

£1.4m for projects supporting sustainable fishing and fisheries science across the UK

Five of the projects – receiving £1.121m – involve Scottish expertise:

- One winning project, whose partners include the Scottish White Fish Producers Association, will use its award of almost £282,000 to explore the use of artificial lights to change fish behaviour. The long-term goal is to look at more selective and sustainable ways of trawling for nephrops and squid, which can currently impact on other marine wildlife.
- Over £274,000 is being invested to improve UK-wide data on catches of crab, lobster and whelks by using autonomous sampling systems on active fishing vessels, or at processing sites. Heriot Watt University is involved in this.
- Heriot Watt is also taking part in a £300,000 project to support a healthy lobster and crab industry with a programme that will see creel mounted cameras deployed in fisheries, including in Orkney. Orkney Sustainable Fisheries is another partner.
- Another of the successful applicants announced today is a project trialling the use of kites and Looming Eye buoys to deter seabirds from diving into the water near to an operational fishery and getting caught up in the nets – an issue which is estimated to kill up to 400,000 seabirds worldwide each year. It's hoped the project will help to protect the UK's vital but threatened seabird populations, such as the Great Northern Divers, Black-throated Divers and Slavonian Grebes.

The funding is the first part of the £100 million UK Seafood Fund designed to level up coastal communities across the UK. A total of £24 million has been earmarked specifically for science and innovation projects – to invest in new technology, trial new gear and support world-class research.

Today's announcement builds on the £65 million infrastructure scheme announced in December which will be made available for projects such as modernising ports and harbours, and a further £10 million to encourage new entrants into the processing, catching and aquaculture sectors, alongside training and upskilling current workers.

These schemes will ensure the industry and coastal communities are equipped to benefit from additional quota gained as a result of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) signed with the EU in 2020. Following our

departure from the Common Fisheries Policy, there have been uplifts in quota for UK vessels, with the value of UK-EU fishing opportunities for the UK in 2021 totalling approximately £333 million.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Malcolm Offord said:

It's great, but unsurprising, that Scottish expertise is at the heart of many of these projects. This UK Government funding will boost innovation and sustainability in the UK fisheries sector.

"Scotland's seafood, aquaculture and science sectors are world renowned, I look forward to continuing to work closely with them to ensure that this funding – and future allocations – helps deliver a sustainable and profitable future."

Fisheries Minister, Victoria Prentis, said:

I am pleased to see the £100m UK Seafood Fund in action, backing the impressive wealth of talent and innovation in our fishing industry.

A sustainable fishing industry is essential if we are to ensure we have a healthy, thriving marine environment that is capable of supporting our world-class industry long into the future.

The funding has been awarded through the Fisheries Industry Science Partnerships (FISP) scheme, established to strengthen relations between industry and research organisations to promote world-class fisheries management. Today's investment is the first in a series of funding rounds that will see the fishing and seafood industry supported to work with scientists to research more productive and sustainable fishing gear and gather new data to more sustainably manage the UK's fish stocks. Applications for a second round of funding will open on Wednesday 2 March and run until 25 April.

This comes as the UK and Devolved governments call for views on the Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS). The JFS sets out policies for achieving or contributing to the eight objectives outlined in the Fisheries Act 2020 which will help to achieve the UK's vision for clean, healthy, safe, productive, and biologically diverse oceans and seas. Each of the eight FISP award winners have been chosen for their potential to meet one or multiple Fisheries Act objectives.