

New powers to Scotland and sustainable fishing at the heart of new Bill

Legislation delivering on the Government's promise to realise the benefits of Brexit for the Scottish fishing industry is being introduced into Parliament today (29th January 2020).

As well as powers for the UK to set quotas, fishing opportunities and days at sea, the flagship Fisheries Bill includes new powers for the Scottish Government to ensure that fish stocks, and the marine environment, can be better protected.

With 52% of fish landed in the UK, landed in the Scottish ports of Peterhead, Lerwick and Fraserburgh, the Scottish fishing industry is central to UK government plans to ensure fishing opportunities are harnessed sustainably for the benefit of the UK fishing industry and our marine life.

The introduction of the Fisheries Bill delivers a legal guarantee the whole of the UK will leave the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) at the end of the Transition Period, in December 2020 – allowing the UK to control who may fish in our waters, and on what terms, for the first time since 1973.

The Scottish Government will be given powers to protect off-shore marine habitats from the impacts of fishing, as well as amend regulations on aquatic animal disease in the same way that the UK Government will be able to do. This will enable Scotland to protect the vitally important and valuable Scottish fish farming industry.

The Bill provides powers enabling the Scottish Ministers to amend technical fisheries regulations, equivalent to those provided to the UK Government. This is a critical power which will allow the Scottish Government to move away from the CFP after the implementation period in a measured and controlled way that works for their industry, allowing the benefits of Brexit to be realised.

The Scottish Government, along with the UK Government and other fisheries administrations, will set out in a joint statement how they will work together to achieve the Bill's sustainability objectives.

New funding powers enabling the Scottish Government to provide financial support for the breadth of what is currently funded by the EU's European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, such as training and port improvements, are also included in the legislation.

Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers said:

Scotland's fishing industry will benefit from this new Fisheries Bill which takes back control of our waters, enabling the UK to create a sustainable, profitable fishing industry for our coastal

communities.

Leaving the EU's failed Common Fisheries Policy is one of the most important benefits of Brexit. It means we can create a fairer system for all of the UK, with new powers for the Scottish Government to ensure fish stocks and the marine environment, can be better protected.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Douglas Ross said:

The Fisheries Bill is great news for our fishing industry and coastal communities, providing fantastic new opportunities for this hugely important sector to Scotland. We are getting Brexit done and becoming an independent coastal state, no longer shackled by the hated Common Fisheries Policy, but empowered to control who fishes in our waters.

The Bill gives the Scottish Government more powers at their request and I hope they will put party politics aside so that the Scottish Parliament can unite to grant legislative consent and deliver a sea of opportunity for our fishermen.

Fisheries Minister George Eustice said:

The Fisheries Bill gives us the powers to implement our own independent fisheries policy, take back control of British waters, improve our marine habitats and make decisions based on the health of our fish stocks not vested interests.

For many people in coastal communities, leaving the Common Fisheries Policy is at the heart of getting Brexit done, and this Bill delivers for the environment, fishermen and the Union.

Elsbeth MacDonald, chief executive of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, said:

The Fisheries Bill is the key piece of legislation needed to help deliver the benefits that the sea of opportunity presents. SFF looks forward to working with both the UK and Scottish Administrations to secure the right legislative framework to allow this to happen.

New provisions in the Bill mean the UK will take into account climate change impacts on its fisheries, with a new objective to move us towards 'climate-smart fishing' in UK waters. Last year we became the first major economy in the world to pass laws to end our contribution to global warming by 2050 and the Fisheries Bill will complement this.

A new legal requirement for all fish stocks to be fished at sustainable levels is also at the heart of the Bill – delivering on the Government's manifesto commitment to ensure there will be sustainability plans for each fish stock.

The Bill includes powers to ensure fisheries management decisions are taken strategically, for the benefit of the whole marine environment. Fisheries management plans will be tailored to the UK's 'mixed fisheries', which have lots of fish stocks swimming together and where certain fishing practices can have a significant impact on the marine environment.

The plans will also recognise that many of our fish stocks are 'shared stocks' as they will swim in both the UK's and other coastal states' waters. For these stocks, negotiation with other coastal states is crucial as sustainable catches cannot be achieved through UK action alone.

Further information

1. The Bill's provisions on sustainable fishing will be underpinned by the requirement for the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations, including the Scottish Government, to publish a Joint Fisheries Statement to coordinate fisheries management where appropriate, and Fisheries Management plans to achieve sustainable stocks.

2. The Bill will also ensure:
 - EU vessels' automatic access right to fish in Scottish waters is removed
 - Foreign boats will be required to be licensed to fish in Scottish waters and will have to follow rules negotiated as part of the UK's fisheries negotiations
 - Fisheries are managed in a sustainable way – balancing social, economic, and employment benefits while preventing the over exploitation of fish stocks
 - The UK fisheries administrations will seek to ensure increased benefits from fish caught by UK boats
 - The UK fisheries administrations will seek to ensure that Sensitive marine species, such as dolphins, are protected and the bycatch of unwanted fish reduced
 - The UK fisheries administrations will continue to collect robust scientific data on fish stocks and shares it to manage shared stocks sustainably
 - UK boats can continue to access any part of UK waters, as they do now regardless of whether they are registered in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland