

Fisheries Bill: the importance of Remote Electronic Monitoring

Briefing for MPs for Committee stage
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Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) in the context of the Fisheries Bill

The Fisheries Bill as drafted does not make provisions for full documentation of catches and as such Greener UK recommends the following amendments:

1. A commitment to full documentation of catches. Without full documentation of UK fisheries, we will not have a true picture of what is being removed from the seas and therefore will not have accurate scientific data to ensure effective and sustainable management of the shared stocks in UK waters.
2. A commitment to robust monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. There are no provisions in the bill to deal with monitoring and enforcement, a fundamental part of effective fisheries management. Vessel monitoring should be applicable to all vessels regardless of size. In addition, remote electronic monitoring with CCTV should be required for all large vessels (over ten metres) and select smaller vessels to ensure accountability and improve compliance and enforcement.

Background

Remote Electronic Monitoring with CCTV (REM) systems have been trialled worldwide for over 15 years and have been found to be a robust and cost effective tool for supporting sustainable fisheries management. Following the UK's exit from the EU, UK fisheries need to be world leading if they are to compete on the highly competitive international seafood market. REM will be a key tool to support and demonstrate the sustainability of UK fisheries management. At present the Fisheries Bill makes no provision for full documentation of catches, which must be addressed to ensure sustainable and accountable fisheries management.

What are the benefits?

The benefits of using Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) with cameras to manage and monitor fisheries include:

1. improved data collection to support stock assessments and to inform non-target species capture;
2. effective monitoring at sea of target and non-target capture species, incentivising selectivity;

3. improved compliance and transparency;
4. an ability to demonstrate that a vessel is operating in accordance with best practice;
5. ability to ground truth and support management revisions;
6. a reduced need for human observers to go to sea;
7. a cost effective alternative to traditional monitoring and control methods;
8. round the clock monitoring of fishing activity;
9. more responsive decision making;
10. strengthening international reputation as accountability in the fishery can be assured

How much would it cost?

Costs have reduced by 22% from £4,694 in 2015 to £3,785 per vessel per year in 2017 due to advancements in technology and greater efficiencies of analyst staff time. This cost covers hardware and review costs.

There's no need to look at all the video footage!

Video monitoring covers the time of actual fishing activity and in general around 10% of the footage is reviewed to monitor for compliance while more detailed information can be collected for data sampling. Monitoring across the over-10-metre fleet across the UK would cost in the region of £5.01 million. This equates to roughly a quarter of the money spent on more traditional systems which deliver less than 1% coverage of what is actually happening when vessels are fishing at sea. At sea coverage is essential for effective monitoring of levels of fishing and discarding.

How does a REM system work?



Figure 1 documenting how a fully documented fishery is managed © WWF New Zealand

A REM system usually consists of wide angle digital cameras, a GPS receiver, gear usage sensors, storage and processing devices, and a display screen. Sensors can collect data about vessel locations and record when the fishing gear is being used.

The data collected helps scientists, fisheries managers and compliance officers verify what is caught, where a boat is fishing, and the type of activity a commercial fishing boat is engaged in. This helps governments collect a wider range of data to help make informed fisheries management decisions and combat illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing.

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