

Commons Committee Stage of the Fisheries Bill: Briefing for MPs on amendments 98, 108, 109, 113, NC21 and NC22

Days 3 and 4 of line-by-line scrutiny

17 December 2018

Stronger data collection requirements (98, 108, 109)

Greener UK welcomes the above amendments, tabled by Luke Pollard and Peter Aldous, which would ensure accurate documentation of what is being removed from the sea and improve incentives and funding for scientific data collection and research. There are currently no provisions to provide incentives for scientific data collection and research to support fish stock management and biodiversity, such as financial assistance.

Fisheries science and accurate data are essential to ensure that fisheries management is effective and sustainable. Greener UK welcomes the above amendments that would ensure sufficient funding for scientific data, in turn informing effective management of stocks in UK waters.

Greener UK would welcome clarity from the government on how it intends to achieve a 'gold standard' in fisheries management without adequate funding for scientific data collection and research, particularly in light of its recent announcement that £37 million of extra funding will be available to boost the UK fishing industry during the proposed implementation period.

Proceeds of charges and fees for commissioning of scientific research (NC21)

Greener UK supports amendment NC21, tabled by Peter Aldous, which would require any proceeds or charges received by the Secretary of State, the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) or Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) to be used to preserve English fisheries for future generations. This would include the commissioning of scientific research to support effective stock management and biodiversity and the commissioning of scientific or technical research into, and the development of, low impact fishing techniques.

As highlighted above, effective funding for scientific research is essential, and amendment NC21 would ensure a simple and effective mechanism for providing such funding.

Criteria for negotiation of fisheries agreements (NC22)

Whilst Greener UK does not have concerns about government amendment NC22, tabled by George Eustice, the government should also acknowledge the importance of setting clear sustainability criteria when negotiating fisheries agreements with other countries.

The UK will need to negotiate with the EU, Norway, and other states to agree an overall total allowable catch and allocations for each state of many commercially important shared stocks. Unlike most existing negotiations with third countries which involve just a handful of fish stocks, the UK shares over 100 stocks with the EU, which means it is critical that a clear and robust process is developed. In approaching these negotiations, the UK must be required to adhere to scientific advice and take all reasonable steps to avoid any agreement, or lack thereof, that results in overfishing.

Greener UK would therefore welcome assurances from the minister during Committee that a clear and robust process will be developed that explicitly ties such negotiations to the fisheries objectives set out in clause 1 of the Fisheries Bill.

For more information, please contact:

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Greener UK is a coalition of 14 major environmental organisations united in the belief that leaving the EU is a pivotal moment to restore and enhance the UK's environment.

Greener UK is working in partnership with the New Economics Foundation and Oceana.

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