Report from the European Union Committee *The EU fisheries landing obligation: six months on*

The need for a commitment to better data, robust monitoring and effective compliance

23 January 2020

The inclusion of robust monitoring and enforcement mechanisms in the Fisheries Bill is crucial, not only to ensure compliance with the UK fisheries management regime, but also to gather essential data on the state of the UK’s fish stocks to inform management decisions. The need for this has been backed up by the House of Lords which made the following stark conclusions and recommendations in its reports on the implementation and enforcement of the EU landing obligation:

- Without effective monitoring there will be no way of determining whether discards are still occurring and consequently whether the catch limits that are set to prevent overfishing are being adhered to
- Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) with cameras is the only practical and effective way to monitor compliance with the landing obligation
- Ministers are urged to mandate the use of REM with cameras as soon they are able to set their own rules for vessels operating in UK waters.¹

The Fisheries Bill offers the opportunity to act on the Lords’ recommendations to put in place effective monitoring and enforcement procedures, that will not only support the landing obligation but also underpin sustainable fisheries management more generally with the provision of reliable data. Currently these provisions are lacking and as a result our ability to verify what is being taken out of our seas is limited.

Minister Eustice has previously argued that there is no need to address monitoring and enforcement in the Fisheries Bill as EU legislation such as the Control Regulation and the Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) Regulation already regulate monitoring and enforcement. However, EU legislation lacks detail in various respects and the way the legislation is enforced in the UK is based on lengthy and expensive criminal proceedings. The European Commission has stated that closed-circuit television (CCTV) is “the only effective control tool to ensure control and enforcement of the Landing Obligation at sea and to provide a deterrent to illegal discarding”.² As such we should take the opportunity offered by the Fisheries Bill for the UK to strengthen monitoring and enforcement mechanisms in order to support sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources, provide consumer confidence and prevent overfishing and IUU activities.

Greener UK believes that the Fisheries Bill should establish a commitment to the introduction of Remote Electronic Monitoring with cameras to deliver full and verifiable documentation of UK fisheries. REM systems have in operation in fisheries around the world 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. Accurate data and traceability can provide retailers with confirmation that the seafood they are selling has been sustainably sourced, which is becoming increasingly important in today’s market.
To help deliver this and address effective monitoring and enforcement, Greener UK is asking for the following:

**A commitment to robust monitoring and enforcement**

It is vitally important that the UK is able to achieve full and verifiable documentation of catches to give a true picture of what is being removed from our seas in order to provide accurate scientific data and traceability for retailers and consumers.

Putting cameras on boats could do a huge amount to ensure compliance with fisheries rules, monitor bycatch and aid scientific data collection, which in turn can improve consumer and buyer confidence in a fishery. Remote electronic monitoring with CCTV and vessel monitoring system technology should be a requirement for all vessels to ensure accountability, assist with data on removal rates and bycatch of all marine life, and improve enforcement.

There should also be an appropriate sanctioning system to ensure that the provisions of fisheries legislation are effectively enforced.

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**Endnotes**

1 HoL European Union Committee, *The EU fisheries landing obligation: six months on*, July 2019
2 European Commission, *Towards new SCIPs: Advisory Council Consultation*, June 2018

Greener UK is a coalition of 13 major environmental organisations united in the belief that leaving the EU is a pivotal moment to restore and enhance the UK’s environment. Together, Greener UK members have the support of over eight million people.