

Lords Report Stage of the Fisheries Bill: Briefing for Peers on amendments 1, 2, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 20, 29, 51, 52, 53, 58, 59

18 June 2020

Greener UK's priorities

Whilst welcoming the inclusion of the fisheries objectives in the Fisheries Bill and recognising that the Fisheries Bill provides a framework for future fisheries management, Greener UK remains concerned that without key amendments the Fisheries Bill will not achieve the government's aim of world-leading sustainable fisheries management.

Greener UK is asking Peers to support and vote for the key amendments below and to ask the Minister for clarification on how the government will achieve its stated objective of sustainable fisheries management if the Fisheries Bill is not amended to provide a clearer and more robust legal framework as the following amendments propose.

Improving effectiveness of the sustainability objective and more robust mechanisms to support the joint fisheries statement (2, 11, 16 and 20)

Greener UK supports amendment 2, which ensures that the sustainability objective is the prime objective and that fish and aquaculture activities do not compromise environmental sustainability in either the short or the long term. This amendment will help ensure that the Fisheries Bill prioritises environmental sustainability, which will be vital to help protect our oceans, prevent overfishing and support a sustainable fishing sector.

Greener UK also supports amendment 20. As currently drafted in the Fisheries Bill, national authorities must exercise their functions in accordance with the joint policy statement, which will set out how they will achieve the objectives, and the fisheries management plans. However, the national authority is in certain circumstances entitled to act against the policy statement or plans. Amendment 20 crucially ensures that even where an authority acts against the policy statement, that authority must still aim to achieve the important requirements set out in the sustainability objective. In addition, Greener UK supports amendment 16, which ensures that decisions to act against the policy statement on the basis of scientific advice must be based on the "best" available advice.

Finally, Greener UK supports amendment 11, which seeks to strengthen the processes around the joint fisheries statement by providing a mechanism for

seeking to resolve a dispute between fisheries policy authorities in the preparation of a joint fisheries statement and the ability to call for an independent review.

A commitment to introduce remote electronic monitoring with cameras on vessels (52)

Greener UK strongly supports amendment 52. This amendment requires the roll out of remote electronic monitoring with cameras to support sustainable fisheries management by providing evidence of what, where and how fishing is being undertaken in our waters. This will make a vital contribution to an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management through the generation of information on non-target and protected species captured by fishing gears.

The House of Lords EU Energy & Environment subcommittee stated in its 2019 report into the landing obligation that without remote electronic 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”*. As well as supporting the landing obligation, effective monitoring and enforcement procedures would also underpin sustainable fisheries management more generally. Rolling out REM would mean we would have better scientific data about what is being caught and discarded, which would provide invaluable insights into the status of commercial stocks. 60% of UK shellfish stocks have unknown statusⁱ and data could also help inform the interactions with, and status of, vulnerable bycatch species for which there are currently large uncertainties. The roll out of cameras would also help fishers show how their activities are sustainable and would provide transparency for retailers and consumers who increasingly want evidence of the sustainability of their seafood. The government has also recognised the benefits of introducing remote electronic monitoring in its responseⁱⁱ to the above House of Lords report stating *“the Government recognises that Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) is one of the most cost effective and efficient tools to monitor fishing activity and bring full compliance with the landing obligation”*.

Strengthening the application of maximum sustainable yield and the sustainable management of shared stocks (8, 10, 12, 13, 51, 58 and 59)

Greener UK welcomes amendment 10 and amendments 58 and 59, which provide for fisheries management plans to restore fish stocks to above (and not just maintain them at) sustainable levels and strengthen the definition of maximum sustainable yield (MSY). As indicated recently by Minister Prentisⁱⁱⁱ, 67% of Total Allowable Catches (TACs) of interest to the UK were set in line with MSY for 2020 – a decrease from 69% in 2018. It is therefore vitally important that the Fisheries Bill reverses this trend and boosts the number of fish stocks fished at sustainable levels.

Greener UK also welcomes amendments 8, 12 and 13. As the UK shares over 100 stocks with the EU, it is critical that a clear and robust process is developed for the management of shared stocks that avoids another 'mackerel wars' scenario, where coastal states set their own unilateral catch limits above scientifically recommended levels. These amendments would help to ensure that the joint fisheries statement and fisheries management plans are drawn up jointly with any coastal state that shares fish stocks with the UK, recognising that the management of shared stocks must be coordinated at a supranational level.

Finally, Greener UK supports amendment 51, which explicitly requires Ministers to have regard to the fisheries objectives in relation to all relevant international negotiations. This amendment recognises that the important sustainability requirements contained in the fisheries objectives must be taken into consideration not only in the formulation of domestic fisheries policy but also internationally, given the migratory nature of fish stocks.

Other amendments (1, 7, 29 and 53)

In addition to the above, Greener UK also supports amendments 1 and 29, which recognise fisheries as public property held in trust for the people. These amendments would help to ensure that coastal communities are given a fairer deal, new entrants are encouraged into the fishing industry and sustainability and local employment are incentivised across the sector over time.

Greener UK also supports amendments 7 and 53, which recognise the impact of fisheries on climate change and the role that effective fisheries management can play in mitigating the effects of climate change.

For more information, please contact:

Emma Crane, head of public affairs, Marine Conservation Society
e: emma.crane@mcsuk.org
t: 07419 132996

Endnotes

ⁱDEFRA, 2019. Marine Strategy Part One: UK Updated Assessment and Good Environmental Status https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/841246/marine-strategy-part1-october19.pdf

ⁱⁱ UK response to the Energy and Environment Sub-Committee inquiry report on implementation and enforcement of the EU landing obligation, 4 April 2019.

ⁱⁱⁱ House of Commons Hansard, 2020. Maximum Sustainable Yield: UK-relevant quota stock species <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-04-29/debates/20042932000014/MaximumSustainabilityYieldUK-RelevantQuotaStockSpecies>

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.

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

Working in partnership with:



GREENER UK

