Written submission from the Sea Fish Industry Authority (Seafish)

The Sea Fish Industry Authority (Seafish) is a non-departmental public body that provides support to all sectors of the UK seafood industry. It has a stated commitment to promoting sustainable and profitable seafood enterprises. Seafish has no remit for involvement with the salmonid sectors, cultivated or wild, but it has a role in promoting and supporting all marine finfish and shellfish cultivation and sea fisheries developments.

In general, we welcome the provisions, as proposed, within the Bill, but offer comments on specific areas.

**Part 1 Aquaculture:** The focus of the section is, understandably, salmon-centric, but care should be taken that any measures proposed or implemented do not prejudice the present and future development of cultivation businesses and sites for halibut, cod, turbot or any other marine fish that may offer commercial prospects in the medium to longer term. Safeguards should be strengthened.

**Chapter 1 Fish farm management.** Section 1.2 The requirement for a marine (ie not a salmon or trout site) finfish cultivation site to be party to a Farm Management Agreement or Statement that may have little or no relevance to its business or impact may be an unwarranted burden and provision should be made so that a delay in agreeing such documents cannot be used as a block to development. A mediation mechanism between parties may be required on occasion.

There should also be a clearer mechanism for mediating between the differing requirements of cultivating to certified Organic Standards and those of ‘conventional’ farms when contentious issues arise.

**Part 3 Sea fisheries:** Amendment should be considered to clarify that conducting valid scientific research onboard a commercial fishing or similar vessel that is not designated as a research vessel would provide a defence to or ‘grounds for release’ under powers conferred by Sections 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43 and 44.

**Part 4 Shellfish:** We welcome the provisions to continue the protection offered to Shellfish Cultivation Waters. However, there remains the concern that the specific protections conferred under the Shellfish Waters Directive are not enshrined within the Bill and this may serve to lessen the actual level of protection encountered on the ground. In addition, the wording within section 47.4(b) (ii) might appear to offer SEPA the opportunity to decide that it may not be ‘necessary or desirable’ to implement protection measures in areas where it considers that the expense would not be commercially justified. Whilst not the intent of the Bill, this may prove to be prejudicial to some smaller shellfish cultivators located in some of the more remote and fragile rural areas.

**Part 5 Miscellaneous:** Section 50. Whilst recognising the necessity of funding activities pertaining to aquaculture or fisheries, the provision of the mechanism to introduce direct charges for such functions is of concern to industry. In these financially challenging times, any measure that imposes, or may impose an
additional, unknown and undefined, cost burden on a business or sector, induces uncertainty, weakens investor confidence and may ultimately influence future investment decisions or prejudice the viability of a business. Careful consideration should be given to the desirability of this step.

Should the Committee so wish, we would be happy to expand upon our representations in person.