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The Sea Fisheries (Remote Electronic Monitoring and Regulation of Scallop Fishing) (Scotland) Regulations 2024 – notification of forthcoming changes to the technical specifications and guidance for pelagic vessels

Dear Finlay,

I am writing to make the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee aware of the Scottish Government's intention to amend and republish our remote electronic monitoring (REM) technical specifications and guidance for pelagic vessels.

I wrote to the Committee on 30 January 2025 to alert members to the publication of these documents which are aimed at supporting pelagic vessels as they prepare for the introduction of REM requirements as set out in The Sea Fisheries (Remote Electronic Monitoring and Regulation of Scallop Fishing) (Scotland) Regulations 2024 as passed on 6 June 2024.

Since publication, my officials have continued to engage with the pelagic industry and sought to address concerns that have arisen. As part of this stakeholder engagement, officials were made aware of an issue to do with the storage and transmission of REM video data. In short, the technical specifications and guidance currently require vessels to upload their REM video data within a specified data transmission window to a third-party system on return to port. Following engagement with the pelagic fishing industry it is clear that some vessels are likely to prefer to make use of a second SSI provision which is not currently reflected in the technical specifications or guidance.

This second option would allow vessels to choose between storing video data onboard, or to a third-party's system on return to port. Some of our stakeholders have requested that we simplify the data transmission requirement for video data to reflect this and therefore allow for data to be provided for scrutiny and assessment on request, rather than automatically as currently set out in the technical

specifications and guidance. Officials have reassessed the policy and operational implications of onboard REM video data storage in order to determine whether the requested changes are operationally acceptable and pragmatic and have consulted widely with stakeholders on the issue.

At my evidence session on 1 May 2024, I outlined to the Committee that the technical specifications for the REM systems sit separately from the regulations for the purpose of enabling the Scottish ministers to specify and amend them from time to time without the need to formally revisit the legislation. I also noted that the power to change the technical specifications is not one we anticipated using regularly or lightly. In this instance I am convinced that the recommended changes will strike a beneficial balance of meeting the Scottish Government's REM data requirements and of providing pelagic vessels with a potentially cost saving second data storage and transmission option that fits well with their current business operating practices.

The technical specifications and guidance will therefore be amended and republished to accommodate these changes, and my officials will make the Committee aware of the revised documents over the coming weeks.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mairi Gougeon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

MAIRI GOUGEON