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Finlay Carson, Convener
Rural Affairs and Islands Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

27 March 2025

Dear Finlay,

Publication of Scotland's Fisheries Management Strategy Delivery Plan Update 2025

I would like to take this opportunity to update the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee that we have published the updated Scotland's Fisheries Management Strategy 2020-2030 Delivery Plan on 20 March 2025.

As you know, Scotland's Fisheries Management Strategy 2020-2030 is a ten-year strategy, which we published in 2020, containing a number of actions intended to deliver world-leading, responsible and sustainable fisheries management in Scotland. In September 2022 we published a delivery plan to support the Strategy and to improve transparency around decision making. We committed to updating the delivery plan as progress was being made.

The 2025 update highlights the key areas of progress made since 2020, for example:

- the improvements to our co-management groups
- the introduction of legislation for **mandatory Remote Electronic Monitoring** to both the scallop dredge and pelagic fishing fleets and the planned rollout of **vessel tracking and monitoring** across under 12 metre fleet
- our transition towards more agile **management of inshore fisheries** and the introduction of interim management measures in 2024 for crab and lobster fisheries
- the introduction of legislation which closed all Scottish waters to fishing for sandeel, for all vessels (EU and UK).

As ever, the balance between socio-economic and environmental outcomes is delicate and requires a wide range of policies to be implemented and developed in order to be effective.

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Within this updated Delivery Plan, the focus is on the role that the fishing industry plays in Scotland's economy, and the delivery of management functions and improvements that will provide a stable platform for fishing businesses to operate within. This reflects the Scottish Government's four priorities, particularly the need for sustainable growth of Scotland's economy.

Review of FMAC

At the Committee session on 6 November 2024, I said that I would provide an update on the review of the Fisheries Management and Conservation (FMAC) group.

You will note in the delivery plan that we have confirmed our plans to refresh the FMAC group following the review we undertook last year. Following the feedback received as part of the review, there are aspects of the current model which need to be improved, and I am of the view that the current structure and membership for meetings is making our co-management approach difficult. With that in mind, the future meetings of the main FMAC group will be split so that industry and environmental groups meet separately. The inshore group will follow a similar approach, although, the intention is that some discussions under the Future Catching Policy (FCP) and climate change subgroups may continue to operate in a mixed space.

Although the main FMAC group has not met in recent months, progress has still of course been made on a range of policies and actions.

I remain committed to co-management, and whilst our approach will change, I believe FMAC still offers a viable opportunity for Government, industry, environmental groups and others to discuss common issues. The new arrangements will, of course, be kept under review and we will consider bringing the eNGO and industry sides together on an ad hoc basis to exchange views and ideas.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

MAIRI GOUGEON

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