

RURAL AFFAIRS AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Wednesday 28 October 2009

Session 3

£5.00

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body 2009.

Applications for reproduction should be made in writing to the Information Policy Team, Office of the Queen's Printer for Scotland, Admail ADM4058, Edinburgh, EH1 1NG, or by email to:
licensing@oqps.gov.uk.

OQPS administers the copyright on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body.

Printed and published in Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body by
RR Donnelley.

CONTENTS

Wednesday 28 October 2009

Col.

DECISION ON TAKING BUSINESS IN PRIVATE	1999
SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION	2000
Sea Fishing (Enforcement of Community Quota and Third Country Fishing Measures and Restriction on Days at Sea) (Scotland) Order 2009 (SSI 2009/317)	2000
Fodder Plant Seed (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2009 (SSI 2009/330)	2000
Environmental Impact Assessment and Natural Habitats (Extraction of Minerals by Marine Dredging) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2009 (SSI 2009/333).....	2000
FISHERIES COUNCIL	2001

RURAL AFFAIRS AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

25th Meeting 2009, Session 3

CONVENER

*Maureen Watt (North East Scotland) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*John Scott (Ayr) (Con)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab)
*Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD)
*Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP)
*Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab)
*Peter Peacock (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
*Bill Wilson (West of Scotland) (SNP)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Jamie Hepburn (Central Scotland) (SNP)
Jim Hume (South of Scotland) (LD)
Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

Nick Bailey (Marine Scotland)
Dr Paul Fernandes (Marine Scotland)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Peter McGrath

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Roz Wheeler

ASSISTANT CLERK

Lori Gray

LOCATION

Committee Room 6

Scottish Parliament

Rural Affairs and Environment Committee

Wednesday 28 October 2009

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 10:00*]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Maureen Watt): Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the committee's 25th meeting of the year. The main purpose of today's meeting is to take evidence on the issues to be considered at the European Union fisheries council negotiations. I remind everyone to turn off their mobile phones and electronic devices because they impact on the broadcasting system.

Agenda item 1 is consideration of whether to take items 4 and 5 in private. Item 4 is our review of the evidence on the issues to be considered at the EU fisheries council negotiations, and item 5 is consideration of the committee's work programme. Do members agree to take items 4 and 5 in private?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Subordinate Legislation

Sea Fishing (Enforcement of Community Quota and Third Country Fishing Measures and Restriction on Days at Sea) (Scotland) Order 2009 (SSI 2009/317)

Fodder Plant Seed (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2009 (SSI 2009/330)

Environmental Impact Assessment and Natural Habitats (Extraction of Minerals by Marine Dredging) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2009 (SSI 2009/333)

10:00

The Convener: Item 2 is consideration of three negative Scottish statutory instruments. The Subordinate Legislation Committee has commented on SSI 2009/317, and members have a copy of an extract of that report in paper 4. No members have indicated any concerns in advance and no motions to annul have been lodged. Do members have any comments on any of the instruments?

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): I am disappointed that there is, yet again, a drafting error. However, I understand that the error, which is in SSI 2009/317, will be corrected before the order comes into force.

The Convener: Do we agree to make no recommendations on the instruments?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Fisheries Council

10:02

The Convener: We move to our evidence-taking session on the issues to be considered in the EU fisheries council negotiations and in fisheries negotiations between the EU and Norway. I welcome the witnesses, both of whom are from Marine Scotland science at the Scottish Government. Nick Bailey is the fisheries management advice co-ordinator and Dr Paul Fernandes is the sea fisheries group leader.

Will you give us an overview of where we are in relation to fisheries and tell us what movement there has been between last year and this?

Nick Bailey (Marine Scotland): We have provided a short submission, which members may have had time to read. In addition, Tom Edwards of the Scottish Parliament information centre has provided an excellent summary that contains a lot of information.

The state of a number of stocks has shifted since last year. The broad picture is that fishing mortality—the rate at which we remove fish from the sea—has generally held steady and has dropped in a number of stocks, which is a very good thing. Unfortunately, though, a number of the stocks have not shown substantial increases in biomass; in fact, in some stocks biomass has declined. The overall effect is some reduction in what we can expect can be taken from the seas that are of interest to Scotland. How much more detail would you like?

The Convener: That is okay. Dr Fernandes, would you like to add anything to that?

Dr Paul Fernandes (Marine Scotland): On balance, the opportunities for next year are likely to be reduced, although there are certain ups and downs, as is normal. I emphasise, though, that the general direction in which we are going, which is internationally recognised as being the right one—in accordance with, for example, the world summit on sustainable development in Johannesburg in 2002—is to reduce fishing mortality. That is recognised as being the most advantageous way to go. Many of the management plans by which quotas are set are going in that direction, and much of the advice that the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea drafts involves reducing fishing mortality. That is why the situation is as it is.

The Convener: Is it possible to achieve that at the same time as maintaining a viable Scottish fishing industry?

Dr Fernandes: That introduces difficulties in the short term, but it has to be in the interests of the

industry to have a sustainable set of fish stocks that it can rely on in the longer term.

Nick Bailey: There is no question but that the resources around our coasts can provide for a sustainable industry; the question is what size and shape that industry will be. That involves discussion with people who have expertise beyond ours in disciplines such as socioeconomics; the laboratory is not currently placed to deal with such areas. We are aware of those issues, but they do not lie in our sphere and require discussion with other people.

I will add something to what Paul Fernandes has said. The move towards lower fishing mortality rates across stocks generally, and the implementation of management plans, will not necessarily mean smaller quotas for all species in the longer term. The principle of the methods and models that are used is that, in the longer term, lower fishing mortalities allow the populations to grow to the optimum sizes for exploitation. We might expect there to be increases in the total allowable catches of many species in future.

The key point about all that is that the response should not be simply, "We can have more boats and fish harder again." Instead, the response should be to keep fishing at about the same level, reaping the benefits of improved sustainability and better-quality stocks.

Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD): You have indicated that there has been a reduction in fishing mortality but that there has still been a decline in biomass in some stocks. There could be any number of reasons for that, but do you have a clearer picture of what those reasons are for some of the stocks? Are we doing enough in those areas to address the root causes, rather than always focusing on fishing effort?

Nick Bailey: It is hard to generalise, but I will try. Our understanding of why many of those things are happening is poor. However, if we invest large amounts of money on understanding why, we run the risk of not being in a position to provide the other kinds of advice that we currently provide. It is a balancing act when it comes to understanding the root causes.

Herring currently provides a great example: the stock biomass is lower than it has been for some time, and it is dropping, yet the fishing mortality rate is not particularly high, and the decrease does not seem to be caused by fishing effects. To understand environmental and other drivers for why that stock is as it is would require vast amounts of money, and it would stop activities in other areas of science.

I do not think that that answer helps you particularly, but that is the best that I can do.

Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP):

Speaking generally, and not concentrating on any specific species, we had some recommendations last year, which were implemented, but the effect has not been what we wanted. There is no guarantee that it will not be the same story next year with what we recommend this year, and the same the year after.

Nick Bailey: There are no guarantees. One thing that—

Alasdair Morgan: Sorry to stop you, but I would like you to answer this, too. On the basis of the evidence and the track record so far, the probability is that that is what will happen, is it not?

Nick Bailey: Yes, viewed across the piece. The story varies across individual stocks. Some go up—some of the advice is for increases—so we cannot say that all stocks are declining. However, the big picture, based on previous experience, is that some measures do not seem to have worked for a number of stocks. Unfortunately, there is always an expectation that the measures that are introduced at the end of one year will deliver something by the next. That is wholly unreasonable for most stocks. We are looking at improvements and a drive towards sustainability that can take anything from three to 10 years. It depends a lot on the biology of the species, environmental effects and how those contribute to what we call recruitment, which is the arrival of young fish in the population.

Dr Fernandes: The picture for North Sea cod has been difficult in the past few years, but there has been a slight recovery. That typifies what happens in many stocks, including herring. We are at the mercy of natural forces that dictate how many young fish come into the population in any one year. The recruitment cycle is rather sporadic—more sporadic in some cases than in others. In general, one can assume that, if there is a large parental stock—a large spawning stock biomass—the chances of good recruitment are better. In the case of cod, which has a low spawning stock biomass as a result of high fishing mortality in the 1990s and early noughties, the chances of getting high recruitment to get us out of our current problem are lower. The answer to your question is that we suspect that it will take longer to achieve that, because the parental stock is so low that the chances of getting a good year of incoming recruits is lower, although it could still happen.

We had a good year class of haddock in 1999 and a moderate year class in 2005. The fishery has been sustained on that basis. The arrests in the biomass of haddock in the North Sea have been slower as a result of the pulses of recruitment that have taken place. We hope that the drive towards lower fishing mortality will

enhance the chances of parents sticking around and reproducing, so that there is a good incoming year class. It is still a matter of chance, as we are subject to the forces of nature, which we do not understand greatly and cannot control. We are in no position to dictate to nature how it should bring about a strong year class.

Alasdair Morgan: Why, having made a decision, do we not stick with it for a longer period, instead of revisiting it each year on the basis of evidence that seems pretty tenuous, to say the least? The answer to my question may be that it is because of the politicians.

Nick Bailey: Are you asking why we do not stick with a particular management approach?

Alasdair Morgan: Yes.

Nick Bailey: That is an important point. Again, it is slightly out of the realms of science and has much more to do with the management strategy. As you know, the management frameworks for many of our stocks are provided by the European Commission. At the moment, its view is that there should be a series of recovery measures that ratchet things up year on year, rather than keeping them fixed.

John Scott: Are there other factors at work? Is climate change influencing what is happening? I share Alasdair Morgan's concerns about the variability of the picture that is presented to us year on year. We are expected to come to a view, but it is difficult for us to do that. I agree that there is consistency of approach, but there seems to be different scientific advice each year. New and different things happen, apparently out of the blue, to surprise us. Last year, for example, we were told that the west coast fisheries had disintegrated, without anyone knowing that that was happening.

Nick Bailey: I would simply link climate change to the general point that has been made about environment. It is extremely difficult to say that climate change is the driver for any particular factor, but it is clearly influencing some of the processes in our waters. In the North Sea, for example, certain hydrographic features are changing, although it is difficult to tell whether that is a direct result of climate change, or simply a decadal or centennial change.

10:15

I take slight issue with the view that the problem in the west coast was not apparent until last year. In fact, the position of cod and whiting, which were two of the species that triggered the difficulties last year, has been very poor for a good number of years. It was when the haddock stock drifted outside the limits that were deemed sustainable and precautionary that the particularly harsh

management measures were triggered last year. It has been a progressive process, not just a one-off measure in a single year.

However, I concede that, for a variety of reasons, the scientific advice that is issued can change from year to year, sometimes in ways that can be difficult to understand. That is partly methodological and to do with progress in science, but partly to do with processes that we do not understand, and which may be environmental.

Dr Fernandes: I will just add that, although it is likely that some unknown environmental factors are at play, the type of fishing mortality that we experienced in the late 1990s and early noughties was rather high, and was internationally recognised as such. It is therefore no surprise that there has been a decline in stocks during the past few years. We welcome the reduction in fishing mortality, which will, we hope, lead to better outcomes in the long term.

The Convener: Was that decline due to overfishing, or were other factors involved, such as the movement of the fish stocks?

Dr Fernandes: Sorry—the decline in what?

The Convener: The decline on the west coast that you were talking about.

Dr Fernandes: Fishing mortality was high on the west coast in particular, but the situation there has not responded as well as we might have expected to some of the management measures that we have had in place for the past few years. There may be something unusual about the west coast, but it is difficult to pin that down. One of the factors that may be involved is predation by seals, which we are investigating. There may also be other environmental drivers, given that the ecosystem and the hydrographic regime there are different from those in the North Sea.

John Scott: Would you like to expand on the possibility of increased predation by seals, given that it is germane to the discussions that we will have later in the day?

Dr Fernandes: The population of grey seals on the west coast has increased, and studies by the sea mammal research unit have indicated that the predation of fish by seals has increased as a consequence. The collective population of cod, haddock and whiting on the west coast has reduced to such levels that it could be the case that the seal population is acting like a fishery and taking a proportion that is likely to be more significant than it was in the past. That proportion is significant both because the population of seals has increased and because the fish populations have decreased, so there are complicated factors at play.

Nick Bailey: ICES acknowledged that fact for the first time in its recent report on the west coast. It has previously not said very much about the potential influence of sea mammals, but this year it did.

Dr Fernandes: As a result, we are beginning to look into that. We are running various projects to examine the west of Scotland ecosystem, and we hope to come up with some answers but, unfortunately, there will not be a quick fix or solution.

John Scott: So, virtually every species in the west of Scotland is under threat. We certainly believe that common seals are under threat, and you are essentially telling us that all the fish stocks are at dangerous levels.

Dr Fernandes: Well, it is the demersal fish species—cod, haddock and whiting, in particular—that have experienced a decline. That is not the case for all the species, and there are indications that monk and megrim have not experienced the same levels of decline—indeed, megrim might have increased on the west coast. However, the fishery for those species is new, and fishing mortality in relation to precautionary limits is unknown.

Alasdair Morgan: Nephrops are important to the Scottish industry, particularly in the North Sea. According to the ICES advice, the three areas that are of interest to the Scottish fleet—the Moray, Forth and Fladen grounds—seem to be in fairly good condition. As a layman, I find it hard to see why anything should change, but I understand that we are facing a reduction in the total allowable catch. Could you expand on the reasons for that?

Nick Bailey: I will try. This is one of the areas of complexity that partly involves changes in the science. Earlier in the year, there was a review of the methods that are used for assessing nephrops. The net effect of that for the North Sea would have been to leave the overall TAC just about the same as last year, because of a higher recommendation for the very large Fladen ground, which is out in the central northern North Sea. That higher recommendation would make up for the lower opportunities in the Moray and Forth grounds.

From the recommendations, it seems that the Commission has overlooked an allocation that ICES makes to all those small pockets of mud on which these animals live that are not necessarily in the Moray, Forth or Fladen grounds, a good example of which is a place called the devil's hole, which is just to the east of the Firth of Forth. That quantity was estimated by ICES to be about 1,500 tonnes, and it just so happens that if we add that back into the Commission's proposals, the 7 per cent decrease disappears. That suggests that the

Commission has just overlooked something. I am afraid that that is out of our hands, but officials are aware of it. We will just have to see how that plays out.

Alasdair Morgan: It seems ridiculous that people's livelihoods are at the mercy of someone doing something like putting a figure in a wrong column.

Nick Bailey: I could not agree more, but such things have happened in the past and it seems that there are one or two examples of them happening again this year. Efforts are usually made to ensure that the Commission corrects things that are the result of obvious arithmetical oversights or mistakes on its part.

Alasdair Morgan: On the basis of your experience, would you expect the issue that you have mentioned to be corrected?

Nick Bailey: There is a good chance that it could be. In previous years, this sort of thing has been cleared up pretty quickly. Past experience suggests that such matters will be dealt with in committee prior to the council that we are here to discuss today, as that is usually what happens.

Bill Wilson (West of Scotland) (SNP): I have a question that you might not be able to answer at the moment. As you will be aware, there has been considerable concern over the decline in white-fish numbers in the Clyde estuary. Is the nephrops fishery having any impact on the recovery of white fish in the Clyde estuary?

Nick Bailey: That is another interesting and extremely difficult question to answer. In recent years, quantities of fish in the Clyde area have been low generally, so it is difficult to suggest that anything that has happened in recent years has been caused by nephrops fishing. Ten or so years ago, it was clearly the most extensive of the fisheries in the area and it has used smaller-mesh nets than many of the fisheries directed at white fish. Therefore, its contribution over the years to white-fish mortality is almost certainly higher, but it is much more difficult to say whether that has led to the overall position.

Bill Wilson: Is the nephrops fishery liable to be affecting the chance of recovery now? Given the smaller mesh sizes, is it having an impact on the present recovery of stocks?

Nick Bailey: Boats in the nephrops fishery are now required to include fairly substantial square-mesh panels in their nets. On the basis of our observations at the laboratory, we think that the small fish in species such as haddock and whiting should be escaping quite well from those gears. I do not think that we can continue to say that the chance of recovery is being affected.

It is slightly more difficult to answer your question in relation to cod, for which square-mesh panels are not such an effective tool, because the animals grow so quickly. The seasonal closure in the Clyde, which generally takes place in the first quarter of the year and covers a large area in the south-west of the Clyde, is designed to allow spawning cod to aggregate—which they do—without being affected by fishing. As far as we understand from tagging studies, the fish are still congregating there but, so far, that has not led to the much-wished-for recovery of cod.

Peter Peacock (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

I want to stick with the issue of the nephrops fishery on the west coast. The Commission's proposals, which could result in a significant reduction in the TAC—although it would be about half the reduction that the ICES report suggested—derive from a concern about the stocks. How concerned are you, and how concerned should we be, about the state of the stocks in the North Minch, the South Minch and the Clyde?

Nick Bailey: It is unfortunate that, when the TAC advice suggests reductions, there is an immediate response from society to the effect that there must be a serious problem with the stocks. The first general comment to make is that all our stocks will go up and down and our expectations of them should take that into account. We should not get too excited about the ups and downs.

The position on nephrops on the west coast is that the outcomes are partly affected by the methodological change that we touched on in relation to the North Sea. On the west coast, it affected all three stocks in such a way that it led to the rather dramatic decrease.

We can pick up a picture of the state of the stocks just from the television surveys—we can estimate the abundance by counting the animals' burrows. It is true that in the North Minch and South Minch in particular there have been declines in abundance, but they are not to a level that causes us any great concern at present. In the Clyde, there was a decline for a couple of years, but the most recent estimate, for 2008, was for an increase. I do not have such concern about the state of the stocks.

The bottom line from the Commission is a proposal for something like a 15 per cent cut in the TAC. If we go back to the TV trends and employ the previous methodology that we had for nephrops, a 15 per cent cut is about right. That reflects what I have said about reductions in abundance, which we have to recognise. The industry has to realise that numbers will go up and down, so there should be some adjustment but not to the extent that we all throw our arms up in the air and get worried about the state of the stocks.

Peter Peacock: Thank you for that answer, but I am slightly confused by it. On one hand, you are saying that we should not get overly concerned—I understand your argument for that—but on the other hand you are saying that a 15 per cent cut in the TAC would be appropriate. That seems quite a big reduction, given how it might affect the economic interests of some of those involved.

10:30

Nick Bailey: Fluctuations in the populations of different species will vary from year to year, but ups and downs of 15 to 20 per cent in the nephrops population would not be unusual. I recognise that changes of that kind have implications for those who are involved in using that resource, but such changes have been around for a number of stocks for many years. I would argue—this is not a scientific point, but just a comment related to the general management of fisheries—that we need to build into our approach to fisheries management a recognition that there will be changes in stocks and a structuring that can accommodate that kind of natural movement.

Peter Peacock: Again, that is helpful, but your scientific advice would be that the 15 per cent reduction is appropriate. Can you confirm that that is your judgment?

Nick Bailey: I wish to reserve judgment on that in order to go back and do the sums in the old way.

Peter Peacock: That takes me to my next point. There is a disagreement between the Commission's technical committees and ICES about methodologies. Is that likely to be resolvable? Are people seeking to resolve such differences?

Nick Bailey: It is unfortunate that there have been several changes in the methodology with regard to nephrops, which have led to a great deal of confusion. Except for those who are closely involved, it is an extremely esoteric and difficult topic. Some changes relate to how the TV survey takes place and how the material is used. There have been sensible corrections, for example, for bias and for the use of the count in terms of what is seen on the sea bed in relation to what the industry can catch. Another level of adjustment is involved in the idea of moving towards harvest rates and long-term targets. ICES has suggested an approach that would use any one of three different targets, but the scientific, technical and economic committee for fisheries disagrees with that approach, believing that we should stick with one target—that is where the particular difficulty is. The STECF disagrees with one particular part of the ICES approach, rather than with all of it.

Peter Peacock: If such differences did not exist, would the advice on the levels of allowable catch change? If a slightly different approach was taken that was arguably as valid, would it make the 15 per cent figure invalid?

Nick Bailey: In relation to all our stock assessments and all our forecasts, any developments in which we end up with options for which method to choose can produce different outcomes. Currently, the best judgment of ICES in relation to its approach to using TV surveys is that that is the approach that has delivered the values that ICES has. I do not know whether it is particularly helpful to get into a speculative discussion about what would happen if we did things one way rather than another. Clearly, if we do things in different ways, we can get different numbers. The point is to take a structured and reasoned approach to arguing about or unpicking anything that has been done. We must be careful that any suggestions for development, modification or advancement of existing techniques are made according to the best available information.

Peter Peacock: I come back to my previous point. It would be a bit irritating, to say the least, if disagreements about methodologies affected whether not only individuals but communities that derive their livelihood from fishing were kept in business. What effort is going into reconciling differences about methodology so that there is at least agreement on a scientific basis about the correct way in which to measure stocks that is consistent year on year?

Nick Bailey: I fully understand what you say and I recognise the position and the irritation that it can cause. We meet the industry regularly, and that point has been articulated to us lots of times—and not just in relation to nephrops, as the argument transcends the many different stocks with which we deal. All I can say is that ICES continually looks at its approaches and methodology and tries to seek agreement from all the participating countries to ensure that the method is as robust as we can possibly get. However, it is inevitable that progress will be made and that advice will change, which will lead to difficulties from time to time for those who must live with the advice.

Peter Peacock: I will finish on one small factual point. You can keep me right, but I recall—I am not sure offhand whether the North Sea or the west coast was involved—that a previous allowable catch level was greater than what was being caught. Reductions on paper were therefore not real, because of the gap between what was caught and the allowable catch. If the advice is implemented, will it eliminate that gap and have a real economic effect, or has that gap gone anyway?

Nick Bailey: On the west coast, the uptake of the nephrops TAC this year is only about 70 per cent, which means that a change is less likely to lead to hardship. The strength of argument is not borne out by the uptake rates. It is interesting that many reports from our observer trips and other activities show that the scale of the declines that I talked about is about right.

A secondary point that is not scientific and on which we should not base our science, but which is germane, is that the markets for nephrops throughout Europe are extremely depressed. For many years—for at least the 20 or 30 years in which I have been involved in the process—when gluts have occurred in the market, that has helped nobody, because the price drops and the economics of the situation fall apart. As I said, we must be careful not to base scientific judgments on economics, but the economics are such that a lessening of nephrops abundance in the market would be no bad thing.

Liam McArthur: It is helpful that you have moved on to an issue that I will touch on. An increase or decrease in the quota can have an impact on a fishery's viability and value, but so can the quality of what is landed. What you said about a depressed market for nephrops bears out all that I have heard recently. Is that simply the result of having too much product on the market or is the quality of the nephrops stock having an impact on the price that is commanded?

Nick Bailey: It is a bit of both. The overall quantities are a problem. When an operator puts additional material on the market in an effort to make up price shortfalls, he often uses the smaller animals—although of legal size—that he would otherwise have discarded or not caught. That means that the quality drops, too, but that depends on the market. What has tended to happen and still happens is that a lot of small nephrops are stored and are filling freezers throughout the country.

Liam McArthur: The 70 per cent take-up of the TAC suggests that the Scottish fleet is not flooding the market. Where is the supply coming from?

Nick Bailey: There is a difference between the amount that is said to be available to be fished sustainably and the economics of a French or Spanish market. If everyone stopped buying nephrops, the fleet could take up just 10 per cent of the TAC and still flood the market.

John Scott: I return to some of your figures, which I hope that I have read correctly. You say that the nephrops TAC should be reduced this year from 15,000 tonnes to 10,000 tonnes. The European advice is for a 15 per cent reduction in the TAC, but you advise a 30 per cent reduction, if I have understood the figures.

Nick Bailey: The ICES advice was for an even larger reduction than that, because the catch is currently greater than 15,000 tonnes. Last year's catch was somewhere around 20,000 tonnes, so ICES was predicting a reduction of roughly 50 per cent.

John Scott: Notwithstanding your comments about not getting too alarmed about in-year variability, the proposed cut seems a huge shift.

Nick Bailey: Yes. I would not align myself with a cut of that magnitude.

John Scott: But that is ICES's suggestion.

Nick Bailey: Yes. I think that we have some way to go in the methodology that is being used. That is perhaps reflected in the advice that is given by ICES's advisory committee—not so much the numerical advice but the written text that goes alongside that—and by the STECF advice. There is a recognition that the proposed cuts are extremely large and that managers might wish to make the changes in a series of smaller steps.

John Scott: As I have a specific interest in the Clyde, do you happen to know what variation is proposed in that area?

Nick Bailey: I do not know the figure off the top of my head, but it will be smaller than the overall amount because, if my recollection is correct, the change in the Clyde is smaller than in the North Minch and South Minch. At the moment, the west coast is managed not as individual units but collectively, so the future implications for any particular area might be lessened because boats are free to fish for their TAC wherever they want across the west coast.

The Convener: That just highlights the uselessness of the common fisheries policy as it is and the need for local management.

Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): I am a bit concerned about all those small nephrops lying in people's freezers. That seems to me a classic case in which technical measures could be used to prevent the younger, more immature animals from being fished. Surely that would be a better way of ensuring that the larger animals were caught and the younger ones got away. Would that not be better than the blanket numbers-based reduction in the catch that is being proposed?

Nick Bailey: There is a lot to be said for taking a careful look at how the nephrops resource is used. If I may correct you, I should point out that some of those small animals are not necessarily immature or even under the legal size. However, they frequently have a lower unit value than the larger animals.

Technical measures are certainly one possible way forward, but another would be to avoid fishing

for the animals during certain seasons in the year when the product has a poorer quality. As members will know, crustaceans shed their hard shells in order to grow. When the animals have finished shedding their shells, they are soft for some time so they do not attract the same price. In the summer months, the female of the species has ovaries that go dark green, which makes the product potentially go green—the industry calls it “green sac”. From time to time, moves are made to try to restrict the landing of such animals because the price is lower. Such internal changes could be made. Indeed, the langoustine strategy group that operates in Scotland has discussed such measures. However, one difficulty is in getting unanimous agreement on the best way forward among all the players in the various forums.

Bill Wilson: I seek clarification on one point that I perhaps did not catch correctly. Is only 70 per cent of the total allowable catch for nephrops taken at present?

Nick Bailey: I think that that is the case on the west coast. I will need to check, but the catch is something of that order.

Bill Wilson: There is now talk of a 15 per cent reduction in the total allowable catch of nephrops. Perhaps I am confused, but it seems to me that a 15 per cent reduction would leave us with 85 per cent, which is still considerably higher than the catch that is currently being taken. Therefore, the proposed cut would result in no reduction in the actual number of animals that were removed from the water. Is that correct?

Nick Bailey: Sorry, but could you go through that again?

Bill Wilson: The fishermen presently catch 70 per cent of the total allowable catch.

Nick Bailey: Yes.

Bill Wilson: The reduction in the total allowable catch will bring it down to 85 per cent of what it is at present, but that is 15 per cent greater than what is presently being taken. Therefore, there will be no reduction in the number of nephrops that are taken out of the water.

10:45

Nick Bailey: But we are not at the end of the year, yet.

Bill Wilson: So the fishermen might exceed the 70 per cent by the end of the year.

Nick Bailey: Yes, they will almost certainly catch more than 70 per cent by the turn of the year.

Bill Wilson: Will they exceed the 85 per cent?

Nick Bailey: I have no idea. The only point that I was trying to make was that the claims that there will be devastation because of the proposed cuts are not necessarily borne out by the observations.

Bill Wilson: I was coming from another angle. We are told that the cuts are required because there is a concern that the population is falling, but if the cuts do not bring the number of nephrops that are landed below the present number, there will actually have been no cuts.

Nick Bailey: That might be a reasonable observation but, given the structure and nature of the population, the advice is that it requires to be at a certain size in the long term.

Bill Wilson: So the issue is rather less to do with a one-year measure and much more to do with a decade-long measure.

Nick Bailey: As I said, one change that has occurred recently is the attempt to move towards a long-term management approach for nephrops, employing a longer-term target. That has been discussed in the regional advisory committees. That is partly why the advice from ACOM, the advice drafting group in ICES, and the STECF was that, unlike with the cod story that we have talked about and the west coast gadoid story generally, any changes that we make in relation to nephrops are required not necessarily because the stock has a particular problem at present but because, in the long term, that is a better management place to be.

Bill Wilson: That is fine—that clarifies the issue.

The Convener: You briefly mentioned whiting. Scientific advice on North Sea whiting suggests that the stock cannot be evaluated in relation to reference points, but that the biomass is at its lowest point since the 1990s. The stock is obviously in trouble, but it does not seem to be given the same prominence as other stocks such as cod. Do we know the reasons for the poor state of the whiting stock? Does more need to be done to conserve that stock than the proposed reduction in the TAC of 15 per cent?

Dr Fernandes: As we have moved away from nephrops, I will answer that one. The last few estimates of spawning stock biomass in whiting have been the lowest on record. The reason is that there has been a low level of recruitment, so we have not had a good year class of whiting for a long time—since 2002. Fishing mortality was quite low, but has subsequently increased a little. On that basis, a fairly severe cut in the TAC for whiting has been proposed. We do not know why the recruitment has reduced.

One issue with whiting that concerns our industry is that the whiting population occurs throughout the North Sea and into the Channel—it

is in ICES areas 4 and 7D. It therefore has a fairly large range. Our observations have been that the population changes have not occurred equally in all parts of the area. The declines have occurred relatively more strongly outside the areas where our fishermen take whiting, so their observations are that the local whiting stock has not declined as much. That is consistent with our observations. However, the population is drawn from a much bigger area. The population at large in the North Sea, on which the assessment is based, is declining, which has resulted in the advice that a fairly stringent cut should be introduced.

The Convener: Are you saying that, given that fish move across areas and boundaries, the cut has to be over the whole area because the biomass is low in the south part?

Dr Fernandes: That is correct. We are looking to see whether there are sub-populations of whiting within that large area—for example, in the northern North Sea compared with the southern North Sea—but that is a difficult process because it requires data to be collected from our international partners. Notwithstanding the scientific issues involved in examining that problem, relative stability comes into play. One would not want to split the whiting quotas up into northern and southern North Sea quotas and play with relative stability because everybody else would say, “Okay, then—relative stability is up for grabs, so let’s negotiate on other stocks.” Scotland’s position is usually quite good in regard to relative stability for many stocks, so it might not be a good idea to open up that discussion. I am afraid that that is an issue.

The Convener: That might be a matter of opinion.

Dr Fernandes: It might be.

Liam McArthur: The west coast situation was very much the focus of the concerns—not least in the committee—ahead of last year’s talks. Claims were made that closure of the west coast was averted at the negotiations but, in effect, the catch composition rules excluded most of the white-fish fleet from the area. A task force has been set up not only to oversee the emergency measures that have been put in place for the west coast but to consider the scientific advice. It would be interesting to know whether those emergency measures have worked. It may be too early to say, judging by the response to Alasdair Morgan’s question, but I would be interested to know what the Government’s assessment is at this stage. I would also be interested to know what input has been made into the scientific understanding of what has happened on the west coast, not least because, if no fishing vessels operate regularly off the west coast, the catch data and whatnot on

which the Government has been able to draw in other waters will not be available, I presume.

Nick Bailey: I can give you an update on those points. You asked whether the measures had worked yet, but it is too early to say. The outcome assessments this year reflect the 2008 data, so things that are happening in 2009 will not have fed into the system yet. Despite what is being said, there are still boats working on the west coast—boats operating on the shelf edge and so on—and, in some fisheries, they are doing okay.

On the task force’s work and the science input, two strands of work have just begun, but neither will deliver anything yet. One of them is a joint industry-science survey along the lines of the highly successful angler fish survey. It involves commercial charters of boats alongside the research vessels and employs scientists and fishermen working together. We have met the industry once already to discuss that and hope to meet again in November to firm up the detail, but we have agreed with the industry that the survey will take place in March next year, as that was judged to be the best time to do it. Therefore, it will be some time before the information from it begins to feed in.

We have commented on the seals issue on the west coast, but a number of other issues on the west coast could have an effect. The topography is different from the North Sea, as is its position in the Atlantic, so there could be many other environmental factors.

The second strand of the work involves some of the resource that was made available for the science forum, which is being put into a joint desk study of the west coast by several universities and scientific institutes to draw together all the information that we have, with a focus on demersal fish and on the usefulness of that information in informing policy. The study will take a while, but individuals are in place and work has begun on it. We expect something from it in the spring but, unfortunately, that will not really inform or help the December council.

Liam McArthur: The concern is the lag factor. When the Commission cites the scientific underpinning, it is not drawing on the evidence that you are gathering now, so the recommendations that it makes and the management structures that it puts in place are likely to ratchet up before there is an assessment of the effectiveness of the emergency measures or of the scientific underpinning that you undertake.

Nick Bailey: Setting aside the comments that I have already made, I am not saying that no other things are taking place on the west coast to enable us to make use of new material. For example, additional observers are available to the whole

process, managed by the Scottish Fishermen's Federation and funded by the Scottish Government. The material that they are gathering is adding to our data and can inform the process for the west coast. Our own scientists are involved in the development of a haddock management plan that we can suggest to the Commission as a better approach than the blanket 30 per cent bycatch rule that currently captures haddock. The new management plan provides fairly strict measures; it will not be easy, but it could unlock the species from the current rather crude blanket measure. We are investing time and effort in that plan, which will play into the December council.

My comments about what the task force and the science forum are doing should not colour the general picture. Quite a lot of effort is going on in the background. Paul Fernandes may wish to add some comments about what we are doing.

Dr Fernandes: Yes, I will pick up on the second part of the question. The west coast task force and its scientific component will largely focus on the why issue and what is happening on the west coast. The information on the status of the stocks is very much informed by our assessments, which are largely driven by surveys, unlike those in the North Sea, in which the mathematical models have various components to derive the estimates of spawning stock biomass, recruitment and fishing mortality. Assessments on the west coast have for some time relied much more on fishery-independent surveys, of which we carry out the large part. The reasons for that relate to the provenance of the fish catch data back in the 1990s, when difficulties associated with misreporting black landings and so on were such that the data were deemed unreliable, so we moved towards survey-based assessment. The fact that we do not get some of the information from the catching sector does not preclude our making assessments based on our surveys. By and large, the fishermen do not contest the findings that we have come up with for cod, haddock and whiting. The trends are certainly down and they accept that—for the west coast, at least.

Liam McArthur: That is your methodology. As I understand it, the recommendations from the Commission last year were based on landing data. If there is less activity I presume that the consequence of that going forward—fewer fish being landed on the west coast—means that we will end up with ever-decreasing quotas being set.

Dr Fernandes: Sorry?

Liam McArthur: As I understand it, the recommendations from the Commission last year were based at least in part on landing data and what was being landed out of the west coast. That may or may not be true and it may or may not be

the intention going forward, but the concern is that, if that is the case and there is less activity—I take the point that people are still operating in those waters—you will end up with fewer and fewer fish landed and therefore a recommendation for smaller quotas.

Nick Bailey: Yes, in an ever-decreasing spiral.

Liam McArthur: Has the Commission changed its view on that? Your methodology for a survey-based approach sounds fine, but if the Commission is adopting a different approach in its recommendations, that creates problems.

11:00

Nick Bailey: The Commission's position on the use of previous landings to influence what it suggests for TACs has been criticised so much by so many countries that it has started to move away from that and it now bases its decisions on a series of 12 different rules, depending on the available information. Rarely is a TAC now based simply on what was landed the previous time. Nevertheless, I take your point that, if the Commission were to base its judgment on that and activity were reduced, a TAC could be set that would not have any bearing on what stocks actually existed. That is a danger, but I am pretty sure that we have moved away from that.

Our judgment on what the Commission has suggested for haddock—it is sometimes hard to interpret exactly where the Commission has got its recommendations from—is that it has been based on the ICES advice of what would lead the stock back to the limit reference point. It is still a pretty big cut, but it has some structure to it.

Liam McArthur: There were concerns that the catch composition rule could not be operated. There are other ways of setting up catch composition rules, given the way in which the fishery is operated and the ways in which the species behave. Are you confident that we may be able to make progress on that this year?

Nick Bailey: We are into a mixed-fishery discussion. I mentioned earlier the long-term management plan for haddock, which will potentially unlock the way for a more sensible and refined debate than simply saying that we need a bycatch rule that affects all species. That work is under way and I am hopeful that there can be some movement on that. I reiterate, however, that it will not mean that there will suddenly be a lot of haddock. It will make things easier for those people who tend to rely for their livelihood mainly on haddock in their catches, but it cannot open the floodgates to everybody to go and fish haddock on the west coast. If it did, we would still face a real problem.

The Convener: We are running over time and still have a number of questions to ask. I remind members to be brief. Let us not go over ground that we have already covered.

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): May I take you on to mackerel? Will you explain to those of us whose constituencies, unlike that of Liam McArthur, are not surrounded by water what is meant by a TAC overshoot in mackerel?

Dr Fernandes: That happens largely in international waters, when the coastal states agree on a TAC and some of the signatory members—or non-signatory members, such as Iceland—take a catch that is in excess of that TAC. In the past year, the biggest culprit has been Iceland, which has taken in excess of 110,000 tonnes of mackerel over and above the agreed TAC. That has been the biggest problem of that kind.

Karen Gillon: I am tempted to ask what can be done about it, but the answer would probably be, “Not a lot.” Does such action play a part in reducing the overall TAC? If not, what is the scientific rationale for reducing the overall TAC?

Dr Fernandes: Such action plays a part in reducing the overall TAC because, ultimately, we have to factor in the fact that so many mackerel have been taken from what has traditionally been a pretty well-behaved stock—its abundance has been quite stable. I suspect that, if Iceland’s behaviour were to continue into the long term, we would end up with significant problems and the stock would be reduced significantly. In answer to the question, the cut in the TAC will be more severe than it would have been without those removals.

Karen Gillon: What discussions are taking place with Iceland about that?

Dr Fernandes: It is funny that you should ask that. It is not a scientific debate, but it is taking place right now in Cork.

Nick Bailey: Serious discussions are taking place, which will draw on scientific advice where that is appropriate, but it is not particularly a scientific issue.

Elaine Murray: In answer to questions from Alasdair Morgan, you spoke about the time it takes for measures to be implemented, and the fact that we cannot draw conclusions from one year to the next. I was concerned to read that the European Commission had decided that real-time closures and cod avoidance schemes were not working and that it is likely now to press ahead with reductions in kilowatt days, rather than allow the alternative of conservation credits. Is there any scientific basis for making that judgment so quickly after measures’ introduction?

Nick Bailey: I am not sure where you read that. The formal position is that this year member states were supplied with an effort pot, according to the effort management regime. If they thought that they could use alternative approaches to reducing cod mortality, they could do so without necessarily taking the full reduction in effort in days. Built into last year’s council regulation is a review process to judge how successful the schemes have been, which will take place in spring next year. I was not aware that the Commission had said that the measures were not working.

Elaine Murray: That is the advice that we have had.

Nick Bailey: I do not know whether it is the formal position, but I am surprised that the Commission has said that. There is still plenty of scope to present a case suggesting that something better is happening.

We have not talked much yet about conservation credits. The scheme includes a series of measures. Because they are implemented wholly within Scotland and are within the remit of a steering group, generally they are implemented quite quickly. With some of the measures that are in place—earlier you touched on selectivity—it is possible, in principle, for things to happen fairly quickly. One good example is the reduction in the number of discards or in the catching of undersized fish. It is more difficult to judge whether those measures are affecting the overall targets that the Commission has set.

As part of the discussion in the spring about how successful we have been, we as a country will have to present information showing how our catch—in this case, of cod—compares with what it would have been if our behaviour had been exactly in line with the prediction, which relates to the TAC plus the number of discards associated with that. We have been doing exactly that and such information will be fed into the process. Until that happens, it is not the Commission’s place to say that the schemes are not working. I was not aware that that was its current position; I was under the impression that it was prepared to wait and see what advice comes out of STECF when it considers the issue.

Elaine Murray: We may need to check the matter. There will be a report in the spring. How much time should elapse before a science-based judgment can be made on such issues?

Nick Bailey: Our great claim is that we can do things pretty quickly, because of the nature of real-time closures, so the Commission will expect STECF to produce the results quickly. We have already been positioning ourselves to provide some of the background evidence that will enable us to give an answer one way or the other. We

must remain open on what the outcome will be, but the results should come out pretty quickly in the spring and could inform next year's conservation credits, assuming that the scheme continues. The process usually starts at the beginning of February each year. Shortly after that, there should be information that will indicate what additional steps are required, whether we have been successful and how we can make a case to the Commission that the problem is other people's.

John Scott: You have probably dealt with my next question.

Members: Good.

The Convener: Are you sure?

John Scott: Yes—that will probably do me.

Liam McArthur: There has been a lot of focus, not just in the past year but over a number of years, on the environmental and economic madness of discards. Linked to the TACs and quotas for 2009, there is a requirement on member states to undertake trials of discard reduction. What has been done over the past few months and what observations can you make even at this early stage about the effectiveness of those measures?

Nick Bailey: I will start to answer that, and Paul Fernandes might want to add something.

Discards are generally fish that are taken on board but are unwanted for whatever reason—they may not be of commercial value or may be of commercial value but the vessel does not have sufficient quota. The key, therefore, is somehow to avoid catching those fish. We have talked about real-time closures, which is one way of doing that—going to places at sea where cod are not so numerous. Other methods include various technical measures. For species such as haddock and whiting, the use of square-mesh panels can be quite effective up to reasonably large fish, although it is less effective in the case of cod because they get so much bigger and the technical measures that need to be employed are even more stringent. Square-mesh panels are widely in use and have increased in size.

Various boats in Orkney and elsewhere have started to use nets that are directed at catching white fish but have very large meshes in the entrance in order to reduce cod catches. The trials of such gear have been quite promising. Throughout the year, there has been a series of trials of various gear to reduce cod bycatch, and we are in line to have several more between now and February, for which the charter agreements are just being sorted out.

For many years, we have monitored discard levels through observer trips. The picture is a

mixed one that depends on whether boats are targeting white fish or nephrops, and with which sea areas and species they are involved. Paul Fernandes recently completed an analysis that included something like 80 PowerPoint slides—we can provide you with a copy if you are interested, but it takes some reading. The analysis highlights important measures that are being taken in relation to the cod recovery plan in the North Sea. For the first three quarters of the year, we have seen marked reductions in discarding from the white-fish vessels compared with previous years. However, the observations are only as good as the quality or robustness of the observer programme—in other words, how representative it is of what is actually going on in the fleet as a whole.

That has been positive. The net effect—going back to the discussion of evidence—is that we appear to be on track to reduce our overall cod catch in line with what was required under the predictions and the regulation. So, there are some positive signs. Unfortunately, the situation is full of complexity and there is still some way to go with the nephrops gears. They are still catching quite high proportions of cod, haddock and whiting at a time when that is not a particularly sensible thing to be doing.

Dr Fernandes: You may have heard that the total available catch is quite often expressed as the total available landing and that an assumption of discarding goes into the forecasts, which is seen as an absurdity. The reason for that is the recognition that, unfortunately, because it is difficult to get compliance for various reasons, it is almost inevitable that there will be some discards in any catch. Increasingly, perhaps because of the economic conditions, the driver for that seems to have been the situation of high grading, whereby fishermen are trying to maximise the economic opportunities of cod and are, therefore, selecting only cod that have a high market value and are discarding those that have a lower market value.

11:15

Solutions to that would include some of the technical measures that Nick Bailey suggested. The latest idea, which is currently on trial, is the use of closed-circuit television. If we can demonstrate that the use of CCTV is a workable system that can show that there are no discards, and if fishermen are willing to take it on, we could show that there is not a compliance problem and fishermen could be given the portion that is forecast to be discarded, because it will not be discarded. The fear that any scientist or manager should have is that unless there is absolute compliance, the practice of discarding will continue. If you were to do the simple thing and

just give the discard portion back as part of the total allowable catch, the catch would be caught and the discard portion would be thrown out to sea again.

Liam McArthur: I know that Bill Wilson will cover this, but, historically, we have captured the data on discards a little more rigorously than some other member states. Can I take it from the way in which the regulation was framed last year that such evidence gathering is now being done in a more uniform fashion by all member states?

Dr Fernandes: It is getting better.

Nick Bailey: It is not fully there.

We have to be a bit careful about this. In Scotland, we have for a very long time been more rigorous in capturing data than have many other countries. The only point to which I would draw attention is the fact that we can sample only a very small proportion of the vessels in Scotland's overall bucket of effort. We have to be careful that we do not trumpet the success of our schemes only to be told, "Yes, you do 90 trips a year, which is more than anyone else in Europe, but look at all the fishing trips that you have. You should be increasing what you do even more." There are two sides to the story.

Bill Wilson: I was about to ask what evidence there is that the CCTV system was working, but I take it from what you have said that it is still being assessed.

Dr Fernandes: Very much so—it is a pioneering approach. I am not sure what you know about CCTV's track record, but the system comes from the western United States and Canada, where they have used it successfully for controlling discards in, and managing, long-line fisheries, where it is simple to use a camera to see the fish on the line as they come in one by one. The system has not been used in trawl fisheries. The jury is still out as to whether all the loopholes for getting around the system can be closed.

Bill Wilson: I suppose that on a long-line you can count the number of fish that are being brought in, whereas it is rather difficult to count an empty net of fish.

Dr Fernandes: Exactly. Only last week, I put to Mike Park the question that Bill Wilson asked. It will take some work with some of the fishery representatives to come up with a robust system that will allow us to be sure that fishermen are not discarding.

Nick Bailey: I have seen some of the footage from one of the first trips. Many of the boats now have quite sophisticated conveyor-belt systems for sorting in their fish houses. You can clearly see and identify the fish coming along the conveyor belts and there is some capacity to judge their

size. There is scope to use that material but, as Paul Fernandes said, we have to understand the ingenuity that might be used to circumvent the system and we have to be comfortable and confident that the system is robust.

Dr Fernandes: The advantage is that there is an appetite on both sides to try to use the system. Work will be done over the course of the next year to establish whether it is a viable solution.

Bill Wilson: At least we will avoid the civil liberties issues that we have with CCTV on land.

The Convener: ICES will say to us—it said this to us when we were in Brussels—that it bases its recommendations on the scientific evidence that is fed into it from people including Marine Scotland. Are you saying that, given that there seems to be a mismatch between what ICES recommends and some of the stuff that you are feeding in, ICES is getting its recommendations from elsewhere or is not using the evidence that you are putting in?

Nick Bailey: No. We contribute material—biological data—and people to all the meetings, so to pretend that we are different to ICES or STECF is rather silly. The scientists in Scotland, in the laboratory, participate in those various processes, and the advice is agreed on by consensus that is reached through argument, with everyone sitting around the table.

It would be dishonest to say that we always agree 100 per cent with what goes on. There are occasions when, frustrating as it might seem, we produce information with which we are comfortable and that we feel is good, but it does not quite meet the standard that is required in the international context and people argue against it. We try all the time to produce material that is completely robust and for which we can argue our case strongly, but from time to time, inevitably, that does not work. The same applies to other participating countries.

That happens particularly at this time of year, when, to some extent—as we indicated in our submissions—we change our hats. In the early part of the year, we try to provide advice on the state of the stocks to say, "This is how things are", but towards the end of the year, we are required to provide input to management, and we are asked specific questions along the lines of, "What would you do if such-and-such happened?" That requires different types of forecasting, some of which are new or are not covered by the ICES process.

The system of real-time closures is, in a sense, a forward-looking management approach that incorporates the idea of forecasting what the catches will be. It is not covered by the ICES process, so from time to time, our comments will appear to be slightly at odds with what ICES says. The material that goes in is a collective effort from

all the countries—it is the best data set that we can get, and ICES does not exclude particular pieces of information.

The Convener: Thank you very much for your attendance, gentlemen.

Karen Gillon: It would be useful if we could get a copy of the slides that Mr Bailey mentioned, even just for our records and for SPICe, as they might contain some useful facts.

Nick Bailey: Yes—the slides on discards. We can send those to the clerk. We have put the ACOM advice and other things on a CD; if you are interested, we can give several copies to the clerks.

The Convener: That would be very helpful. If you have any further supplementary information that you think would be useful, we would like to receive it before Wednesday 4 November, to inform our evidence session on 11 November, in which we will take evidence from the Scottish Fishermen's Federation and the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment.

That concludes the public part of today's meeting. I thank the press and the public for their attendance.

11:22

Meeting continued in private until 12:21.

Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice at the Document Supply Centre.

Members who wish to suggest corrections for the archive edition should mark them clearly in the report or send it to the Official Report, Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP.

The deadline for corrections to this edition is:

Friday 6 November 2009

PRICES AND SUBSCRIPTION RATES

OFFICIAL REPORT daily editions

Single copies: £5.00

Meetings of the Parliament annual subscriptions: £350.00

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS weekly compilation

Single copies: £3.75

Annual subscriptions: £150.00

Published in Edinburgh by RR Donnelley and available from:

Blackwell's Bookshop

**53 South Bridge
Edinburgh EH1 1YS
0131 622 8222**

Blackwell's Bookshops:

243-244 High Holborn
London WC1 7DZ
Tel 020 7831 9501

All trade orders for Scottish Parliament documents should be placed through Blackwell's Edinburgh.

And through other good booksellers

Blackwell's Scottish Parliament Documentation

Helpline may be able to assist with additional information on publications of or about the Scottish Parliament, their availability and cost:

Telephone orders and inquiries

**0131 622 8283 or
0131 622 8258**

Fax orders

0131 557 8149

E-mail orders, Subscriptions and standing orders

business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk

Scottish Parliament

All documents are available on the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.scottish.parliament.co.uk

For more information on the Parliament, or if you have an inquiry about information in languages other than English or in alternative formats (for example, Braille; large print or audio), please contact:

Public Information Service

The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

Telephone: 0131 348 5000

Fòn: 0131 348 5395 (Gàidhlig)

Textphone users may contact us on
0800 092 7100

We also welcome calls using the RNID
Typetalk service.

Fax: 0131 348 5601

E-mail: sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

We welcome written correspondence in any language.