



September 2022

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about sustainable fishing in British waters.

The Fisheries Act enshrines in law the Government's commitment to sustainable fishing through its objectives and fisheries statements and through the new legal commitment to produce Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) to restore our fish stocks to sustainable levels. The Act contains a 'bycatch objective' seeking to reduce the wasteful practice of discarding fish; an 'ecosystem objective' to minimise and, where possible, eliminate negative impacts on marine ecosystems; and a new 'climate change objective' which recognises and seeks to reduce the impact of fishing on the health of our oceans and our planet.

The UK is a global leader in protecting the ocean and our marine life across the UK, and 374 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) now protect 38% of UK waters. I am aware that these areas are all subject to planning and licensing regimes to ensure they are protected from damaging activities and further plans to manage fishing activity in them continue to be developed. The Government's £500 million Blue Planet Fund will help some of the world's poorest communities to protect the ocean from plastic pollution, overfishing and habitat loss. In August 2021, Ministers announced the first five programmes under the Blue Planet Fund totalling £16.2 million of funding.

The draft Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS) commits the UK Government and Devolved Administrations to work together to adopt an 'ecosystem-based approach' to fisheries that will underpin a vibrant, profitable fishing industry that is resilient to climate change. The JFS includes a list of proposed Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) that will be published by the UK Administrations. FMPs are a cornerstone of the Government's approach to fisheries management now that the UK has left the EU's Common Fisheries Policy.

I am aware that the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) has developed an ambitious programme for assessing sites and implementing byelaws to manage fishing activity in all English offshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). In inshore waters, 98 MPAs already have management in place to protect sensitive habitats from bottom towed fishing gear. I understand that the first four offshore byelaws are now in force and plans are in place to protect all offshore sites by the end of 2024, using powers in the Fisheries Act.

Byelaws are developed using an evidence-led process to determine what measures are required to protect sites. Site by site assessments are carried out to tailor management measures and to avoid unnecessary restrictions on fishing. Only fishing activities which could damage the protected features of an MPA require management, such as trawling on the seabed. I am assured that the MMO and Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities will always manage any fishing activity that is found to be negatively impacting the protected features of MPAs.

The MMO recently launched a call for evidence on its draft fisheries assessment for the next 13 offshore MPAs. Ministers are considering policies for large pelagic trawlers and flyseining, working with the industry to develop more robust management of the non-quota species which these vessels are targeting, as well as quota stocks.



Chris Heaton-Harris
Member of Parliament for Daventry
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
Tel: 020 7219 7048

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the UK and the EU recognises that the UK has sovereign control of its waters. During an adjustment period lasting 5 and a half years, there will be continued reciprocal access to each other's waters at levels commensurate to each party's share of fishing opportunities and, for non-quota stocks, at historic levels. This will allow fleets on both sides time to adapt to the new arrangements. At the end of the adjustment period, the UK will take back full control of its coastal waters and will have the sole right to determine access. From this point, access will be subject to annual negotiations alongside fishing opportunities.

As part of the Government's Action Plan for Animal Welfare, I know that Defra is considering a number of improvements that could be made to the welfare of farmed fish at the time of killing and asked the Animal Welfare Committee to update its 2014 Opinion on the welfare of farmed fish at the time of killing this year. I understand that their advice is expected this autumn.

Currently, Regulation 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing requires that farmed fish are spared avoidable pain, distress or suffering during their killing and related operations but does not include any further requirements. The Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015 makes it an offence for any person engaged in the restraint, stunning or killing of an invertebrate to cause avoidable pain, distress or suffering.

I would like to assure you that this is an issue I will continue to follow closely.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY