

# Brexit Position Statement: Implications of Brexit for Marine and Fisheries

The future health and sustainability of the marine environment and fisheries requires the development of a co-designed, common framework to deliver a new, world-leading, ecosystems-based and truly sustainable fisheries policy for NI and the UK.

## 1. Key points

- The sustainability of commercial fish stocks and fishing communities are inextricably linked to the health of our seas and the life found within it.
- The marine environment and commercial fish stocks are dynamic systems which do not respect political borders. To avoid negative environmental consequences, it is crucial to maintain, and where appropriate enhance existing legislation which addresses transboundary issues.
- NI must align with the UK commitment to deliver the 'Fisheries Objectives' presented on the face of DEFRA's new Fisheries Bill. During the transition period NI is required to contribute to producing a Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS) stating future policies for delivering the fisheries objectives.
- Maintaining future funding for nature conservation, sustainable fisheries management including research, enforcement and monitoring previously supported through EU funding programmes such as EMFF, LIFE+ and INTERREG is a priority in becoming a world leader in sustainable fisheries management.

## 2. Sustainable Fisheries – A new fisheries bill for Northern Ireland

- In November 2018, DEFRA's newly introduced Fisheries Bill states a commitment to the delivery of six 'Fisheries Objectives'. The objectives aim to deliver an ecosystem-based approach to future fisheries management, and in order to follow a common framework approach, are agreed by each of the four UK countries. Fisheries management in NI should be coherent with the rest of the UK and international environmental legislation.
- Before 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021, NI is required to deliver a Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS) outlining how the new fisheries objectives will be delivered in NI. It is essential that future, post-Brexit fisheries policy and legislation in NI is amended or introduced to specifically meet these objectives.
- The Fisheries Objectives are:
 

a) The sustainability objective	d) The scientific evidence objective
b) The precautionary objective	e) The discards objective, and
c) The ecosystem objective	f) The equal access objective

## 3. Sustainable Fisheries – An ecosystems-based approach

- The UK is committed to delivering an ecosystems-based approach to marine management:
  - International: OSPAR Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

- National: UK Marine Strategy Regulations (2010) state that the UK ‘must apply an ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities’.
  - The regulation defines ‘an ecosystem-based approach’ as one which: ensures that the collective pressure of human activities within the marine strategy area is kept within levels compatible with the achievement of good environmental status; and does not compromise the capacity of marine ecosystems to respond to human-induced changes.
- Quota allocations should be a transparent process with objective criteria based upon environmental, social and economic factors, and using best available scientific advice (ICES).
  - The Precautionary Principle – ‘on the basis of the best scientific advice available in the time-frame for decision-making: there is good reason to believe that harmful effects may occur to human, animal or plant health, or to the environment’ should be implemented, especially in data poor areas.
  - Achieve Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) for all fish stocks by 2020 by setting Total Allowable Catches (TAC) in line with scientific advice.
  - All vessels must be subject to a Vessel Monitoring System and/or independent observers. An effective Remote Electronic Monitoring system, using cameras and sensors, should be required on all vessels over ten metres in length; and where particular issues have been identified that require monitoring.
  - Establishment of appropriate enforcement mechanisms are required with infringements dealt with through effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions.
  - Reduction and, where possible, elimination of by-catch of non-target and protected species through continued development of selective fishing gears, exclusion devices and other measures when relevant such as real time closures. There needs to be a commitment to full documentation of catches.

#### 4. Sustainable Fisheries – Working together

- More than 100 species of UK’s commercial fish stocks straddle our borders. We therefore need both international and intra-UK cooperation to manage our shared stocks.
- High environmental standards must apply to all vessels working within UK territorial waters and our boats in international waters. It is vital to ensure active and meaningful stakeholder involvement throughout future policy development such as through the use of stakeholder advisory groups.
- We need an independent expert UK committee including NI members (equivalent to the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries - STECF) to represent the UK as an independent coastal state in future fisheries management decisions.
- The remit of the Loughs Agency (as a cross border body established under the Good Friday Agreement) in managing the cross-border Foyle and Carlingford Lough catchments may need to be extended as a mechanism to progress environmental protection measures and provide cooperative management with Ireland across a range of functions related to fisheries and marine management.

## 5. Who we are:

Nature Matters NI is a campaign for a nature friendly Brexit. Led by the NIEL Brexit Coalition we are working for more sustainable land use and fisheries, and better environmental protection for Northern Ireland.

The Northern Ireland Marine Task Force (NIMTF) is funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and is a coalition of environmental organisations campaigning for healthy productive seas. NIMTF leads the Marine and Fisheries element of the Nature Matters NI campaign. We also work closely with Greener UK and support their belief that leaving the EU is a pivotal moment to restore and enhance the UK's environment.

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