

19<sup>th</sup> August 2021

FOA Paul Davies MS, Chair of the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

Dear Paul,

Thank you for providing the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) with the opportunity to comment on the priorities for the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee across the next 6 months and the new term.

The Marine Conservation Society (MCS) is the UK's leading marine conservation charity. We work to ensure our seas are healthy, pollution-free and protected. Our vision is for seas full of life where nature flourishes and people thrive. We have actively been working in Wales to improve the health of Welsh seas for the past 30 years.

### **What do you think the Committee's strategic priorities should be over the next six months?**

Wales's recent departure from the European Union creates both opportunities and significant uncertainty around how we manage our seas and fisheries. Without swift action to bridge the gap and deliver meaningful legislation, the future of our fishing communities and our fragile marine ecosystems in Wales are at risk. During this next Senedd term, we need real and lasting change to sea fisheries policy, that delivers both sustainable fishing and recovers ocean health.

We recommend that, over the next 6 months:

- The Committee investigate as a matter of urgency why there is still delay to public consultation on the Assessing Welsh Fishing Activities project. The longer this work continues to be held up by Welsh Government, the greater the chance of nationally important wildlife and their habitats being irreversibly damaged.
- The Committee scrutinise the development of the Joint Fisheries Statement and Wales's input into the joint working of the four UK countries, to ensure the objectives of the Fisheries Bill are delivered and compatible with Wales-specific legislation and objectives (e.g. The Environment Act and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act).
- The Committee investigate how best to support the future production of sustainable shellfish aquaculture in Wales, in light of recent Brexit complications.
- The Committee investigate the Welsh Government's method of prioritisation of the implementation of new Fisheries Management Plans and encourage the production of a time bound strategy for these. These should include long-term management strategies for non-quota stocks.

## What do you think the Committee's longer-term objectives and priorities should be for the term of the sixth Senedd?

Over the longer term, the Committee should scrutinise the development of the Fisheries Bill for Wales, to ensure that environmental sustainability is at the heart of any new legislation. A new Act must build on the UK's shared ambition and commitment to:

- Deliver environmentally sustainable and fully documented fisheries by using (or including the use of) Remote Electronic Monitoring with cameras.
- Ensure fisheries and aquaculture play their part in reaching net zero\*.
- Create new opportunities for low carbon aquaculture.

\*The fishing sector is perhaps unique in being both affected by, and contributing to, climate change. An effective, climate-smart fishing strategy would reduce the carbon emissions that come directly from the UK fishing fleet and enhance marine biodiversity by reducing the damage from unsustainable fishing practices. Our new report, *Shifting gears: achieving climate-smart fisheries*, shows the extent to which the sector is adding to the climate and nature crises while also recognising the need for increased research to help fill knowledge gaps as part of a new climate-smart approach. Please find this report as an attachment to our response.

If you have any further questions with regards to our feedback above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

*C. Trotman*

Clare Trotman

**Policy and Advocacy Manager (Wales)**

**Marine Conservation Society**