

Debate Pack
22 June 2023
Number CDP 2023/0144

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Debate on the fishing industry

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Summary

A debate has been scheduled in the Commons Chamber for Thursday 29 June on the fishing industry. The subject for the debate has been chosen by the Backbench Business Committee.

1

Background

In [proposing the debate to the Backbench Business Committee](#), Alistair Carmichael commented there would be, “no shortage of things to be discussing”, and listed a number of areas of concern. These were:

- fisheries post brexit, including the review of fisheries post 2026, included in the UK and EU Trade and Co-operation agreement
- new medical certificate requirements for inshore fishers
- changes to visa requirements for foreign inshore fishing crews
- concerns about how the competing uses of the marine environment affect the fishing industry (the spatial squeeze).

Further information is provided on these topics below.

In addition, the following library briefings cover a range of further issues affecting the fishing industry:

- Library Debate Pack on [Post Brexit fisheries management](#) published 11 October 2022. This includes information on the [UK Seafood fund](#), set up by the government to support the fishing industry. The [transcript of the debate](#) which took place on 13 October 2022 is available in Hansard
- 1. Library Debate Pack on [the Inshore fishing fleet](#) published 13 June 2022. This includes information on requirements for [catch reporting](#) by inshore vessels, new requirements for [inshore vessel monitoring systems \(iVMS\)](#) and a new [vessel safety inspection regime](#). The [transcript of the debate](#) which took place on 14 June 2022 is available in Hansard
- Library Briefing on [UK Fisheries Statistics](#) published on 11 October 2022

1.1

Fisheries post Brexit

Fisheries management is devolved. Following Brexit, under [the Fisheries Act 2020](#), the UK Government is responsible for dividing the UK share of Total Allowable Catches (TACs) for each quota species between the devolved executives. TACs for each species in each fishing area are agreed by negotiation every year with the EU and other countries, such as Norway. The agreed TACs are then split between each devolved executive by the UK Government, to be allocated to individual vessels as individual quota.

Non-quota species, including most shellfish, are managed by each devolved executive. This includes fishing activity within 12 nautical miles (12nm) line from shore, where for the most part only UK registered and licenced vessels are allowed to fish.

In England inshore fisheries management is carried out by the regional [Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities](#), who are responsible for managing fisheries, licencing certain activities and enforcement. The Marine Management Organisation is responsible for managing fisheries, including quota distribution in England. It also has an enforcement role in the UK's Exclusive Economic Area (EEA), which extends to 200nm.

Fisheries negotiations

The UK Government published the [Outcomes of annual negotiations for UK fishing opportunities in 2021 and 2022 on shared stocks \(PDF\)](#) in March 2022. Agreement with the EU on [TACs for 2023](#) was reached in December 2022. In addition to these annual negotiations, the UK now also negotiates with a number of other countries. As [summarised by the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisation](#) (NFFO), the following took place for 2023:

- Trilateral consultations between the UK, Norway and the EU
- Negotiations between coastal states on the big, highly migratory pelagic stocks (Iceland, UK, Faroes, Norway, Greenland and the EU)
- Talks on a bilateral agreement between the UK and Faroes
- Talks towards a bilateral fisheries agreement between UK and Norway
- Separately, the EU has also held separate bilateral negotiations with Norway ¹

The NFFO summarised the outcomes as broadly positive, as follows:

Broadly speaking, the decisions taken this December keep us safely on the road to sustainable fisheries management, whilst reaffirming the importance of food security, thriving fishing businesses and coastal communities.²

¹ NFFO, [2022 Roundup and Looking Forward to 2023](#), 20 December 2022

² NFFO, [2022 Roundup and Looking Forward to 2023](#), 20 December 2022

Joint Fisheries Statement and Fisheries Management Plans

A [Joint Fisheries Statement](#) (JFS) was published by UK fishery authorities in November 2022, as provided for in the [Fisheries Act 2020](#). The purpose of the JFS is set out in the document as follows:

The JFS sets out the policies of the fisheries policy authorities for achieving, or contributing to the achievement of, the Act's eight fisheries objectives and forms part of the [UK Fisheries Management and Support Framework](#) [this sets out how the devolved administrations have agreed to work together on fisheries]. The JFS sets out the ambition of the UK to continue delivering world class, sustainable management of fisheries in line with those objectives and how it will do so.

The JFS defines how the fisheries policy authorities have understood the fisheries objectives and how we will apply them to fisheries policy. We have also identified through the document where each of the objectives applies to any given policy, noting that, due to the inter-linked nature of the objectives, one policy will often address several objectives.³

The Fisheries Act also includes provisions for the introduction of [Fisheries Management Plans](#) covering both quota and non-quota species, (the later are species that do not fall within the remit of the EU Commons Fisheries Policy). [A list of proposed Fisheries Management Plans](#), also introduced under the Fisheries Act 2020, for 43 different stocks (to be agreed between 2023 and 2028) has also been published. [Six 'front runner' plans](#) are currently in the process of being developed.

Review of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement: fisheries

[Agreement between the UK and the EU](#) on trade was reached in December 2020. Heading Five of Part Two of the [UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement](#) (TCA) covers fisheries.

Under the agreement 25% overall of the existing EU quota in UK waters will be transferred to the UK over a 5 ½ year period to 30 June 2026. Specific percentages are set out for each shared fishing stock. During this period, mutual access to each other's waters continues under a licencing system for fishing vessels.

The TCA also included a review clause for fisheries in Article 510. This clause states that the parties will review the implementation of the fisheries provisions four years after the end of the adjustment period. The adjustment

³ Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (Northern Ireland), The Scottish Government, and Welsh Government, [Joint Fisheries Statement, 6 December 2022](#)

period ends on 30 June 2026.⁴ The review will consider “whether arrangements, including in relation to access to waters, can be further codified and strengthened.”

Paragraph 4 of Article 510 sets out that the review shall allow for an evaluation, in relation to the previous years, of:

- (a) the provisions for access to each other's waters under Article 500;
- (b) the shares of TACs set out in Annexes 35, 36 and 37;
- (c) the number and extent of transfers as part of annual consultations under Article 498(4) and any transfers under Article 498(8);
- (d) the fluctuations in annual TACs;
- (e) compliance by both Parties with the provisions of this Heading and the compliance by vessels of each Party with the rules applicable to those vessels when in the other Party's waters;
- (f) the nature and extent of cooperation under this Heading; and
- (g) any other element the Parties decide, in advance, through the Specialised Committee on Fisheries.⁵

In addition to the specific provision on fisheries above, Article 776 of the TCA provides that the parties will jointly review the implementation of the Agreement as a whole five years after its entry into force.

As part of the agreement there are regular meetings of the UK and EU Specialised Committee on Fisheries. The Committee publishes [Agendas and Minutes](#).

1.2 Fitness certification for inshore fishers

A requirement for inshore fishers to have a medical certificate will be in force from 30 November 2023. The government has introduced the proposal, [after consultation fishing vessel owners and fishers](#), to meet international law requirements.

⁴ [Trade and Cooperation Agreement](#), Annex 38, para 1

⁵ [UK EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement](#) December 2020

The requirement originates from the [International Labour Organization \(ILO\) Work in Fishing Convention](#), which came into force internationally on 16 November 2017. Known as ILO C188, this convention was transposed into UK law via [The Merchant Shipping \(Work in Fishing Convention\) \(Medical Certification\) Regulations 2018](#).

The phased approach means that all inshore fishers require a medical certificate from 30 November 2023, 5 years after the legislation came into force. Offshore fishers were required to obtain a health certificate as of 30 November 2019.

Along with introducing medical certification the government is allowing for [“Grandfather Rights” \(GFRs\)](#) for existing fishers. GFRs allow for some of those who have a medical condition and may not meet the medical standards in [MSN 1886](#), but do not pose an immediate risk to safety, to continue working.

The MCA guidance on the certification provides the reasons for the measures, which is to protect fishers themselves and others:

You may work a long way from medical facilities. This could suddenly put you at risk if you become ill at sea. Even working relatively close to shore, it may take more time to raise the alarm or access emergency medical treatment. If you become ill when working alone, you may not be able to call for help or reach medical assistance.

Some conditions will reduce your ability to undertake the strenuous physical activity involved in fishing, and a medical certificate will make you aware of those conditions. If you're not able to perform your duties properly because you have been taken ill, others working on the vessel or the vessel itself may be put at risk.⁶

In a [press release from January 2023](#), the MCA state that fisherman must have a “suitable level of health” because “working on the water means you are further away from medical facilities and treatment”.

Stakeholder concerns

The requirement for a medical fitness certificate has received opposition from inshore fishers. A [BBC News article](#) from 5 April 2023 reports the opinion of an inshore fisherman from Whitstable in Kent, who “estimated about 50% of workers would fail the medical examinations.” Similarly, a National Federation of Fishermen’s Organisations ([NFFO letter to the Transport Secretary](#)), Mark Harper, on 30 March 2023 suggests that the new regulations are “an existential threat to hundreds of livelihoods.”

On grandfathering rights, the NFFO highlighted the MCA’s “reluctance to apply workable grandfather rights for single-handed vessels” in their critique

⁶ MCA, [Your certificate of medical fitness questions answered](#), 26 May 2023

of the new regulations. In their [Fishermen's Medical Examination Summary Guide](#), the NFFO argue that if existing fishers have any one of a list of illnesses/conditions, their work prospects will be limited:

Current MCA policy will mean it is likely that if you obtain a medical fitness certificate, it will be restricted and will not allow you to undertake lone working, such as single-handed fishing or lone watch keeping on larger vessels.⁷

The list of conditions can be found on page 3 of the NFFO's [Fishermen's Medical Examination Summary Guide](#).

Potential Exemptions

The NFFO and the New Under Ten Fishermen's Association (NUFTA) have called for the government to fully exempt inshore fisherman from the requirement to obtain a medical fitness certificate.

[Regulation 14](#) of The Merchant Shipping (Work in Fishing Convention) (Medical Certification) Regulations 2018 gives the Secretary of State for Transport the power to exempt inshore fishers from the medical certificate requirements.

In a letter to the Transport Secretary, the NFFO [stated](#) that the decision not to exempt inshore fishers is “as baffling as it is disappointing.”

Similarly, [NUFTA have asked](#) that:

Consideration be given to restoring the natural exemption given to those working on fishing vessels under 24 metres in length, inshore, in mainly daylight trips under 72 hours' duration port to safe haven.⁸

1.3 Visas for foreign workers on inshore fishing vessels

Visa requirements for people coming to work in the UK apply to anyone working in the UK's territorial waters, which extend [12 nautical miles off the coast](#).

The UK fishing fleet has a significant reliance on foreign crew. [In one survey carried out in 2021](#), over one third (36%) of workers were foreign nationals. The figure was 61% for Northern Irish vessels. While owners and skippers in the sample were overwhelmingly British, a majority of deckhands were from countries such as the Philippines, Ghana and Latvia.

⁷ NFFO, [Fishermen's Medical Examination Summary Guide \[website visited 28 June 2023\]](#)

⁸ NUFTA, NUTFA writes to Ministers over “ill-conceived” MCA Medical Certificate, 14 May 2023

Visas for offshore fishing crew

Vessels operating outside UK territorial have an exemption under [section 8 of the Immigration Act 1971](#), sometimes known as a ‘transit visa’. This allows foreign workers to transit through the UK for 48 hours without a visa before the board an offshore fishing vessel. The International Transport Workers’ Federation [regards this as a loophole](#) that allows migrant workers to be exploited, but the government [has defended it as “perfectly legitimate”](#).

The Financial Times published an investigation, *The Fishermen*, on 15 June 2023 [subscription required]. This highlighted concerns about how the [“UK fishing industry has come to rely on low-paid workers employed through a little-understood immigration loophole”](#).

Work visa requirements for inshore fishing crew

The legal framework for inshore fishers’ visa requirements is complex, as set out by government body Seafish in [Working on UK fishing vessels: the legal framework](#). However, [Home Office policy guidance](#) has long stated that work visas are required if vessels are operating wholly or mainly in UK waters. The UK Government says that in the past many inshore vessels have been [“incorrectly relying on transit visas rather than work visas to crew their boats”](#).

[Section 43 of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022](#)<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2023/283/regulation/3/made-regulation-3-a> covers working in UK waters and was introduced by the government to “clarify” its long-standing position on work visa requirements. It was due to come into force in October 2022, but the government delayed commencement by six months to allow the industry more time to come into [“full compliance with the UK immigration system”](#) (PDF). Section 43 was instead [commenced from 12 April 2023](#).

The tighter visa rules for inshore vessels have more of an impact in certain parts of the country. Fishing businesses based on the west coast of Scotland, for example, [would have to travel much further to leave UK waters](#) because the 12-mile limit only begins beyond the Hebrides. Some species, such as prawns, are also easier to catch inshore.

Skilled Worker visas and the shortage occupation list

Fishing crew that need visas to work on inshore vessels may be eligible for a Skilled Worker visa. The [list of eligible occupations](#) includes skippers, engineers, and deckhands with at least three years’ experience if working on vessels measuring nine metres or longer. Deckhands had not been eligible at all before [April 2021](#).

However, there is what Fishing News [describes as a “draconian” requirement](#) for applicants to speak English to qualify for a visa. This is seen as a barrier for deckhands. A spokesperson for the Fishermen’s Welfare Alliance told the newspaper: “getting fishermen through the B1 English language requirement is now a big issue. Crew Services has 325 non-UK crew on its books, of which just six have the B1 English language certificate”.

In response to industry concerns, in May 2023, the Home Office announced that fishing jobs already eligible for sponsorship would be [added to the shortage occupation list from the summer](#). This means lower visa fees — although no exemption from other costs, such as the Immigration Skills Charge — and the right to sponsor workers at a minimum salary of £20,960 rather than the £26,200 currently required.

The Home Secretary has also written to industry leaders [offering practical support with the Skilled Worker application process \(PDF\)](#). This includes extra English language testing capacity, a dedicated point of contact in UK Visas and Immigration and expedited visa processing (8-10 days rather than 15 working days). Seafish has also [commissioned guidance to help businesses navigate the process](#).

A debate took place in the House of Commons on [visas for the inshore fishing industry](#) on 23 May. Introducing the debate, Jim Shannon called for English testing to be relaxed for fishing crew:

The Home Secretary has kindly offered a package of help designed to aid the transition to skilled visas. That is welcome, but if I could push that offer of help just a little further, this is the crux of what I would ask for: to recognise that the highly skilled people from around the world who are already part of our fishing communities do not have to have the academic background that enables them to pass B1 level reading and writing. After all, fishing is something we learn in a boat, not in a classroom.⁹

Members specifically called during the debate for a less stringent English language test. In his response [Robert Jenrick, Minister for Immigration, said](#) he would consider the proposals but there were wider policy issues that needed to be considered:

I assure him that I will take that request away and give it careful consideration. If there is any further information that he or the representative bodies would like to submit to us, I would be happy to consider that. But I think he understands the principles on which the decision is taken and that it is not an easy decision to give special treatment to one particular sector when others in the country would like similar treatment. Our overall policy is the right one. We want people to have a good degree of English if they are coming here for sustained periods or on a route to settlement.¹⁰

⁹ HC Deb 23 May 2023 c185WH

¹⁰ HC Deb 23 May 2023 c185WH

1.4

Spatial Squeeze

Fishing organisations have expressed concerns about the combined impact of marine protection polices and net zero polices on the fishing industry.

The NFFO and the Scottish Fishermen’s Organization (SFO) published a report [Spatial Squeeze in Fisheries](#) in June 2022. This concluded that sector is experiencing “spatial squeeze”, with traditional fishing grounds under increasing competition from other sectors. The report summarised the multiple polices affecting the marine environment:

Established sectors such as fishing, aquaculture, extraction of marine aggregates, oil and gas production, and ports and shipping, now exist alongside new and emerging sectors such as renewable energy (wind, wave and tidal). The target to achieve Net Zero by 2050 – and by 2045 in Scotland – together with recent disruptions to other energy supplies, provides an incentive for increased deployment of marine renewable energy technologies. In addition, the need to ensure protection of marine habitats and species and targets to protect 30% of the marine environment by 2030 are leading to increased designation of protected areas and associated restrictions on activities.¹¹

Highly Protected Marine Areas

A Government commissioned [review into Highly Protected Marine Areas \(HPMA\)](#), the Benyon Review, was published in June 2020. This concluded that some existing Marine Protected Areas¹² should be fully protected from fishing activity by an HPMA designation. The review found “that HPMA are an essential component of the Marine Protected Areas network, and government should introduce them into Secretary of State waters”.¹³

The Review’s recommendations included that HPMA should be defined as “areas of the sea that allow the protection and recovery of marine ecosystems”. It proposed that extractive, destructive and depositional uses should be banned, including fishing, and only non-damaging activities allowed in HPMA. The review also concluded that that implementation should start with at least five pilot sites.¹⁴

The [NFFO was highly critical of the proposals](#) for HPMA and raised concerns about potential impacts on coastal communities:

The report downplays the benefits of the existing large network in order to justify a new set of areas that would exclude all fishing activities. In order to

¹¹ NFFO, [Spatial Squeeze in Fisheries](#), June 2022

¹² Marine Protected Areas in the UK include Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ), international designations such as Ramsar and smaller more local Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSI).

¹³ [Defra, Benyon Review into Highly Protected Marine Areas, 8 June 2020](#)

¹⁴ [Defra, Benyon Review into Highly Protected Marine Areas, 8 June 2020](#)

identify new sites, it seeks to pit a coalition of conservation, recreation and tourism interests against existing marine users, including small scale inshore fishing communities.¹⁵

The [Joint Nature Conservation Committee \(JNCC\), \(the statutory nature adviser to the UK Government and devolved administrations\)](#), is currently in the process of implementing pilots. Defra carried out a [consultation on five proposed pilot sites](#) in England which closed in September 2022. Following this, having reviewed responses, the Government announced in February 2023 only [three of would go ahead](#) – one inshore (Allonby Bay) and two offshore (North East of Farnes Deep and Dolphin Head). These will be designated by July 2023. The proposals for the other two sites (Inner Silver Pit South offshore and Lindisfarne onshore) were not taken forward having considered views on the socio-economic impact of the proposals.

The [Scottish Government has also committed](#) to delivering HPMA's and set a target of 10% of Scottish waters to be designated as HPMA. Conservation groups in Scotland [have welcomed the proposals](#). However, there is strong opposition from the Scottish fishing sector to the proposals. Further information on the proposals in Scotland and the ongoing debate on HPMA's can be found in the Scottish Parliament Information Service, [Highly Protected Marine Areas FAQs](#) published May 2023.

Marine spatial planning for offshore wind

The Fisheries All-Party Parliamentary Group published a report, [Fishing in a Changing Space](#) in January 2022. This focused on the impact of marine spatial planning (MSP) for offshore wind on fisheries. It set out a number of recommendations to address concerns from the fishing industry:

- Apply the precautionary principle to all marine plans and activities, not just fisheries.
- Link up all Government departments, Parliamentary bodies, and statutory agencies involved in MSP to avoid siloing and minimise the risk of cumulative impacts.
- Fund and otherwise facilitate the fishing industry to collect comprehensive data on where fishing takes place in UK waters, as a vital first step towards a more spatial approach to fisheries management.
- Establish a statutory adviser or intermediary to represent the fishing industry in MSP consultations.
- Ensure that fishers are consulted as early as possible in MSP, leasing, licensing, and development processes, via appropriate channels and with accessibility in mind.

¹⁵ [Fishing Daily, Benyon Review a 'Hammer Blow' for Fishing Communities – NFFO, 8 Jun 2020](#)

- Encourage consultation and feedback processes to continue after planning decisions have been made.
- Establish a clear regulatory regime to overcome insurance and liability concerns which are acting as barriers to the fishing industry exploring whether co-location with offshore infrastructure is feasible.¹⁶

¹⁶ Fisheries APPG, [Fishing in a Changing Space, January 2022](#)

2 Parliamentary material

2.1 Debate

Westminster Hall debate – [Inshore Industry Fishing Crews: Visas](#)

HC Deb 25 May 2023 | Vol 733 c185WH-

Westminster Hall debate - [Total Allowable Catches: Fisheries Negotiations](#)

HC Deb 18 January 2023 | Vol 726 c120WH-

2.2 PQs

[Marine Animals: Fishing Catches](#)

Asked by: Lloyd, Tony

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the level of compliance with the legal requirement for fishing vessels to report marine mammal bycatch.

Answering member: Mark Spencer | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The Government recognises that accidental bycatch in fisheries is one of the greatest threats faced by sensitive marine species such as cetaceans, and we remain fully committed to tackling this issue.

The UK introduced new rules in 2021 making it a mandatory requirement under fishing vessel licence conditions for fishers to report any marine mammal bycatch to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO). On the introduction of this requirement, communications were sent out by Defra, the Devolved Administrations and the MMO to ensure that industry understood the new obligations. MMO is planning to communicate again with fishers this summer in order to ensure that rules are clear, and skippers comply with requirements. Responsibility for enforcing licence conditions in Scotland and Northern Ireland is a matter for the Devolved Administrations.

HC Deb 19 June 2023 | PQ 188846

Shipping: Inspections

Asked by: Antoniazzi, Tonia

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 24 May to Question 185942 on Shipping: Inspections, what steps his Department is taking to shorten the time taken by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency to undertake surveys and safety inspections on fishing vessels for first time applicants.

Answering member: Mr Richard Holden | Department: Department for Transport

All surveys on fishing vessels require a full check of compliance against Statutory requirements. As these requirements are safety related, all areas of compliance are required to be checked prior to issuing a certificate, the scope of the survey cannot be reduced.

Waiting times around the country for a survey vary depending on the time of year and local demand for this activity. The MCA work closely with applicants to arrange a convenient time and consider other external factors such as tide times.

In 2022, the MCA carried out over 1200 inspections on small fishing vessels and remains committed to reducing fatalities within the sector.

Significant time savings in completing a survey can however be made when a vessel is properly prepared in advance of surveyor attendance.

For this reason, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency have produced guidance on how to prepare a vessel for survey. This guidance, which is available online, is of particular value to first time applicants who may be unfamiliar with the requirements and the survey process and if followed will ensure their survey is completed in the most efficient timescale. Links to this guidance along with other useful information related to their vessel is sent to owners of small fishing vessels when they request a survey.

HC Deb 12 June 2023 | PQ 187404

Fishing Vessels: Monitoring

Asked by: Wilson, Sammy

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions the Marine Management Organisation had with Maritime

Systems Ltd to resolve issues which led to removal of type approval for that company's inshore vessel monitoring systems.

Answering member: Mark Spencer | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

All four I-VMS device suppliers were informed of the outcome of the independent testing and given the opportunity to meet with the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and its independent tester to discuss the results.

All suppliers were also given an opportunity to provide the MMO with proposals to fix the issues identified through the testing. The MMO was clear that if suppliers did not provide a plan, or if the MMO was unable to accept the plan, then Type Approval for the device would be removed.

The decision to grant or revoke a devices Type Approval status sits with the MMO.

The decision to revoke the Maritime Systems device Type Approval status was taken as the device submitted for Independent Testing by Maritime Systems did not meet the technical specification for Type Approval. The fix plan provided by Maritime Systems did not give the MMO the necessary confidence that the numerous and significant issues with the device could be fixed.

I and my officials continue to regularly engage with the MMO to ensure the successful rollout of I-VMS to the English under 12m fleet.

HC Deb 09 June 2023 | PQ 187136

Fishing Vessels: Monitoring

Asked by: Wilson, Sammy

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions the Marine Management Organisation had with suppliers of inshore vessel monitoring systems other than Maritime Systems Ltd before deciding on type approval.

Answering member: Mark Spencer | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The current I-VMS Project that facilitates access to U12 fishers in England, to secure an I-VMS device, did so through a 'Type Approval' process. This process required suppliers of I-VMS devices to demonstrate that their device met the I-VMS Functional Technical Specification, which included agreeing to Requirements of Participation.

All prospective suppliers were invited to engagement workshops ahead of any formal decision making relating to the approval of their devices' Type Approved status.

HC Deb 09 June 2023 | PQ 187137

Fishing Vessels: Equipment

Asked by: Wilson, Sammy

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate she has made of the cost to the public purse of financially supporting fishers to secure suitable, replacement devices for equipment which has had type approval withdrawn.

Answering member: Mark Spencer | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Fishers who purchased a Maritime Systems device and their industry representatives are being kept directly informed, and have been provided with guidance, including being signposted to further support from the Marine Management Organisation.

The costs associated with supporting fishers and re-starting the I-VMS Project is still being assessed.

HC Deb 09 June 2023 | PQ 187135

Fishing Vessels: Monitoring

Asked by: Wilson, Sammy

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment the Marine Management Organisation has made of the impact on fishermen of removal of the type approval for inshore vessel monitoring systems by the Maritime Systems Ltd.

Answering member: Mark Spencer | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Fishers who purchased a Maritime Systems device and their industry representatives are being kept directly informed, and have been provided with guidance, including being signposted to further support from the Marine Management Organisation.

The costs associated with supporting fishers and re-starting the I-VMS Project is still being assessed.

HC Deb 09 June 2023 | PQ 187134

Fishing Vessels: Monitoring

Asked by: Wilson, Sammy

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions she has had with the Marine Management Organisation on the decision to remove type approval for inshore vessel monitoring systems provided by Maritime Systems Ltd.

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what reasons the Marine Management Organisation has given for removing type approval for inland vessel monitoring systems from Maritime Systems Ltd.

Answering member: Mark Spencer | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

All four I-VMS device suppliers were informed of the outcome of the independent testing and given the opportunity to meet with the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and its independent tester to discuss the results.

All suppliers were also given an opportunity to provide the MMO with proposals to fix the issues identified through the testing. The MMO was clear that if suppliers did not provide a plan, or if the MMO was unable to accept the plan, then Type Approval for the device would be removed.

The decision to grant or revoke a devices Type Approval status sits with the MMO.

The decision to revoke the Maritime Systems device Type Approval status was taken as the device submitted for Independent Testing by Maritime Systems did not meet the technical specification for Type Approval. The fix plan provided by Maritime Systems did not give the MMO the necessary confidence that the numerous and significant issues with the device could be fixed.

I and my officials continue to regularly engage with the MMO to ensure the successful rollout of I-VMS to the English under 12m fleet.

HC Deb 09 June 2023 | PQ 187132; PQ 187133

Fishing Vessels: Monitoring

Asked by: Hendry, Drew

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions her Department has had with the Marine Management Organisation on increasing the number of vessel monitoring systems approved for use by fishing vessels under 12 meters in length.

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions her Department has had with the Marine Management Organisation on the potential cost to the public purse of having one Inshore Vessel Monitoring System approved for use for fishing vessels under 12 meters in length.

Answering member: Mark Spencer | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Defra Ministers and officials have had regular contact with the Marine Management Organisation on the delivery of iVMS devices to under 12m vessels in England.

The MMO announced the revocation of 'Type Approval' for two iVMS devices (Maritime Systems Ltd MS44 device and from the Satlink Nano) on the 19 May 2023. However, two devices (Fulcrum Nemo and Succorfish SC2), retain 'Type Approval'.

All fishers are being contacted directly to make them aware of how this affects them. Fishers will be financially supported to secure suitable, replacement devices.

HC Deb 05 June 2023 | PQ 186873; PQ 186874

Shipping: Inspections

Asked by: Antoniazzi, Tonia

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to shorten the time taken by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency to undertake surveys and safety inspections on fishing vessels.

Answering member: Mr Richard Holden | Department: Department for Transport

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) monitor the expiry dates for all small fishing vessel certificates. The MCA allows owners of small fishing vessels to book their renewal inspection up to 6 months before their certificate expires and still retain the anniversary date of the certificate.

The MCA send the owner/operator a reminder letter five months prior to their certificate expiring to prompt and encourage them to book an inspection well in advance of their certificate expiry date and to ensure there is no lapse in validity of the certificate that would affect their ability to commercially fish.

The MCA includes links to guidance within the reminder letter on how to prepare for your survey, reducing the length of time to complete the survey process.

HC Deb 24 May 2023 | PQ 185942

Fishing Vessels

Asked by: Smith, Henry

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that pelagic supertrawlers licensed to fish in UK waters are fulfilling their legal duty to report marine mammal bycatch to the Marine Management Organisation.

Answering member: Mark Spencer | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The UK introduced new rules in 2021 making it a mandatory requirement under fishing vessel licence conditions for fishers to report any marine mammal bycatch to the MMO. On the introduction of this requirement, communications were sent out by Defra, the Devolved Administrations and the MMO to ensure that industry understood the new obligations. Responsibility for enforcing licence conditions in Scotland and Northern Ireland is a matter for the Devolved Administrations.

The Sea Mammal Research Unit have carried out monitoring of pelagic trawlers targeting herring and mackerel for a number of years and reported no bycatch of marine mammals in these fisheries in recent years, whilst other sections of the UK pelagic fleet are working on bycatch mitigation projects to reduce the likelihood of these events occurring more broadly.

HC Deb 15 May 2023 | PQ 183697

Shipping: Conditions of Employment

Asked by: Saville Roberts, Liz

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential impact on the number of seafarers working in the UK of the

requirement for seafarers to have either ENG1 or ML5 medical certificates in order to continue working at sea after November 2023; what recent discussions he has had with organisations representing seafarers on the requirement for seafarers to have either ENG1 or ML5 medical certificates; what steps he is taking to support seafarers who will be required to obtain either ENG1 or ML5 medical certificates; and what steps he is taking to raise awareness among seafarers.

Answering member: Mr Richard Holden | Department: Department for Transport

The main intended outcome, given that the risk level of commercial fishing in the UK is estimated to be 100 times greater than the general workforce, is to ensure that those in the industry are not likely, because of a medical condition, to put themselves in danger, or put others in danger in coming to rescue them.

The requirement for a medical certificate brings fishing into line with all other maritime sectors, and indeed other transport sectors, and all seafarers other than fishers have been required to hold a medical certificate for many years.

The Department for Transport is particularly mindful of those already working in the sector, and this is why we have put Grandfather Rights in place. No-one in the industry has yet been refused a ML5 medical fitness certificate by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency's (MCA) medical assessors.

The MCA has extensively engaged with industry on this over many years, including through a public consultation. The MCA has written to those in the sector with information and published guidance on www.gov.uk, including a Q&A addressing the most common concerns. The MCA has also been working with the Fishermen's Mission to help deliver the message on quaysides, as well as through MCA surveyors.

Any fisher concerned or uncertain about how to obtain a medical certificate can contact the Maritime and Coastguard Agency's Medical Administration Team who can advise on the process to follow.

HC Deb 11 May 2023 | PQ 183927

[Fisheries: Recruitment](#)

Asked by: Carmichael, Mr Alistair

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to help increase the number of fishermen.

Answering member: Mark Spencer | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Through our UK Seafood Fund, we are investing up to £10 million to support projects that will develop new courses and improve the quality of current courses to attract new entrants and upskill existing workers. In our first funding round, we awarded just over £1 million with nearly half of the funding allocated to Scotland.

In Shetland, we awarded just over £186,000 to the University of Highlands and Islands that will partner with industry and schools to pilot courses aimed at introducing 13 to 16 year-olds to the seafood sector and seafood careers and help 16 to 18 year-olds transition into the seafood industry. The courses will also be made available to new adult entrants.

A second funding round, which will provide further funding to improve the quality and accessibility of training facilities is open until 19 May and I would encourage applications. More details can be found here: [UK Seafood Fund: Skills and Training Scheme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/uk-seafood-fund-skills-and-training-scheme)

HC Deb 09 May 2023 | PQ 183341

Total Allowable Catches

Asked by: Offord, Dr Matthew

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her Department's policies of the advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas on total allowable catches; and whether her Department has sought to follow that advice in fishing negotiations with (a) the EU, (b) Norway and (c) the North-East Atlantic coastal states.

Answering member: Mark Spencer | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The UK has advocated in all those negotiations an approach towards setting Total Allowable Catches (TACs) that is founded on the best available scientific advice including from the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) on achieving Maximum Sustainable Yield. The Government will publish a full assessment of the number of TACs set consistent with ICES advice in early 2023 and once all annual negotiations have concluded.

HC Deb 16 January 2023 | PQ 108161

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News items

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16 June 2023

[UK government faces legal challenge over visa system for migrant fishers](#)

Home Office press release

23 May 2023

[Seafood sector jobs to be added to the Shortage Occupation List](#)

Marine Management Organisation press release

18 May 2023

[MMO announces the results of I-VMS device testing](#)

Sea News

17 May 2023

[UK government fails to prepare for own visa rule change, risking fishing crew paying the price](#)

Aberdeen Press and Journal

20 April 2023

[UK response to visa rule concerns branded an 'insult' to Scottish fishermen](#)

Guardian

21 March 2023

[UK fishing vessels 'underreporting' whale, dolphin and porpoise bycatch](#)

Scotsman

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[New marine protected area plan requires 'radical rethink', says fishing group](#)

Scotsman

16 February 2023

[Plans to designate at least 10% of Scotland's seas as Highly Protected Marine Areas are the 'biggest threat to the north-east fishing industry for decades'](#)

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs press release

10 February 2023

[Fishing industry nets new funding to train the next generation](#)

Seafood Source

21 December 2022

[UK seafood industry secures additional GBP 282 million in fishing opportunities](#)

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