Securing the Benefits

The joint UK response to the Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit Net Benefits report on the future of the fishing industry in the UK

Executive Summary
Securing the Benefits

The joint UK response to the Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit Net Benefits report on the future of the fishing industry in the UK

Executive Summary
“The fishing industry is an important part of the UK economy”;

These are the words of the Prime Minister in the foreword to the Strategy Unit Report *Net Benefits*. He went on to say ‘I look forward to a time when we can eat cod, hake and other fish that have been harvested by a profitable and sustainable UK fishing industry working in harmony with the environment’. This joint response to *Net Benefits* from the four Fisheries Administration in the UK sets out how we are going to achieve that.

On 7 March the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations published their shared framework for delivering sustainable development in “One Future – Different Paths”. That defined the overall goal of sustainable development as being to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the quality of life of future generations. It also set out five key principles to be applied to ensure that new policies are sustainable.

The same thinking and principles underpin this response to *Net Benefits*. In particular, the emphasis on ensuring that our future approach to the fishing industry places it fully in the context of the health of the wider marine environment and that we put the industry on a path to a long-term future without risking irreversible decline in fish stocks. At the same time we recognise the need to support fishing communities and to ensure maximum involvement of fishermen in decisions about the industry’s future.

What follows is a summary of work to date and of our plans for achieving *Net Benefits’* goal of ‘a sustainable and profitable future for UK fishing’. That is an ambitious aim and will require some hard decisions at the UK level, as well as effective work with our European partners to improve key aspects of the Common Fisheries Policy. But we are determined to achieve it in continuing partnership with the fishing industry and all stakeholders.

This response is the product of some intensive collaborative work by the four UK Fisheries Administrations in close engagement with stakeholders.
We would like to express our appreciation to all who have given their time freely to participate in this process.

Signed:

Ben Bradshaw, MP,  
Minister for Local Environment,  
Marine and Animal Welfare,  
Defra

Ross Finnie, MSP,  
Minister for Environment and Rural Development,  
Scottish Executive

Carwyn Jones AC/AM  
Gweinidog dros yr Amgylchedd,  
Cynllunio a Chefn Gwlad  
Minister for Environment Planning and Countryside,  
Welsh Assembly Government

Lord Rooker,  
Minister of State,  
Northern Ireland Office
2. Executive Summary

Context

*Net Benefits*, the landmark report from the Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit, mapped out the major problems and opportunities that the fishing industry currently faces. It laid down a challenge to the UK Government, the Devolved Administrations and all interested parties to work together to find common solutions to complex problems.

This response is presented jointly by the Fisheries Administrations in the UK. It reports on progress to date in the intensive stakeholder engagement that has been set in motion.

There are no quick fixes. But the detailed response that follows sets out some early actions in response to *Net Benefits*. And it maps out how the Fisheries Administrations now plan to take the issues forward, in continuing partnership with stakeholders.

Our success has been in creating solid platforms for debate, where fishermen, recreational sea anglers, environmental groups, and officials can exchange information openly, and express views honestly.

This dynamic partnership is an essential foundation on which to build future actions. But we need to do more; we need to harness the momentum, strengthen the dialogue and substantiate trust.

Our shared goal is clear: a thriving marine environment, supporting a thriving fishing industry.

Our thanks go to everyone involved, in particular to the stakeholders who took part in the working groups, sub groups, coastal meetings, etc. These meetings have been invaluable and have directly shaped the document.

We have talked about shared problems, devised shared solutions, rejected short-term answers and laid the foundations for a sustainable and prosperous future.
Key Issues in Report

This short summary is designed simply to highlight the key issues addressed and the broad conclusions. It is published as the first section of the full response, which is also available at www.defra.gov.uk/fish/sea/sfp/index.htm for download.

Three key points underpin this response:-

• the programme set out here constitutes in effect the fishing aspects of the UK Sustainable Development Framework. Taken as a whole, the actions set out follow the five guiding principles of that Framework;

• the response is presented jointly by the four UK Fisheries Administrations, as independent entities working in close collaboration with each other and with stakeholders. Defra, SEERAD, DARDNI and the Welsh Assembly Government are each also publishing documents which discuss issues of particular relevance within their respective areas of responsibility;

• many of the changes we are aiming for will only be achieved by working for better policies at EU level within the Common Fisheries Policy. The response highlights the importance of this and of having an effective strategy for collaborating with stakeholders and for influencing the Commission and other member states to deliver them.
Government Aim and Objectives

As recommended by Net Benefits, we have developed an overarching aim, supported by more detailed objectives, to guide fisheries management and policy-making in the UK. Our aim is:

A fishing sector that is sustainable and profitable and supports strong local communities, managed effectively as an integral part of coherent policies for the marine environment.¹

Managing Fisheries Within the Marine Environment

New approaches to provide a more integrated approach to fisheries and marine resource management are being taken forward across the UK. This includes work on the planned Marine Bill. As part of this we will examine the case for creating one or more integrated marine agencies. We will also continue working with stakeholders to identify areas where marine protected areas might provide a range of benefits including conservation of fish stock and wider biodiversity, as we take forward our international commitments to establish networks of these areas to maintain and restore marine biodiversity.

¹. The “fishing sector” means all aspects of catching, processing, retail and associated industries that rely on the wild-fish catch, including shellfish. This includes the recreational sector.
Towards a More Effective Common Fisheries Policy

We need to build upon the strengths of the CFP and work with our partners to address its weaknesses. In particular we will push for greater regional focus for management measures and policy formation by supporting Regional Advisory Councils. We will help to strengthen the EU science base and its use, and work for greater predictability of fishing opportunities and for more consistent enforcement across the EU.

Discarding

The issue of discards needs to be addressed. We plan to set up pilot projects that will help us better understand the factors that lead to discarding and how they might be tackled. The results of these trials will feed into work on this subject in the EU.

Modernising UK Fisheries Management

Quota Management Reforms

The current system of UK quota management has weaknesses. The picture is complex, but reform is needed to introduce increased certainty about fishing rights and improved transparency in quota trading. There are a number of complex and inter-related issues including legal entitlement, allocation methodology, the role of POs, licensing arrangements, effort control measures and community quota schemes.

All these issues will be addressed in a programme of work, with active stakeholder involvement, which we will aim to complete within three years.
Fisheries Science

Science which is valid and trusted is an essential element in successful fisheries management and in integrating fisheries management more closely into that of the marine environment. An important element of this is using fishermen’s information in fisheries assessment.

The Defra Fisheries Science Partnership has been extended, with additional science funding and greater industry involvement in data collection and prioritisation of science. In Scotland, greater collaboration between academia, government scientists and fishermen will be developed.

Cost recovery

The cost of managing fisheries and the marine environment is substantial and in principle cost recovery should apply. But in the case of fisheries management we must bear in mind the need for the UK fishing sector to be competitive in an international context, and for equitable treatment across its diverse sub-sectors.

We will address the issue of cost recovery in the fishing sector alongside the other reforms outlined here.

Establishing a Compliance Culture in the UK

We need to address the economic drivers which lead to breaches in fisheries regulations and therefore undermine sustainability: profitability and compliance are linked. We are already improving the way those regulations are enforced. As part of this work, the Fisheries Administrations in the UK are introducing designated auction centres, the registration of buyers and sellers and improvements in arrangements for sales notes on the first sale of fish. Implementation of the new system has been considered by a joint industry/government working group.
Building Long Term Profitability

The size and capacity of the fleet needs to be balanced against long term fishing opportunities, but in a way that safeguards the viability of fishing communities. We will continue our discussions with the fishing industry to refine and develop the economic model from Net Benefits and will consider with them whether further selective decommissioning schemes may be necessary. In doing so, it will be important to analyse key types of fisheries separately and regionally.

Next Steps

This document is the first product of a new partnership drawing together the entire fishing sector, together with the Fisheries Administrations, fishing communities, environment groups, and other users of the marine environment.

This partnership approach is the foundation on which we will now build firm plans for taking forward the actions identified in this report.

There are key areas where actions by the four administrations will benefit from being concerted at the UK level as well as areas where it is more appropriate to act separately. Defra, SEERAD, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development will each be making clear how they will be taking follow-up action within their administrations. The main actions that the four administrations will be taking, both together and within their own areas of responsibility are:

- Development of more integrated marine management arrangements, including considering the case for one or more marine agencies and desk studies to establish the approach to multi-purpose Marine Protected Areas. To be developed in close consultation with stakeholders including as part of work on
2. Executive Summary

Marine Bill: the relevant provisions to be drafted during 2006. In Scotland, the Executive’s marine strategy work will also cover these areas.


- Working for a more effective CFP.
  - Extend provision of scientific, technical and practical support – already provided to North Sea Regional Advisory Council – to other RACs as and when they are set up. RAC liaison officers already appointed in each administration.
  - Press for simplification of CFP rules. Aim for simplification action plan by the end of UK Presidency in December 2005, and the fastest possible progress on delivery thereafter.

- Development of fisheries management arrangements in the UK with more regional focus, more stakeholder participation, and measurable responsiveness to stakeholder views. Including the establishment of the Sea Fisheries Inspectorate (SFI) as an Executive Agency for Defra covering England and providing services in Wales in October 2005, appointing one regional manager within the Agency on a pilot basis. Consider the scope for improvement of fisheries regulations (EU and domestic) with the help of external specialists.

- Enhancing fisheries science in the UK: Initiatives already underway across the UK to increase fishermen’s involvement in assessments, and enhanced collaboration between government laboratories and academic institutions. Defra Fisheries Science Partnership for England and Wales already extended for a further three years, and further funding made available.
2. Executive Summary

• Programme for quota management reform in UK under way Spring 2005, to be completed no later than 2008.

• Compliance. Introduce registration of buyers and sellers of first sale fish, by September 2005.

• Support for Community Fisheries Control Agency, and collaboration on enforcement issues with EU partners already being given and to be maintained.

• Profitability. Collaborative work on the economic model will continue.

• “Large stock strategy”. Work with scientists, the industry and other stakeholders on transition to a “large stock” strategy in the context of the EU’s plan and timetable for moving key stocks to Maximum Sustainable Yield in line with World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) commitment.