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Marine

Sandeel fishing to be banned in Scottish waters

January 31, 2024 by Marine Directorate Communications (https://blogs.gov.scot/marine-scotland/author/lesleyrennie/) | Category Consultation (https://blogs.gov.scot/marine-scotland/category/consultation/), Fisheries (https://blogs.gov.scot/marine-scotland/category/fisheries/), Marine ecosystem (https://blogs.gov.scot/marine-scotland/category/marine-ecosystem/), Marine Environment (https://blogs.gov.scot/marine-scotland/category/marine-environment/)



Fishing for sandeel is to be banned in Scottish waters ahead of the 2024 fishery season, subject to Parliamentary approval.

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Sandeel support the long term sustainability and resilience of the marine ecosystem and are an important food source for many species, including marine mammals, seabirds and predatory fish.

Commercial fishing for sandeel is currently carried out entirely by European vessels. In recognition of the importance of the species to marine biodiversity, no fishing quota has been allocated to UK vessels since 2021.

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands Mairi Gougeon said:

"Sandeel are a vital part of our marine ecosystem and a critical component of the food chain in the North Atlantic.

"It is critical that we manage our marine environment in a such a way as to ensure its sustainable use, protecting biodiversity and ensuring healthy functioning ecosystems.

"Prohibiting all vessels from fishing for sandeel in Scottish waters will help provide long term sustainability and benefits not just for sandeel but also for seabirds, marine mammals and other fish species.

"This decision reflects overwhelming support for our proposals, the scientific evidence base and our longstanding position not to support fishing for sandeel as set out in Scotland's Future Fisheries Management Strategy."

The Scottish Government consulted on proposals to close fishing for sandeel in Scottish waters in 2023, with 97% of respondents indicating support for the preferred option.

The UK Government has today also indicated its intention to close Area 4 of the North Sea in English waters for sandeel fishing.

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Marine Directorate scientists recently attended the MASTS (Marine Alliance for Science