



# Scotland's Fisheries Management Strategy 2020 - 2030



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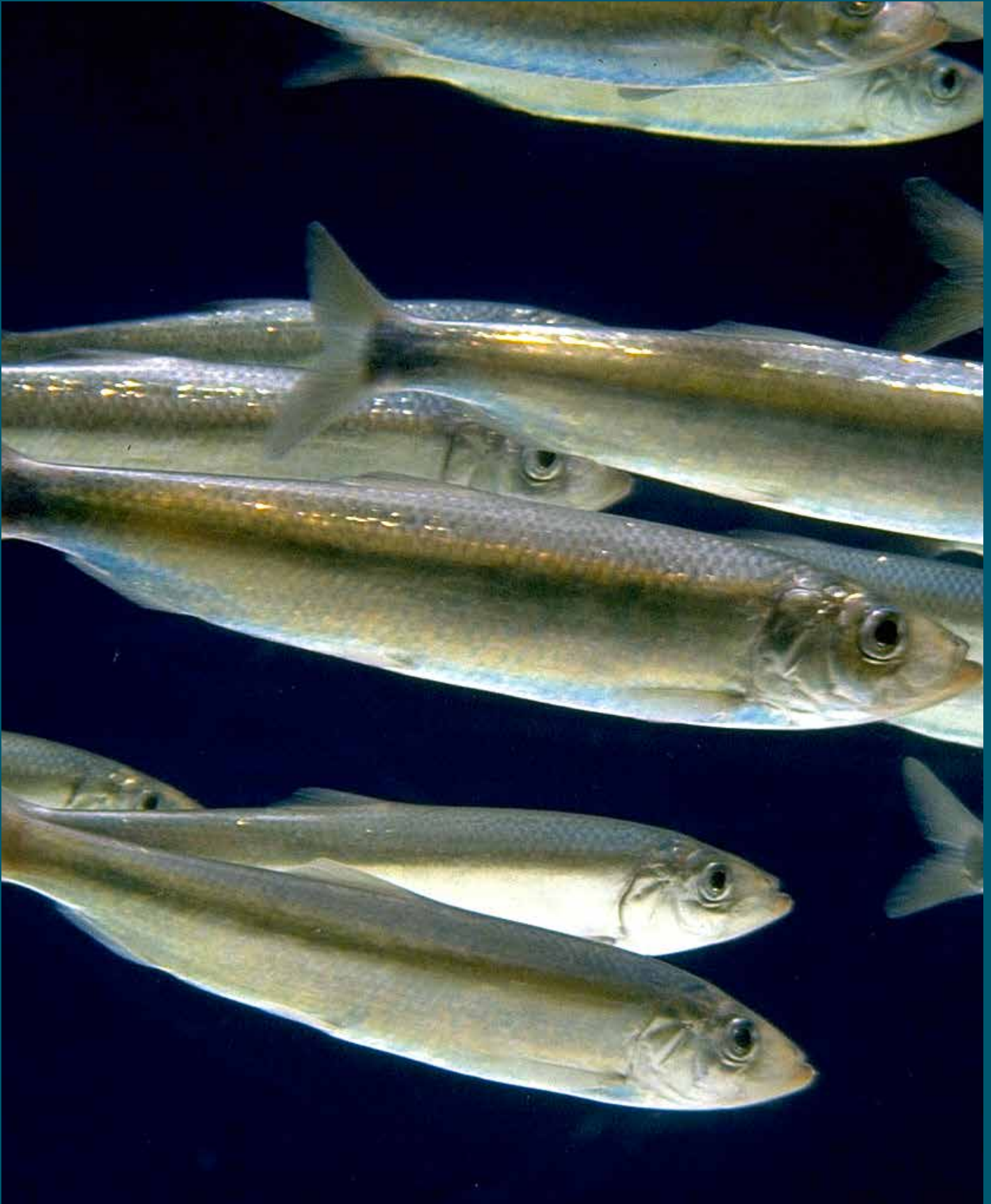
# CONTENTS

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<b>Introduction</b>	<b>02</b>
<b>Strategic Context and Outcomes</b>	<b>04</b>
Our Principles and Outcomes	07
Our ecosystem-based approach	09
Tackling the climate emergency	10
Marine Litter	11
<b>Support for the Fishing Sector</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Decision Making</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Our commitment to co-management</b>	<b>17</b>
Membership of co-management groups	20
<b>Communications and engagement</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Our International Approach</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Working with the UK</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Our 12 point action plan</b>	<b>26</b>



# — Introduction



# INTRODUCTION

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Scotland's marine environment is rich and diverse, with an abundance of life and significant potential for harvesting and harnessing the seas' resources for the public benefit.

With such an important natural asset comes great responsibility: to preserve and sustain the seas' ecosystems; to support the jobs and livelihoods which depend on them; to strengthen the local communities whose lifeblood is intrinsically linked to the sea; and to encourage all users of the marine environment to develop a positive future together with mutual respect.

Our responsibility as Government, as managers, as users of the sea and recipients of its rewards, is to work together to take and implement the right decisions to support the greater national interest. To manage fishing activity and fishing pressures in a sustainable, safe, responsible and compliant way. And to create the right environment to enable us to trust each other and deliver confidence in the decisions we make, the evidence we use and the policies we deliver.

This strategy sets out our approach to managing Scotland's sea fisheries from 2020 to 2030, as part of the wider Blue Economy. It explores how we will achieve the delicate balance between environment, economic and social outcomes, and how we will work in partnership with our fisheries stakeholders at home, within the UK, and in an international context, to deliver the best possible results for our marine environment, our fishing industry and our fishing communities. It also considers how, as part of our Blue Economy approach, we can best share the marine space, to ensure we are managing in the right way, and making the best decisions, for the marine environment as a whole and all those who depend on it.


Commercial sea fishing is one of the most dangerous jobs in the world. Over the years, there have been too many accidents and lives lost at sea. Injuries and fatalities take a terrible toll, most obviously on families but also on our coastal communities. We need to do

all we can to make fishing as safe as possible, and encourage more people to see fishing as a desirable career, which will help to ensure the sustainability of the industry in the long term. The Scottish Fishing Safety Group, established in May 2019 aims to do just that. This group provides advice - working alongside established safety bodies such as the Marine and Coastguard Agency (MCA) - on how we can improve health, safety and wellbeing on Scottish vessels. The group supports fishing industry efforts to achieve zero deaths annually and the reduction in accidents across the whole Scottish fishing industry.

Our track record of managing Scotland's fisheries is strong with robust regulatory and monitoring frameworks in place. Statistics<sup>1</sup> show there were 2,098 Scottish-registered and licensed fishing vessels in 2019. These fishing vessels landed 393,000 tonnes of sea fish and shellfish with a first sale value of £582 million. Over the nine years 2010 to 2019, the value of pelagic landings by the Scottish fishing fleet rose by 29%, demersal by 7%, and shellfish by 9%, in real terms.

There were 4,886 fishers employed on Scottish registered vessels at the end of 2019, while the fleet itself consisted of 1,559 vessels under 10 metre and 539 vessels which were 10 metres or over.

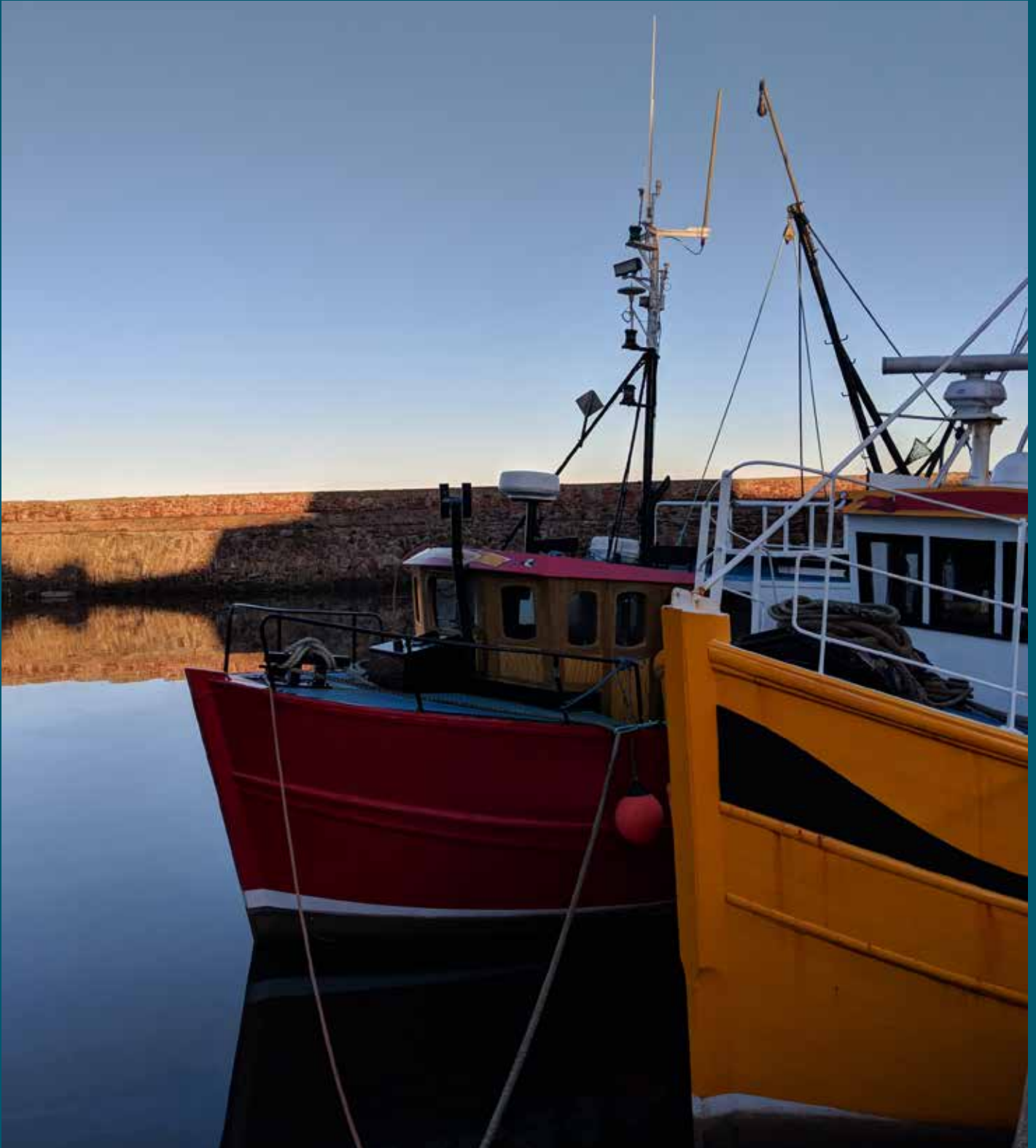
We will build on this solid foundation. We will continue to deliver on our domestic and international responsibilities. But we will also go further, demonstrating our competence, our creativity and innovation, our world class compliance, our ability to lead and be the best that we can possibly be. To set the right course and encourage others to follow.

 **Through this strategy we will set a course to deliver, as part of our Blue Economy Action Plan, our vision for Scotland to be a world class fishing nation delivering responsible and sustainable fisheries management."**

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<sup>1</sup> Scottish Sea Fisheries Statistics 2019, Marine Scotland.  
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-sea-fisheries-statistics-2019/>

# — Strategic Context and Outcomes





# STRATEGIC CONTEXT AND OUTCOMES

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Our marine environment is a national asset and our role as fisheries managers is to manage and preserve that asset for the benefit of Scotland and future generations to come. It is also a shared natural resource not only in a domestic context but spanning oceans and transcending international boundaries. This means shared responsibilities across the international arena, and the need for cooperation and collaboration. Our approach to fisheries management operates within this context, and we will use every opportunity for Scotland to play an active role internationally, not only because it is important for Scotland's voice to be heard, but because we share the fundamental objectives and principles of our international partners.

Our overall approach to fisheries management in Scotland is framed within the delivery of the Scottish Government's **National Performance Framework**<sup>2</sup>, and helps support a range of national outcomes including those related to supporting a sustainable economy, delivering fair work and thriving businesses, supporting a strong international presence for Scotland and empowering communities and strengthening their resilience. Fishing also makes a full and vital contribution to the national outcome '*we value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment*'. Success is measured through the delivery of national indicators, including '*to improve the state of Scotland's Marine Environment*' and this drives many of the decisions we take at a strategic and practical level in order to ensure that the overarching aims and objectives of the Scottish Government are delivered.

Scotland's **Environment Strategy** creates an overarching framework for our strategies and plans on the environment and climate change. Sustainable fisheries management will contribute to achieving the outcomes of the Environment Strategy, including '*Scotland's nature is protected and restored, with flourishing biodiversity and clean and healthy air, water, seas and soils*', '*our thriving, sustainable economy conserves and grows our natural assets*' and '*we play our full role in tackling the global climate emergency and limiting temperate rise to 1.5°C*'.

Our fisheries management also sits within the broad framework of Scotland's **National Marine Plan** which sets out the Scottish Government's approach to managing Scotland's seas, including the interactions between different sectors, their combined impact on the marine environment and the factors which influence our decision making. The overarching vision contained within the National Marine Plan sets the scene for our overall approach and the policies which we deliver. That vision is for '*clean, healthy, safe, productive and diverse seas, managed to meet the long-term needs of nature and people*'. Scotland's Marine Assessment 2020 (SMA2020) assesses the condition of the Scottish marine area and will inform the review and any future update of Scotland's National Marine Plan.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/national-outcomes>

# STRATEGIC CONTEXT AND OUTCOMES

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Within this context, through this strategy and as set out below, we will deliver a range of outcomes which directly support the National Marine Plan and the Scottish Government's national outcomes and which respond to the challenges identified as part of the SMA2020. Many of these challenges are shared, and therefore the management framework provided by the UK Marine Strategy will also be relevant to ensuring that Scotland's seas progress towards Good Environmental Status, as will the holistic thinking generated by a Blue Economy approach. These outcomes are set out below and will shape the policies which we will deliver and the decisions we take.

We see fisheries as a vital part of Scotland's 'Blue Economy', defined as 'the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs, and ocean ecosystem health'.<sup>3</sup> We have committed to developing a **Blue Economy Action Plan** which will take a joined-up strategic approach across the diverse range of Scotland's established and emerging marine sectors to maximise the opportunities offered by our abundantly rich marine zone.

The Blue Economy Action Plan will encourage collaboration across the public sector, marine industries and marine environmental interests to unlock cross-sectoral synergies that can support growth and jobs, benefit coastal communities and help deliver a just transition to net zero. A truly holistic Blue Economy approach also recognises that our many marine industries share the same common space and benefit from the joint stewardship of its amazing natural abundance. Our Blue Economy action plan will therefore reflect the vital importance to our marine economy of the rich natural capital in Scotland's seas and rivers.



**This fisheries management strategy will form one of the cornerstones of the Blue Economy Action Plan. It will seek to deliver the benefits of a Blue Economy approach to the fishing industry by encouraging learning and collaboration with other marine sectors in areas of shared interest, such as skills, science, innovation, infrastructure, regulation and the climate emergency."**

Crucially, a Blue Economy approach also provides the framework for managing the co-existence of different marine interests in the same shared space, enabling a transition from a mind-set of 'environment vs economic growth' to a mind-set of 'shared stewardship of natural capital facing common challenges.' We do not manage our fisheries in isolation and joining up our approach across the marine environment, for example by considering competing marine sectors and priorities in our decision making, and also onshore interests, is vital to success. Through delivery of this strategy, and in the wider Blue Economy Action Plan, we will have a renewed focus on integrating fisheries interests into the wider marine planning process and, linked to this, ensuring that fishing impacts are considered as part of our wider ecosystem-based approach.

Our overarching aim is to focus on collaboration and cooperation, not conflict and controversy. We have not always achieved this in the past, but if we recognise that conflict exists, then through partnership working it should be possible to resolve that conflict for the greater good. One of the ways we can do this is by increasing our openness and transparency around data, improving our evidence base and taking account of the range of knowledge that exists, in particular valuing the knowledge of fishers and others who work at sea, and using this to help boost our understanding of the marine environment.

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<sup>3</sup> World Bank, 2017




# STRATEGIC CONTEXT AND OUTCOMES

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The **COVID-19 crisis** has impacted our fishing industry and our coastal communities in an unprecedented way. Whilst we have been able to provide significant and targeted financial support to key parts of the fishing and seafood sector to support them through the pandemic, COVID-19 has brought into sharp focus issues around resilience within key parts of the fishing fleet and the wider seafood industry. Many of the actions contained within this strategy are intended to help boost resilience in the sector, for example around diversification of fishing opportunities, attracting new entrants, and strengthening links between the catching sector and onshore industries. In this way and as part of our **Blue Economy Action Plan** we will seek to help marine sectors and coastal communities to recover from the COVID-19 crisis and grow sustainably whilst also supporting a transition through EU Exit. The actions within this strategy will also support our **national mission to help create new jobs, good jobs and green jobs**.

We will also seek to strengthen links between the offshore fishing industry and onshore interests, recognising the benefits that fishing as a national asset must have for our communities, onshore processing, local markets, healthy eating and sustainable food supplies, and opportunities for training and employment. The policies which we take forward under this strategy, for example allocation of additional quota opportunities, the introduction of the economic link licence condition from 2022 and our drive to ensure that quota remains in the control of the active fishing industry, will directly support these considerations.

 **The Scottish Nephrops Working Group is being supported by a £1 million investment to investigate the scale of the current challenges facing the Nephrops sector and to develop a long term strategic vision for cementing Scotland’s position as the global leader of high quality langoustine.”**

## Our Principles and Outcomes

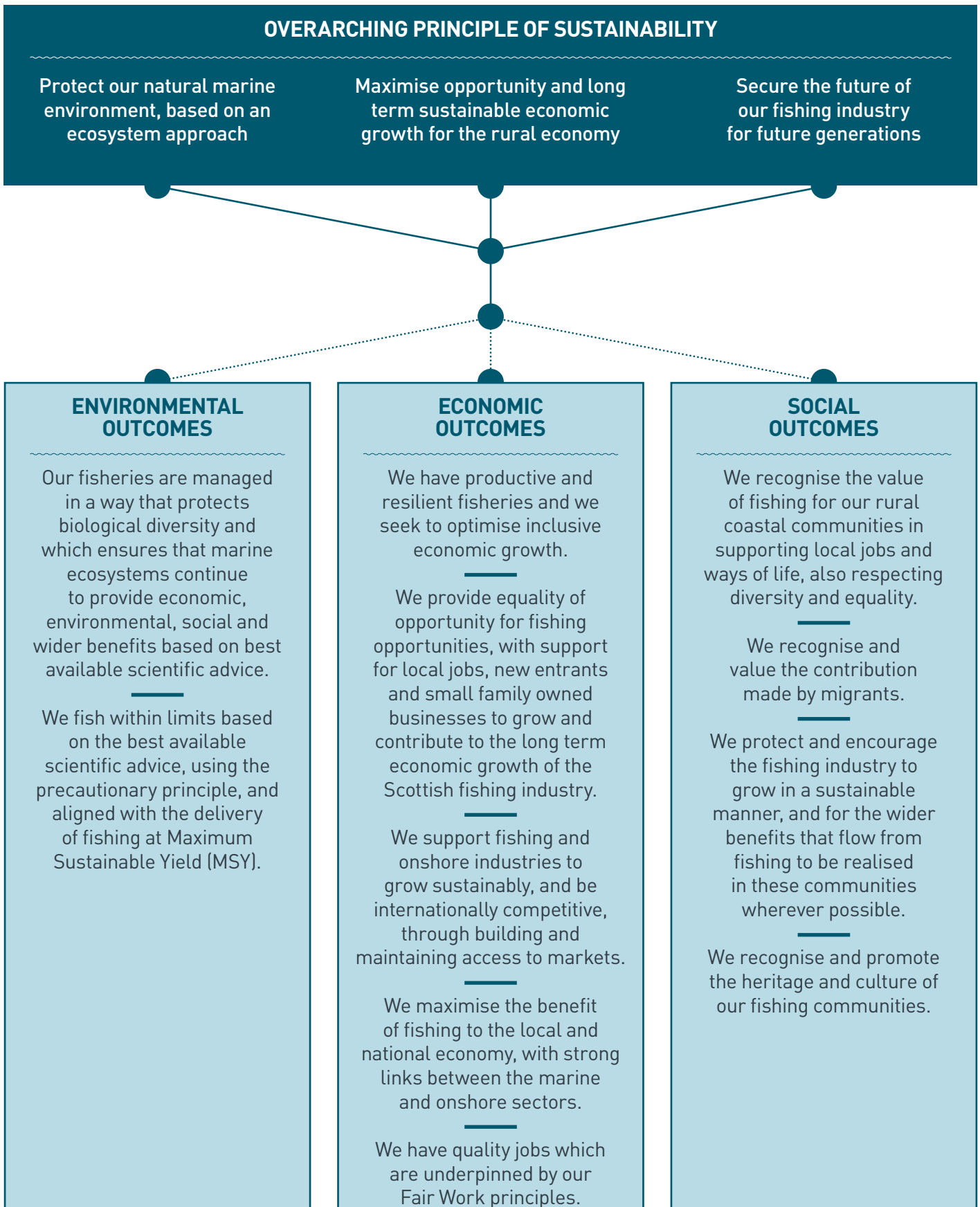
The Scottish Government is committed to moving to a net zero emissions economy in a way that is fair for all. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how abrupt and unplanned shifts can exacerbate inequalities. Now, more than ever, we need a just transition that supports sustainable economic growth and jobs, whilst ensuring no one is left behind. The future fisheries strategy supports this, combining our social, economic and environmental goals as set out here.

In delivering our overarching outcomes we recognise that conflict can exist and that delivery of one set of outcomes, for example on the environment, can sometimes negatively impact another set of outcomes, for example in relation to short-term economic interests. Recognising these conflicts is important and having a robust decision making process in place will enable us to achieve an appropriate balance. Paramount to our approach is the principle of sustainability, in particular the long term sustainability of both our environment and our economy.

Outcomes which conflict with fisheries interests can develop from decisions made on other parts of the marine economy. Our Blue Economy approach seeks to provide the strategic framework within which such conflicts can be coherently and sensibly managed, informed by the principles for fisheries management outlined below.

We will separately publish a monitoring and evaluation framework which will contain further detail about how we will measure and monitor progress against our outcomes and the policies and actions which we deliver as part of this strategy. We will report on progress in a regular, open and transparent way.

# STRATEGIC CONTEXT AND OUTCOMES



# STRATEGIC CONTEXT AND OUTCOMES

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## Our ecosystem-based approach

Protecting our marine environment and securing our natural assets for future generations is central to our fisheries management approach. We already have a network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in place, which will be supported by continuing to develop our approach to the safeguarding of Priority Marine Features (PMFs), providing vital protection to vulnerable habitats and species.

We understand the impact that environmental restrictions can have on fishing activity and we want to strengthen the engagement we have with those affected in order to mitigate unnecessary negative socio-economic effects. We want to listen to our fishers and the experience and knowledge they have about the marine environment, using this knowledge to add to the richness of our overall understanding. We want to ensure that the right protections are in place for our marine environment, underpinned by a robust scientific evidence base and enforcement regime. We recognise that there has been distrust in the past around some of the decisions we have taken, and we will take steps to address this by improving the transparency and awareness around our modelling processes, and supplementing our understanding with local fishing knowledge where appropriate.

Where necessary and appropriate we will introduce additional measures, for example to protect vulnerable spawning and juvenile fishing grounds, and through the introduction of additional enforcement measures such as Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM)<sup>4</sup> for the pelagic and scallop fleets, and as required for other sectors of the fleet. REM should be seen as a positive tool, to provide a way for us to demonstrate that our fishers are acting sustainably and responsibly. The introduction of additional monitoring either through REM or through our inshore modernisation programme, is an important component of continuing to enhance our national and international scientific evidence base to help us make the right decisions to support effective management. Scotland makes an essential contribution to UK and international fisheries science and this expertise and analysis remains a vital component of our sustainable fisheries management approach.

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<sup>4</sup> REM refers to the remote monitoring of fishing activity at sea. This can include the use of traditional tracking devices, such as Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS), and also the use of CCTV cameras and sensors.

# STRATEGIC CONTEXT AND OUTCOMES

We believe that supporting biodiversity in our seas is vitally important, alongside taking account of the wider ecosystem when developing and delivering policies and in our decision making processes. This also reflects the value we place in the sea's natural capital, which forms a vital building block underpinning the wellbeing and sustainability of Scotland's fisheries and the other marine industries that share and depend on the health of the marine environment in which they operate. This holistic approach, which sees our marine natural capital delivering multiple benefits in terms of natural biodiversity and economic productivity, lies at the heart of our Blue Economy thinking.

Rather than a system of marine management focussed on individual features, this strategy will adopt the principles of ecosystem-based management. ICES uses several key phrases to define what an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management looks like, these are: "*management of human activities, consideration of collective pressures, achievement of good environmental status, sustainable use, optimization of benefits among diverse societal goals, regionalization, trade-offs, and stewardship for future generations*".<sup>5</sup> We recognise these descriptors and will use them to shape our own ecosystem based approach under this strategy, taking a holistic and inclusive approach, having environmental sustainability as a key tenet and achieving this through inclusive engagement and not taking decisions in isolation.

As part of our ecosystem-based approach we will work in close collaboration with our stakeholders to focus on:

- Using spatial management measures such as area restrictions to protect spawning grounds and juvenile fish in order to help maintain healthy populations, drawing on fishers' knowledge and scientific evidence in order to develop sensible and proportionate measures
- Fishing at sustainable levels and making use of appropriate technology to properly account for activity and build our shared and accessible scientific evidence base
- Taking fisheries management decisions which make the most of fishers' knowledge, which account for impacts on the wider environment, and which acknowledge and mitigate against negative outcomes both for the environment and the fishing sector

- Supporting fishers to demonstrate their compliance with rules and regulations, e.g. through the use of technology such as vessel tracking to monitor compliance with area closures
- Conservation of vulnerable and protected species, for example, by limiting unwanted bycatch and encouraging proper handling practices when returning protected species to the sea
- Where appropriate, restricting fishing activity and prohibiting fishing for species which are integral components of the marine food web, such as sandeels.

**MPAs are not routinely a fisheries management tool, however many of these sites require management measures that may restrict activity including fishing to achieve their conservation objective. But they are a tool which can help protect valuable ecosystems and support fish stocks to recover and grow. They can also provide natural habitats to protect sources of food and nutrients, and make a positive contribution to carbon sequestration. By protecting these areas there can also be additional benefits such as helping to protect fish stocks, and creating a healthy stock for exploitation. As a general rule we should consider the impact of our management decisions on the wider ecosystem, and where there are known problems, for example with a particular stock, then we will look at options to protect habitats (including spawning grounds) in addition to fisheries management measures such as those taken forward as part of our Future Catching Policy.**

## Tackling the climate emergency

In 2019 Scotland declared a Global Climate Emergency and passed legislation to end Scotland's contribution to global emissions by 2045 as well as enshrining in law Scotland's commitment to a just transition. This will require a transformation across all sectors of our economy and society. Fisheries must play its part to reduce emissions and help to create a low carbon economy with clean, green jobs. This transition is a huge opportunity to grow Scottish businesses, supply chains and good, sustainable jobs. Planning will be crucial to ensure that opportunities are not missed (and that risks associated with rapid structural change

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ices.dk/about-ICES/Documents/ICES%20and%20EBM.pdf>



# STRATEGIC CONTEXT AND OUTCOMES

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are mitigated). We want to work in partnership with businesses to develop effective net zero transition plans and showcase good examples and investment opportunities.

Climate change is already having impacts on fish stocks and fishing activities. The SMA2020 acknowledges that observed changes to fish stocks are difficult to attribute directly to human-induced climate change as other factors are known to influence fish. However, climate change already has an impact on fish ecology and the distribution of commercially important species, and with a warming climate, will increasingly do so.

In a fisheries context, it is important for us to recognise and understand these potential changes and the impacts of our activities, and also to consider the contribution that the fishing sector itself makes to climate change and how we can reduce its impact. We also need to consider the positive role that retailers and consumers can play.

Action on climate change is not something which can be done in isolation, rather it requires a response from across the stakeholder landscape, and we need to take account of research and development to properly understand the options and the difference that actions can make. We need to make the most of the experience of the fishing industry and use their innovation and expertise to explore challenges and develop solutions in collaboration.

With that in mind, we will urgently work with our partners and our scientists to secure a robust evidence base and develop a firm plan to set out direct actions, including:

- seeking a baseline per fleet segment upon which to measure against and to assist with planning and prioritising action.
- working in partnership with our co-management groups and our RIFGs to collaborate on local projects and get buy in from the fishing industry to a Team Scotland approach.
- understanding options to reduce emissions and improve fuel efficiency, e.g. exploring the use of alternative fuels.
- actions to reduce energy use during fishing operations, including inefficient refrigeration equipment.

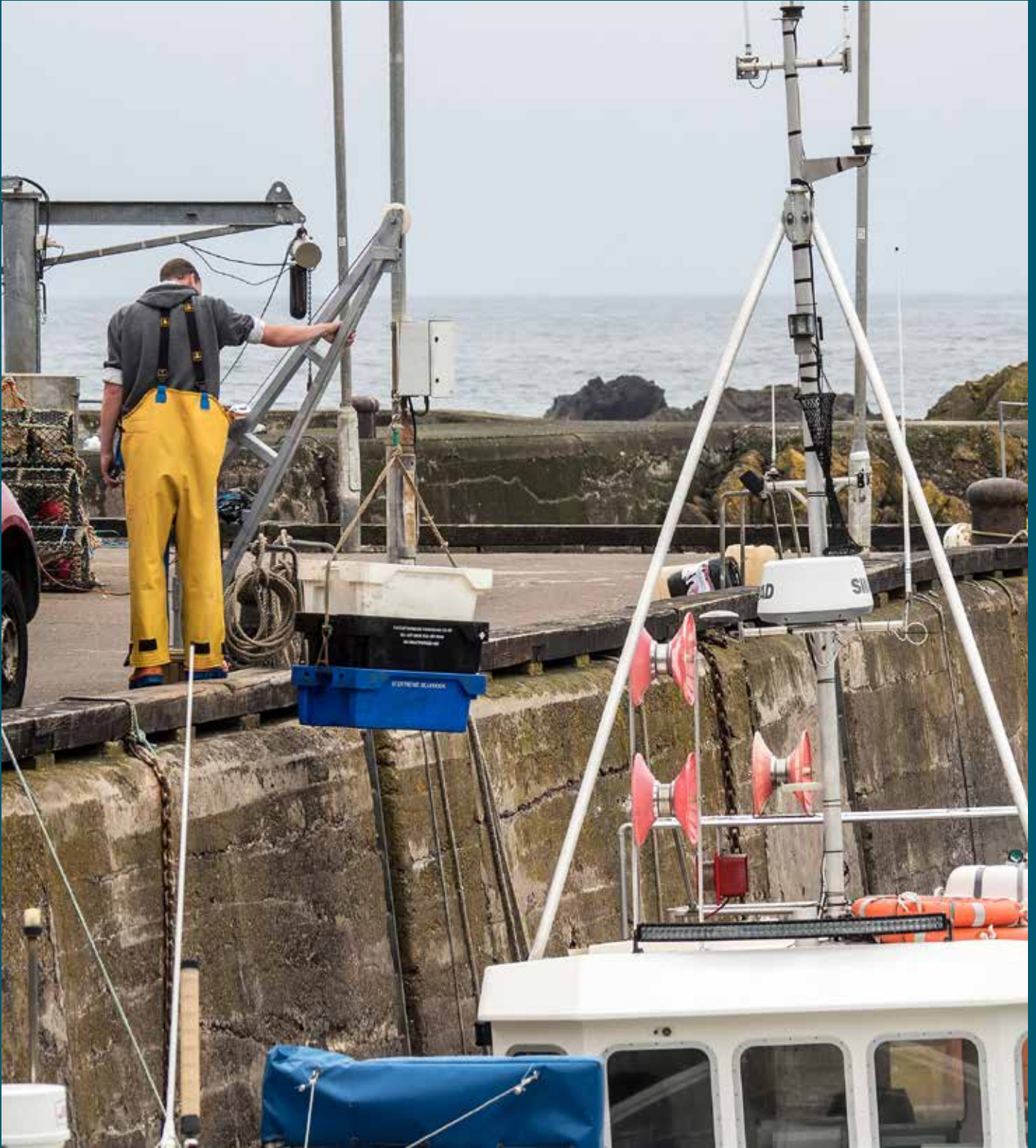
- using the outputs from Fisheries Innovation Scotland climate change projects, alongside other scientific research, to influence and shape policy decisions.
- encouraging and supporting changes to sustainable and innovative fishing techniques.
- making better use of local markets and shorter supply chains.
- continuing to ensure that we fish at sustainable levels with appropriate monitoring and control measures in place.
- considering where and how we need to adapt our approaches to take account of the impacts of climate change.
- taking forward partnership working through the Energy Transition Zone, Global Underwater Hub and Oil and Gas Technology Centre to incorporate fisheries and fisheries advice into low carbon transition proposals.

## Marine Litter

As part of our National Discussion Paper on Future Fisheries Management we indicated we would explore options to make marine littering a specific offence. We are pleased that our recommendations in this area have influenced the introduction of UK Government legislation and The Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Pollution by Garbage from Ships) Regulations 2020, subject to certain exceptions, make it an offence for UK vessels and other vessels within UK waters or UK controlled waters (other than vessels engaged on certain military matters or vessels owned or operated by a State and used on government non-commercial service), regardless of their size, to litter.

As part of our wider ecosystem approach and our actions to tackle climate change, we will take further positive action to reduce levels of marine litter and tackle single-use plastics. As part of this initiative, we will work with the fishing industry to consider ways to recycle and reuse fishing gear to encourage the landing of end of life gear ashore.

# — Support for the Fishing Sector



We will seek to support the delivery of this strategy through post-EU exit assistance for the marine sector and associated communities, as part of our development of a Blue Economy approach. We want to look horizontally and holistically across marine sectors (industry and environment) and seek to deliver economic, social, ecosystem and environmental benefits from joined-up actions arising from the connections and partnerships to be made between sectors in areas such as skills, science, innovation, infrastructure, regulation, natural capital and the drive to net zero carbon emissions. By facilitating investment, jobs and opportunities in marine industries and public sector investment will also help build thriving and vibrant coastal communities.

The 3 agreed investment priorities for the Blue Economy Action Plan, which are based on evidence around market failures and the current weaknesses and opportunities in the marine economy are:

1. Delivering a low carbon Blue Economy which contributes to our climate change targets.
2. Contributing to an innovative, globally competitive, sustainable Blue Economy with quality jobs, fair work and a safe working environment for its participants.
3. Fair and inclusive growth that maximises opportunities for people and communities in Scotland.

Supported investment will deliver against agreed outcomes:

#### **Overarching/public good**

- Supporting collaboration, partnerships, knowledge and technical expertise which enable better decision making, regulation, science and innovation.
- Enhancing the marine environment and ecosystems, including quality, reputation and marine products.
- Reductions in emissions and support for the drive to net zero.
- Removal of waste.

#### **Supply chain/marketing**

- Fairer and greener supply chains.
- Developing direct selling and new and existing markets which deliver sustainable economic benefits.
- Matching processing and supply chain capacity with landings and production capacity.

#### **Sectoral/Community outcomes**

- Development and delivery of training including safety and sectoral training.
- Promoting fair work and opportunities for new entrants to the seafood and marine sectors.
- Improving marine infrastructure.
- Diversification projects which enhance marine tourism, marine energy, sea fisheries and/or aquaculture sectors or coastal communities.
- Improving resilience and capability, including that of communities, supply chains and businesses.



# — Decision Making






# DECISION MAKING

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As fisheries managers we take decisions on a wide range of issues and policies on a day-to-day basis. We want to ensure that we are taking decisions at the most appropriate levels and that we are flexible and responsive around joining up decision making. The co-management structures we have in place help us to take these decisions in a sensible and responsible way. Sharing the decision making framework which we use, helping people to understand how decisions are made, and ensuring that decisions are communicated openly and transparently, is one of our key strategic goals.

There are three main types of decisions which we take:

- in an international context, decisions around fish stocks and sustainable levels of fishing.
- in a domestic context, technical, spatial and operational decisions related to how and where people can fish.
- strategic policy decisions, related to existing policies and new policies, and overall management of the fisheries sector. These decisions are also influenced by other marine considerations, including the renewables sector, Marine Protected Areas, and aquaculture. Taking a wider view across the shared space is an important part of the strategic decision making process.

 **Under this strategy, our decisions will be taken in the context of the outcomes we seek to achieve, and balancing the principles of sustainability, environmental, economic and social benefit.”**

To support our decision making, we will always take an evidence-based approach and make full use of the best available scientific advice, enabled by a fit for purpose monitoring programme and collection of data. This will not only guide our approach to agreeing sustainable fishing levels, but will also provide a fundamental building block for our Future Catching Policy, influencing and guiding our approach to technical and spatial management measures, and informing our approach to protecting vulnerable spawning and juvenile areas. We will seek to build on our evidence base, particularly where there are gaps in our current knowledge. Key projects such as the introduction of REM, our Inshore Modernisation Programme, and taking forward learning from the Inshore Pilots, will help us do this.

# DECISION MAKING

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Wherever possible we will work in partnership with our stakeholders, utilising our established co-management groups FMAC<sup>6</sup>, IFMAC<sup>7</sup> and our Regional Inshore Fisheries Groups (RIFGs) and through formal and informal consultation particularly around technical issues as required. Ensuring we have the best possible understanding of impact in the real practical sense before final decisions are taken. We will be transparent about communicating our decisions, so that stakeholders understand the outcomes of our decision making processes and the rationale behind them. And we will also expect a similar approach from our stakeholders, in how they engage and in the behaviours they adopt and act with regards to transparency.

Of course decisions about management are not just taken with our domestic stakeholders. As part of the broader UK coastal state we work closely with the other UK Fisheries Administrations and alongside other coastal state partners on a broad range of fisheries management issues. We will continue to be a constructive and helpful partner in this context, ensuring that Scottish interests are fully reflected, promoted and protected.

Many of our goals and the outcomes we seek to achieve link strongly to those underpinning the approach in the EU and we intend to keep pace with EU standards and rules as far as possible. In a fisheries context this

means we will continue to align to the overarching outcomes and principles which underpin the EU's approach to fisheries – including those of the Common Fisheries Policy – although it will not prevent us from using alternative technical and operational processes to achieve the same or better outcomes; or to raise standards and deliver improved outcomes, if that would better support our aim to be a world-leading fishing nation and our desire to innovate and encourage others to follow. Our management decisions will be influenced by our aspirations for Scotland to gain independence.

We share the EU's goal of ensuring the long term conservation and sustainable exploitation of marine biological resources and to deliver that we will continue to champion science-based approaches that are tailored to the needs of specific regions and ecosystems, are supported by robust yet proportionate management measures, and which take account of the shared challenges we face, such as climate change. And we will also continue to meet – and where possible, exceed – our international obligations relating to fisheries and the marine environment, a great many of which are shared with the EU.

The need for proportionate and appropriate legislation will also influence the decisions we take. Fisheries is by its nature a heavily regulated and complex legislative area. Where we can simplify measures and cut through unnecessary bureaucracy without impacting on outcomes, we will take action.

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<sup>6</sup> Fisheries Management and Conservation Group

<sup>7</sup> Inshore Fisheries Management and Conservation Group



# Our commitment to co-management



# OUR COMMITMENT TO CO-MANAGEMENT

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In Scotland we are fortunate to have a fishing industry that is well represented, with many fishers being members of a fisheries association or other group. We have an established network of offices around the coast of Scotland which provide a direct interaction between Marine Scotland, fishers, and communities. We also benefit from an engaged environmental community, and from members of local communities who take a direct interest in, and benefit from, fishing activity either from the jobs it creates or the food it produces.

## **Our approach to co-management:**

**We already have a system of co-management in place for Scotland's fisheries, with Government officials and fisheries stakeholders working in partnership to oversee the management of our fisheries and guide key decisions. Going forward, we want to strengthen these arrangements, with a greater focus on strategic decision making and a shared responsibility for management and delivery whilst respecting the ultimate accountability of Scottish Ministers to the Scottish Parliament and the general public.**

We recognise that there are a wide range of groups that are involved in fishing, both directly and indirectly, and want to ensure that we are inclusive in our management approach and our policies. Women play an active role in many parts of the industry although this is not always readily acknowledged. Going forward we will seek to recognise the important role that all parts of society make to the fishing industry, and to promote involvement across all genders and equalities groups in a positive and inclusive way.

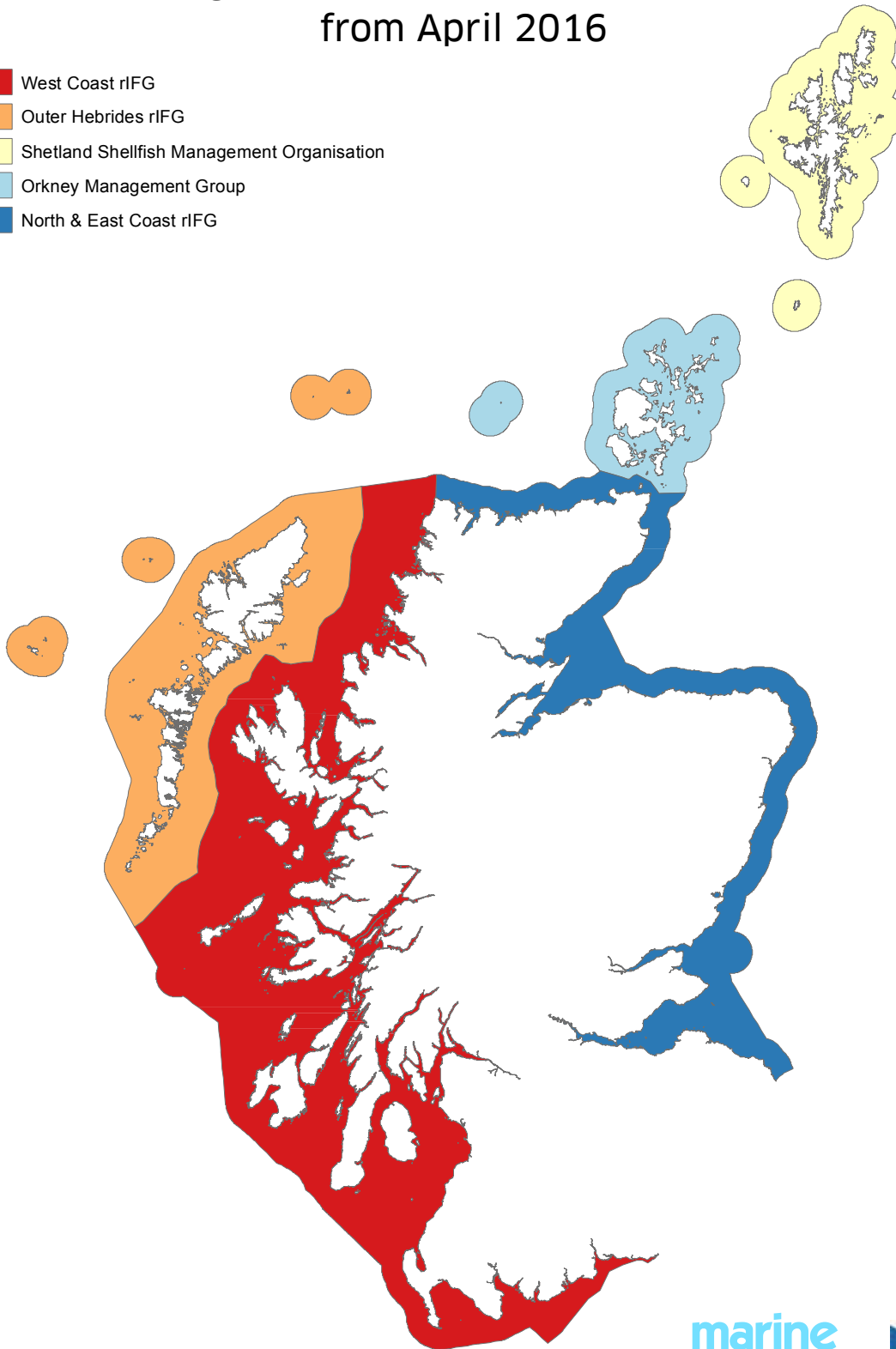
We believe that strong and transparent governance arrangements should be in place, to ensure that the right level of engagement takes place and that decisions are taken at the right level. We think there is room to strengthen governance arrangements in some areas, and policy proposals to do this will be taken forward as part of the implementation of this strategy. This will include considering the role that sectoral groups play. It will also see us strengthening the role of the Regional Inshore Fisheries Groups (RIFGs) so that they are recognised as the main delivery vehicle for local management, and have the right resources in place to deliver improvements and tackle local issues such as gear conflict and fishing effort. To help support this we will consider strengthening inshore licence conditions.



# OUR COMMITMENT TO CO-MANAGEMENT

## Regional Inshore Fisheries Groups from April 2016

- West Coast rIFG
- Outer Hebrides rIFG
- Shetland Shellfish Management Organisation
- Orkney Management Group
- North & East Coast rIFG



# OUR COMMITMENT TO CO-MANAGEMENT

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To support decision making at a national level, we will continue to use our established groups to help guide and support us. For the inshore sector this will primarily be through RIFGs. For wider fisheries interests this will be through our Fisheries Management and Conservation Group (FMAC). These groups have evolved over time to become our key groups supporting strategic and operational decision making and we will seek to build on this role in the future. Where needed, for example, to develop technical and spatial rules, we will use sub-groups to develop ideas and advise on approach.

## Membership of co-management groups

FMAC: includes representatives from environmental NGOs, fish producer organisations, fisheries associations, and the active fishing industry, alongside members of Marine Scotland policy, science and compliance functions.

IFMAC: this has a broad range of involvement from across a range of fisheries interests, with open membership of all inshore stakeholders.

Regional Inshore Fisheries Groups (RIFG): Established in 2016, RIFGs are non-statutory bodies that aim to improve inshore fisheries. This is achieved by development of localised fisheries management projects and by offering fishers a strong voice in wider marine developments. The RIFG network comprises:

- North and East Coast RIFG
- West Coast RIFG
- Outer Hebrides RIFG
- Orkney Sustainable Fisheries
- Shetland Shellfish Management Organisation

The information we use to make our decisions comes from a variety of sources, for example through the Scottish Government's science division in Marine Scotland, which undertakes fisheries research, key data collected from the fishing industry itself, and a wide range of information and knowledge collected through government compliance and regulatory operations. Using this information within our decision making framework is important, although we recognise that there are some limits to the information

we hold and there is an ongoing need to boost our knowledge and the quality of our data in certain areas. Strengthening our knowledge base in order to ground the decisions we take in a solid evidence base, and fully utilising the data and knowledge available at all levels, is a key aim of this strategy.

We also acknowledge the need to strengthen some of the management structures we have in place, particularly in relation to quota, and will use lessons from the trialling of Quota Management Groups to inform future improvements to our quota management functions. To supplement this we will also review the arrangements in place for non-sector vessels and deliver change where needed.

## Communications and engagement

Given the wide range of groups that exist in the fisheries sector, and with an interest in fisheries, it is sometimes difficult to include all fisheries stakeholders in our direct decision making structures. In this, we recognise the important role that representative bodies can play in engaging at a local level and also the role that our coastal offices can play in reaching a wide section of the fishing community. Where we need broader input to shape our direction, we will consult widely and comprehensively to gather views from across the stakeholder and public spectrum, although there will be times where quick management decisions are needed and where this won't always be possible.

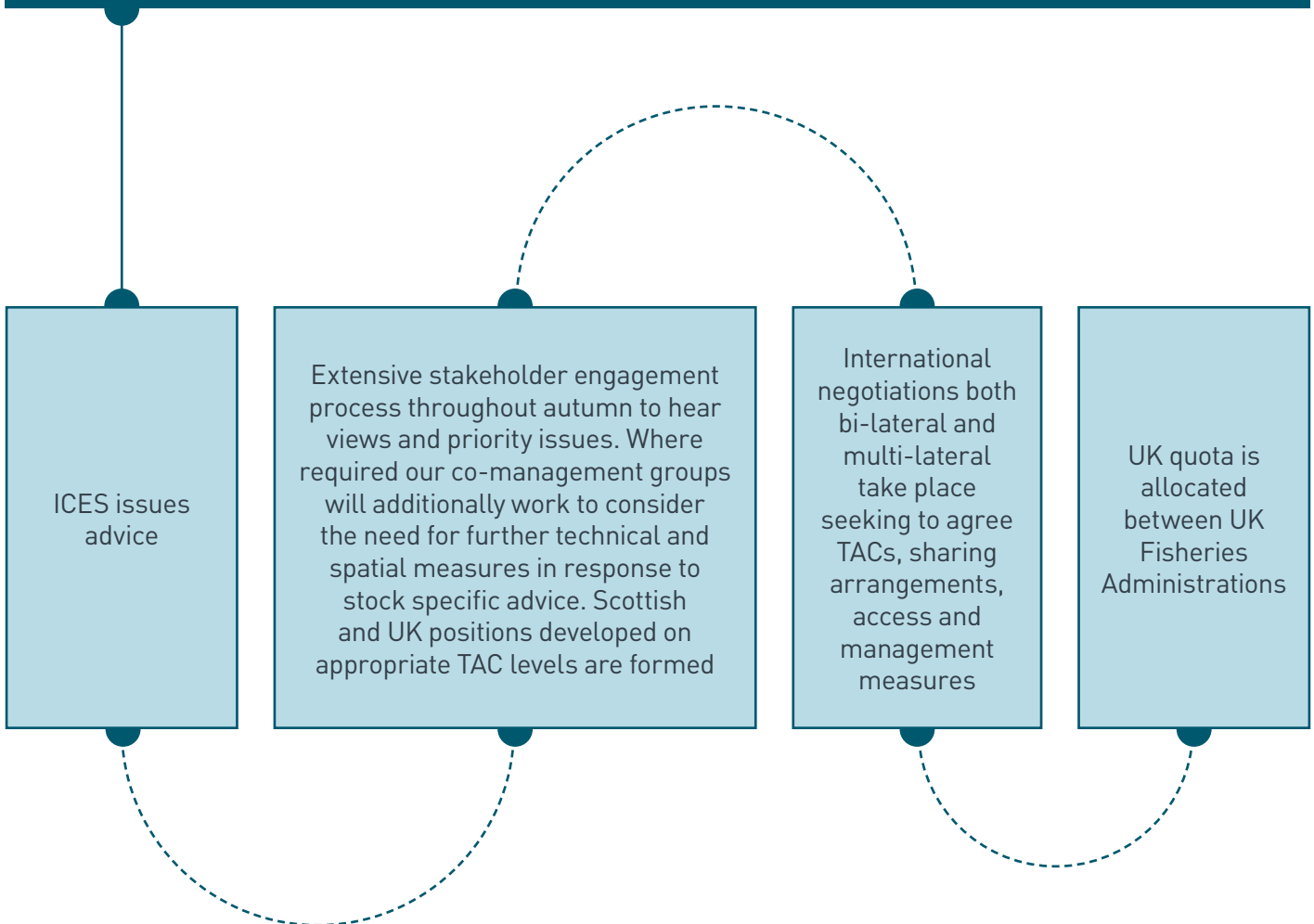
To support this we will also take steps to streamline and improve the way in which we communicate and engage with stakeholders. Fisheries management can often be fast-moving, with decisions taken at pace, particularly around the setting of fishing opportunities and end year international negotiations. This can sometimes make communication and engagement challenging. But if we make full and better use of modern technology, for example through social media, we can effectively and regularly keep interested parties involved and informed about decisions which affect them. We will test a variety of approaches on this and seek feedback as to their effectiveness, evolving our approach as new techniques and technologies become available.

# OUR COMMITMENT TO CO-MANAGEMENT

On an annual basis we will publish a comprehensive communications and engagement plan, setting out the key decision points on different policies, and when and how we will engage with stakeholders on specific issues. We will include improvements to our online presence as part of this, providing an easy and accessible way for stakeholders to get the information they need.

The fisheries year follows an established rhythm, based around the production of scientific advice and the setting of agreed Total Allowable Catch (TAC) levels designed to deliver sustainable fishing activity. Stakeholder engagement is built in throughout this annual process and in the future many of our objectives will necessarily be closely aligned to our Future Catching Policy which will integrate decisions on technical and spatial management measures into the process.

## A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF FISHERIES WILL BROADLY FOLLOW THE FOLLOWING PATTERN:





# — Our International Approach




## OUR INTERNATIONAL APPROACH

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Scotland is a major fishing nation in the north-east Atlantic and we manage our fisheries in partnership at an international level. Whilst responsibility for management decisions is often defined by lines on a map, fish stocks rarely respect such boundaries.

Departure from the EU has changed the international context in which we operate, but we are determined to continue to play a full and key role in supporting and delivering international fisheries management, whether it be through our contribution to science and technology, through our international compliance contribution which sees us sharing intelligence and best working practices, or through taking joint decisions on the management of shared stocks. This includes continuing to play a full and active role in ICES, where Scottish scientists have and continue to make significant contributions to all levels of the ICES advisory process. Scotland is already well regarded by other nations and our opinions, knowledge and expertise will continue to be important in the future.

 **We will be a responsible management partner, and will not be afraid to challenge others to increase standards where this will help support our fish stocks, our industries, and the communities they support.”**

As a Coastal State the UK controls and manages fishing in its Exclusive Economic Zone in accordance with international obligations. We will work closely with the UK Government and as part of the UK delegation, the Scottish Government will be an active partner at international negotiations, especially in relation to stocks which are predominantly present in Scottish waters and in relation to access to Scottish waters by foreign vessels. We do not envision a scenario where access to Scottish waters does not form a key component of annual negotiations.

Our negotiating approach is underpinned by a set of guiding principles that will remain consistent from year-to-year and which are consistent with the need to progress towards Good Environmental Status:

- Conduct negotiations on a principled rather than positional basis.
- Comply fully with a range of international conventions and obligations in particular the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
- Manage stocks using Total Allowable Catches (TACs) where appropriate – this will include considering introducing TACs for current non-quota species.

# OUR INTERNATIONAL APPROACH

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- Inform management decisions using best available scientific advice.
- Ensure foreign vessels fishing in Scottish waters meet the same high standards that apply to Scottish vessels in Scottish waters. We will also ensure that Scottish vessels meet these standards when fishing elsewhere.
- Support international compliance by sharing best practice and proactive engagement and collaboration.
- Protect environmental, economic and social outcomes by supporting a progressive move to Fmsy<sup>8</sup> (fishing at MSY, i.e. at sustainable levels) for all stocks, without setting arbitrary targets and in mixed fisheries by the use of scientifically established Fmsy ranges.
- Reduce unnecessary discards as part of our Future Catching Policy to reduce waste and improve the sustainability of our fish stocks, protecting them for future generations.
- Monitor and reduce incidental bycatch (including mammals, birds and cetaceans).
- Protect and enhance the resilience and socio-economic wellbeing of our industry and the wellbeing of people and communities associated with it.
- Ensure sustainable exploitation of stocks through the establishment of comprehensive TAC sharing arrangements according to zonal attachment principles and development of stock-specific Long Term Management Strategies (LTMS).

To do this we will:

- Be an active and critical part of the UK delegation at international negotiations.
- Support new fishing opportunities in our own waters and further afield.
- Take a co-management approach, particularly in relation to critical management issues requiring a collective response.
- Through our Future Catching Policy we will involve industry, environmental stakeholders, and compliance experts directly in 'rule setting', to help advise on practical solutions and to increase buy-in to implementation of policies.

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<sup>8</sup> Fmsy refers to the fishing mortality rate consistent with Maximum Sustainable Yield. This is the highest yield which can be continuously taken from the stock under average conditions without significantly affecting the ability of that stock to reproduce.

- Move towards more active and responsive management of stocks, particularly in response to issues and problems.
- Continue to engage with the EU to influence future reform of the CFP where appropriate and to demonstrate leadership in addressing key issues and challenges.
- Seek to influence the approach of others, demonstrating best practice and encouraging other fishing nations, both EU and non-EU, to meet certain standards including around fair treatment of workers and tackling modern slavery.

We will take an integrated approach to stock management, explicitly linking stock advice, quotas, and management measures such as technical and spatial rules, through our Future Catching Policy.

We also want to help ensure our fishing fleet, and others fishing in our waters are compliant with the management measures that we put in place and we will do this through our Promote, Prevent, Respond approach to Compliance. Taking a risk based approach, we will analyse and assess the risks associated with those management measures to take decisions on a range of compliance and enforcement options. Supporting this approach we will continue to use traditional measures such as using our Marine Protection Vessels (MPVs) to undertake inspections at sea, using drones and RIBS to monitor our inshore waters, and using our coastal inspectors to verify catches in port. We will also seek to continue to modernise our approach with additional measures, making full use of appropriate technology including, but not limited to, Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) and Artificial Intelligence (AI). The use of REM will help us to demonstrate correct and compliant activity by fishers, and will also help us to eliminate non-compliant behaviour where this occurs. It should be seen as a positive tool which we hope the vast majority of fishers will embrace.



## WORKING WITH THE UK

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The UK Fisheries Act (2020) has established a number of objectives which all UK Fisheries Administrations (UKFAs) are committed to supporting and delivering. They are:

- The sustainability objective
- The precautionary objective
- The ecosystem objective
- The scientific evidence objective
- The bycatch objective
- The equal access objective
- The national benefit objective, and
- The climate change objective

In the Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS), the Scottish Government, along with the other UK Fisheries Administrations (UKFAs), will set out policies for achieving those objectives. The JFS will also provide the framework under which we will exercise the powers provided for under that Act. Our Future Fisheries Management Strategy shape our input into the JFS.

The UK Fisheries Act also provides for Fisheries Management Plans which will detail the steps the UKFAs will take to recover and/or maintain stocks at sustainable levels.

As part of the UK Frameworks process, the UKFAs have agreed to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) supported by a number of operational agreements which will detail the day to day relationships between the UKFAs and how they will co-operate on technical and administrative matters, for example on co-ordinating scientific research or compliance activity.

Each UKFA is committed to working collaboratively with the others in order to ensure we deliver on our obligations. In many cases it makes sense to take a pan-UK approach given the mobile nature of the fleet and the living resources in the marine environment. However, there is also recognition that within each of these processes that, due to the differences between us in terms of our fleets and waters, there will be divergence between UKFAs in the policies set out, as is currently the case.

The Scottish Government will engage regularly with the other UKFAs and stakeholders to ensure that through our actions we can achieve the aims and objectives of this strategy whilst respecting our commitments locally and internationally.



# OUR 12 POINT ACTION PLAN

This action plan sets out how we will deliver the aspirations, principles and outcomes detailed within this strategy, alongside delivery of our international commitments and those detailed as part of the UK Fisheries Act. They link directly to the delivery of key Scottish Government priorities, particularly around:

- **Economy:** We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy.
- **Environment:** We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment.
- **Fair Work and Business:** We have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone.
- **Human Rights:** We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination.
- **International:** We are open, connected and make a positive contribution internationally.
- **Poverty:** We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally.
- **Communities:** We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe.
- **Safer working:** we work collaboratively to support training, awareness and improvements to the workplace that ensure safety of our fishermen is at the forefront of everyone's actions and behaviours.

1.

**WE WILL** promote fishing as an attractive and safe career of choice, with a focus on improving safety standards, fair work, supporting new entrants into the sector, and equal treatment regardless of national origin or gender. We will not tolerate illegal treatment of any worker in any part of fishing industry.

2.

**WE WILL** secure the resilience of the fishing industry, working with stakeholders to strengthen links to local and global markets, supporting diversification and exploring new fishing opportunities.

3.

**WE WILL** increase the benefit from fishing to local areas through our policies around allocation of additional quota, ensuring quota is in the hands of active fishers, and increasing the volume of fish landed into Scotland including through the introduction of a Scottish economic link licence condition in early 2022.

4.

**WE WILL** support delivery of a strong relationship between the fishing industry and local communities, with strengthened links to local supply chains, support for consumers to buy local / Scottish and recognising the importance of inward migration for remote and coastal communities.

# OUR 12 POINT ACTION PLAN

5.

**WE WILL** address issues around the shared marine space linking with wider developments through the Blue Economy Action Plan, considering how fishing interests can work alongside others marine users including offshore renewables.

6.

**WE WILL** strengthen our co-management processes and support transparent and responsive management to a local level wherever possible, in particular by strengthening the RIFG network. As part of this, we will always consider local community impact as part of our decision making process.

7.

**WE WILL** deliver a robust licensing regime to manage domestic and foreign vessels fishing in Scottish waters and will improve quota management arrangements for the non-sector fleet which are not administered by a Fish Producer Organisation or a Quota Management Group.

8.

**WE WILL** strengthen our quota management processes supported by the right management groups and delivery mechanisms, and through expanding the use of TACs where appropriate.

9.

**WE WILL** improve accountability and confidence in our seafood products and fishing operations, supported by a robust compliance regime, making full use of existing tools and new available technology, including REM and vessel tracking solutions, to deliver compliance and improve our knowledge base, ensuring that our decisions are grounded in the best available scientific advice and that we fish within sustainable limits.

10.

**WE WILL** deliver a robust Catching Policy, in partnership with our stakeholders, which links stock management with responsive and proportionate technical and spatial measures, which delivers a reduction in waste and which encourages compliance through appropriate enforcement actions, including the application of penalties where appropriate.

11.

**WE WILL** work with our stakeholders to deliver an ecosystem-based approach to management, including considering additional protections for spawning and juvenile congregation areas and restricting fishing activity or prohibiting fishing for species which are integral components of the marine food web, such as sandeels.

12.

**WE WILL** take action to understand and mitigate the impacts of climate change on our seas, including supporting delivery of the Scottish Government's net zero targets including by reducing vessel emissions and encouraging shorter supply chains. In addition we will support and encourage sustainable waste management in our fleets, growing our circular economy and reducing marine litter.









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