

Ailsa McLellan submission of 22 August 2022

PE1951/U: Reinstate inshore coastal limit on the use of dredge and trawl fishing gears

I am writing in response to the Scottish Government's response to the Scottish Creel Fishermen Federation (SCFF) petition, dated 4th August. I am in support of the SCFF call for the reinstatement of an inshore limit on trawling and dredging, which I believe is long overdue. In my view, our inshore waters are currently managed for the convenience of the trawl and dredge sector at the expense of fin fish fisheries, the environment, and coastal communities; this has to change.

Our west coast fishery is dominated by the mobile sector, who have almost total access to grounds, despite the 'complex habitats' that the Scottish Government acknowledge exist. This is about more than just prawns and scallops. What about our devastated fin fish stocks? Many are currently labelled 'choke species', with no plans in place to recover them. What about the climate and biodiversity crisis we are sliding into? The Scottish Government's [2022 Marine assessment](#) shows that our coastal waters are in dire straits with many Priority Marine Features (PMFs) - the foundation of coastal biodiversity- in free fall.

[The report provided by the Scottish Parliament's own research centre, SPICe](#), states that Scotland's marine environment holds more carbon than all of our terrestrial trees, peats and soils combined. There [does not appear to be information available](#) on how to 'recover' damaged marine muds, yet less than 5% of our inshore seabed is currently protected from fishing methods which damage it. The constant refusal of the Scottish Government to act on its own data is, in my view, a dereliction of duty to every single person impacted by climate change, and far from being world leading, it makes us look out of step and blinkered when it comes to managing the marine environment to help mitigate the climate crisis. In my opinion, an inshore limit would address the climate and biodiversity crisis by protecting coastal mud, while allowing the recovery of PMFs, *and* fisheries.

The Scottish Government's response mentions distracting 'continued calls' for a limit and requests that the SCFF stick to 'established groups'. To me, it feels as though SCFF are being told to 'get back in your box'. Why should they? Given the perceived failures in recent fisheries management, from a commercial and environmental point of view is it

any wonder the SCFF are calling for change? I believe all sectors must have an equal say in how our common waters are managed.

The talk of 'world leading' and 'alternative plans' is, in my view, just that – talk. There is no evidence of an improving picture. In my opinion, it is the same old story with people shouting for change, and Scottish Government saying no because the mobile sector don't want it.

I believe we need an inshore limit as a priority, and fishermen should be supported through the changes that this will bring. On our current trajectory, many of them will be put out of business by poor fisheries management and climate change, so, in my view, it is doing no one a favour to keep kicking this issue into the long grass.