



FISHING QUOTAS - CONSULTATION ON THE ALLOCATION OF SCOTTISH ADDITIONAL QUOTA FROM 2024

Report by Depute Chief Executive

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek homologation of the Comhairle's response to the Scottish Government consultation on the allocation of Scottish additional quota for 2024, which closed on 11 January 2024.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 On 19 October 2023 the Scottish Government opened a consultation seeking views on how it should allocate a portion of additional Scottish fish quota, stating that sea fish quotas are a national asset. This additional quota is issued to the UK as a result of the UK leaving the European Union.
- 2.2 There are various options for how the quota could be allocated. Previously, additional quota was distributed using the historic track-record method, with a small amount being allocated to non-sector vessels. Various options are discussed in the consultation - however some of these options have been ruled out by Scottish Government, as they either require further consultation or due to the administrative effort required at present being considered too great.
- 2.3 The Comhairle's response to the consultation is appended to this report. The proposed response was circulated to the Primary Industries Member Officer Working Group (PI MOWG) in advance - for finalising and approval - prior to formal submission. It is proposed that the Comhairle's response be homologated, given that the closing date of 11 January 2024 preceded the current committee series.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 **It is recommended that the Comhairle agrees to homologate its response to the Scottish Government Consultation on allocation of additional quota, as appended to the Report.**

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Appendix: Scottish Government consultation on the allocation of additional quota from 2024: Response by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

Background Papers: [The Allocation of Scottish Additional Quota From 2024 - Consultation Document](#)
[The Allocation of Scottish Additional Quota From 2024 - Data Annex](#)

IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

| Resource Implications | Implications/None |
|------------------------|--|
| Financial | None relating to the Comhairle |
| Legal | None |
| Staffing | None |
| Assets and Property | None |
| Strategic Implications | Implications/None |
| Risk | None |
| Equalities | None |
| Corporate Strategy | Support community sustainability, particularly in relation to sustainable, traceable fishing and onshore processing; supports growth and resilience within the fisheries sector in targeting continued local food production and contributing towards the objectives of the Islands Growth Deal (IGD) Outer Hebrides Food and Drink Programme. |
| Environmental Impact | None |
| Consultation | Appended to the report |

BACKGROUND

- 5.1 Sea fish quotas and how they are distributed can be difficult to understand. Historically, the majority of fish quotas are fixed following annual negotiations with other coastal states. The UK's share of quota opportunities is determined by the Secretary of State and then apportioned between the UK Fisheries Administrations - with the Scottish Government allocating quota to vessels administered in Scotland. Fisheries management is a devolved issue, particularly in relation to sea fisheries quota - however fishing businesses are permitted to move, swap, lease transfer and sell quota. This allows larger fishing businesses to purchase quota and hold it, resulting in a system where a small number of businesses hold the vast majority of quota for a certain species. This is particularly the case in the pelagic sector.
- 5.2 The Scottish Government states that it *"aims to ensure fishing communities retain their fishing rights, which are a national asset"*. Also, that *"The Scottish Government does not charge/ require payment for access to fishing opportunities, all quotas are distributed free of charge. Any exchange of money takes place separate to Government."* The majority of sea fish quota is distributed based on Fixed Quota Allocation (FQA) shares that are linked to each fishing licence, with each FQA unit providing a share of the UK's annual quota for corresponding fish stocks.
- 5.3 The Comhairle response to the consultation is appended to this report. The proposed response was circulated to the Primary Industries Member Officer Working Group (PI MOWG) in advance - for finalising and approval - prior to formal submission by the closing-date of 11 January.

CONTEXT

- 6.1 The vast majority of Scottish sea fish quota is distributed through Fixed Quota Allocation (FQA). Since its withdrawal from the EU, the UK now receives a higher share of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for some fish stocks, and additional quotas for species which it previously had no share or access to.

- 6.2 The Scottish Government intends to maintain the FQA system for allocating existing quota share. Existing quota is defined as the UK's share of the total allowable catch. Additional quota is defined as any quota that is greater than the UK's existing quota share. The Scottish Government recognises two sources of additional quota. One source is as a result of exiting the EU and the second is gains from transfers of quota to the UK from other coastal states.
- 6.3 In its 'Future Fisheries Management Discussion Document', the Scottish Government proposes that at least 50% of Scotland's Additional Quota (AQ) should be distributed via mechanism other than fixed quota allocation. The document stated that options for allocating Additional Quota differently should be developed with stakeholders. Scotland has allocated 100% of its previous additional quota using an allocation mechanism other than fixed FQM units so as to target quota to active Scottish vessels and non-sector vessels only.
- 6.4 The Scottish government state that *"Fish stocks are a public resource and a national asset. The economic and social benefits that flow from fishing should be shared widely across the nation"* (in line with the national benefit objective set out in the Fisheries Act 2020 and as discussed in the Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS): *"Sea fish quota should be distributed in line with the Fisheries Act 2020, AQ will be distributed based on criteria that are:*
- *Transparent and objective;*
 - *Include criteria relating to environmental, social, and economic factors; and*
 - *Additionally, national fisheries authorities must also seek to incentivise the use of selective fishing gear, and the use of techniques that have a reduced impact on the environment."*
- 6.5 Previously the Scottish government allocated additional quota in two ways. The greater share of additional quota was allocated based on Historic Track Record (HTR). The remainder was allocated to non-sector vessels (under 10-metre vessels and over 10-metre vessels). In allocating this quota the key aims were that it should:
- Be consistent with the Scottish Government's Fisheries Management Strategy and Blue Economy Action Plan;
 - Support the active fishing fleet and help reduce their business costs; and
 - Help businesses with diversification of fishing operations through access to fishing opportunities.

ALLOCATION OPTIONS

- 7.1 The Scottish Government have identified a number of different distribution methods and considerations for allocation of additional quota. The historic track record method allocates fishing quota based on what a vessel landed previously for each fish stock. Therefore, the share of additional quota each vessel receives would be based on the vessel's share of all landings for that stock during an identified reference period. This would then increase allocations to vessels that have landed those species in the recent past. This distribution mechanism excludes vessels that are unable to access certain quotas and therefore unable to build up a track-record. Also, if quota is unable to be leased or bought then vessels cannot build up a track-record and will never therefore be issued any additional quota. The benefits of this method of distribution is that it benefits those with the capacity and vessels capable of catching the additional quota species.
- 7.2 Another distribution option is to have a special allocation to non-sector groups. There are two such non-sector groups: 10m and under vessels; and over 10m vessels. The majority of Scottish vessels are in the under 10m group and primarily target shellfish. Vessels in the non-sector groups have been more restricted than sectoral vessels in fishing for quota stocks. It is also widely believed that allocating additional quota to these groups could result in a more equitable spread of the socio-economic benefits arising from Scotland's quota and encourage the use of fishing gear with a lower environmental impact. These under 10m vessels methods are often associated with higher

selectivity, reduced bycatch of fish species and a lower impact on the marine environment. Also allocating these vessels species covered by quota will also allow for diversification and remove fishing pressure from non-quota species. Some criticism of distributing quota to the non-sector is that where this fishing opportunity has been provided to this fleet in the past, it has often not been fully utilised. There has also been capacity issues where smaller vessels are not capable of fishing for certain stocks or a lack of onshore infrastructure to handle the resultant catch as well as geographic issues where certain species may not even be present in these areas.

7.3 Allocation of fishing opportunities equally between all vessels or a section of vessels has also been given as an option for distribution of the additional quota. This method considers sharing additional quota between the fleet, or a specific segment of the fleet, in an equal manner. The consultation identifies two mechanisms under this option:

- Distribute all additional quota equally between all active vessels;
- Distribute pelagic additional quota equally between active pelagic vessels, specifically, the large pelagic vessels that target these species.

(a) Under the first option each active fishing vessel in the Scottish fleet would be eligible for a share of Scotland's additional quota. This would allow each vessel the potential to develop their fishing opportunities and represents an equitable distribution option. Where fishing opportunity has been lost this could be the only possibly of some vessels receiving quota, especially pelagic quota. However, problems can arise where vessels may not operate in areas where the additional quota is found or have the ability to catch the stocks in question. Also, if the quota allocation isn't significant enough to be targeted then stocks may not be caught at all. This last issue should be less of a concern as the stocks are still in our waters, though not actively being targeted which may result in an increase in the health of certain stocks.

(b) The option to allocate additional quota equally between those vessels identified as pelagic vessels – i.e. 21 vessels in the entire Scottish fleet - is problematic. Pelagic species accounts for 85-88% of all the Additional Quota share available in Scotland. To allocate such a large share of AQ to 21 vessels would appear to be unbalanced and repressive to the rest of the industry. In 1973 the volume of pelagic and whitefish landings into Stornoway was 97.5% of total overall landings. This has been reduced to extremely low percentage numbers, as quota has been lost and opportunities have not been made available to this point in time.

7.4 A number of responses to previous consultations advocated allocating additional quota to those vessels which land into Scotland – as opposed to ports in other parts of the UK or abroad, as this would bring greater benefits to Scotland. Landings into Scotland extend the social and economic benefit arising from Scottish quota beyond those involved in the catching of fish, as this results in greater activity in Scotland's ports, processing sectors and other onshore industries. The consultation requires consideration of whether landings into Scotland should be used as a basis for distributing:

- All stocks; or
- Only those stocks for which economic link provisions do not apply.

(a) Under this option all or a proportion of additional quota is awarded to vessels based on their landings of particular stocks in a qualifying period. There would also be other factors that need to be considered under this option:

- Should this option be linked to Historic Track Record (HTR); or
- Allocation of Fishing Opportunities Equally Between all?
- Should vessels be required to land a set percentage of their total catch for a particular stock into Scotland before qualifying for additional quota?
- What would the qualification period be?
- There are a number of species for which Scotland has a limited processing sector and home market, should these species be removed from the provision?

- 7.5 One method for allocation of additional quota would be to only give access to vessels with independent accreditation. Under this option the allocation would be made to vessels with an independent accreditation in recognition of standards achieved for conditions aboard the vessel or the manner in which fishing operations have been conducted. This could be utilised as a stand-alone basis for allocating quota or linked to other options set out in the consultation document. For example, a vessel would get all or a portion of the additional quota under alternative options based on having such a standard. It is proposed that eligibility for additional quota for pelagic species be linked to pelagic vessels that have these accreditations. However, this may not be a fair distribution method, as it would disadvantage those without accreditation and allocate the vast majority of quota to a small number of already very prosperous vessels/ fishing businesses.
- 7.6 The consultation identifies *“exceptionally providing additional quota as a result of lost fishing opportunities”* as another form of distribution. There are competing uses for Scotland’s seas with different sectors and industries seeking to make use of the marine space. In addition, there is a need to ensure the right environmental protections are in place to address the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. It is noted that this could result the removal of established fishing opportunities leaving no ready alternative for some vessels. Where the ongoing viability of a fishing business has been affected, additional quotas offers the potential to help mitigate impacts on such vessels help diversify fishing operations. This would require careful consideration to ensure vessels were capable of using the additional quota opportunity, the potential financial impact on the business of the intervention and a requirement for clear evidence that alternative fishing opportunities were not available to the impacted vessel. The allocation of any quota would require to be open and transparent however this may be very appropriate in areas where large developments displace existing fishing fleets.
- 7.7 Applications from sectoral groups on environmental criteria is another method being proposed. It is proposed under this method that additional quota is retained, and sectoral groups bid for the retained quota on behalf of some or all the vessels they administer. Sectoral Groups are bodies recognised by a UK Fisheries Administration for the management of sea fishing vessels involved in the production of sea fish products. They hold devolved quota management responsibilities, as provided under the UK and national quota management rules of the Fisheries Administration which recognises them. To access this pool of AQ, it is envisaged that Sectoral Groups would be required to set out in an application form how the vessels that seek to benefit from this fishing opportunity would meet one or both of the requirements;
- Use of selective fishing gear;
 - Use of fishing techniques that have a reduced impact on the environment.
- (a) It is expected that any Sectoral Group awarded quota under this initiative would be required to report on how the quota has been utilised following distribution. Failure to use the fishing opportunity in line with requirements would result in the Sectoral Group being required to compensate the Scottish Government with quota the following year.

INSENTIVISED SELECTIVITY

- 8.1 Scottish Government administered the Conservation Credits Scheme, which ran under the Cod Recovery Plan, between 2008-2017 - whereby a flat-rate effort allocation was made to vessels, but they could ‘buy’ additional effort by agreeing to operate gear with selectivity greater than the legal minimum. The result being that vessels that fished with this more selective fishing gear was able to operate at sea for a greater period than those without. In a similar way, quota could be allocated to vessels that adapted fishing behaviour to allow for a reduced environmental impact.

- 8.2 The Marine Directorate would retain the total awards made centrally until the conclusion of the calendar year. Only then would those amounts be credited to the vessel's group and cover the landings made by vessels. This would help ensure that vessels participating in the scheme do not use the incentivised quota as a tradeable commodity and compliance with the scheme over the full year. Non-compliant vessels would not be awarded their quota share on the grounds of non-compliance. The Scottish government view this as complex and do not plan to put such a system in place yet but suggest it could tie-in it in with the Future Catching Policy and in will be developed with input from the fisheries management and conservation group.

COMMUNITY QUOTA SCHEMES

- 9.1 The Scottish Government states that *"Community Quota Schemes could allow for the utilisation of fishing opportunities in line with local priorities, develop socio-economic benefit and allow for communities to develop opportunities for new entrants to the fleet. Such a move would allow for local quota management that could seek to increase local governance in fisheries, widen socio-economic benefit from Scotland's quota and allow for diversification – particularly important to Scotland's shellfish and inshore fleets."* Distribution to community quota schemes would then generate revenue for the local regions and allow fair access for the entirety of the fleet in these areas. It would continue to do so and allow fleets to diversify and also if it were distributed this way would also allow coastal communities to develop markets on a local bases rather than the catch being landed to foreign ports and have little benefits to the local region where the fish was caught. This should effectively be the methodology by which all quota is distributed. Local authorities with devolved powers over the allocation of the fishing quotas in their waters – with management of these waters on a local or regional basis – would mean that many of the current issues with quotas could be resolved. This would give many coastal areas a much-needed boost, with the revenue generated reinvested in local infrastructure and processing capability for the fleet – rather than lost to a small number of exceptionally large fishing businesses.
- 9.2 The Comhairle currently runs a community quota scheme through a Producer Organisation (PO). This has proven to be successful, with 100% of the available quota leased in most years. The scheme allows for local vessels to catch quota stocks and lease the required tonnage for a fraction of the landed value of the stocks. For example, a ton of nephrops quota costs local vessels £40 to lease, but a ton landed to the market can currently achieve anywhere between £6,000 to £10,000. The availability of this quota scheme available to local vessels has been instrumental in maintaining a strong and profitable local fleet. The revenue generated from this scheme has also been designated for reinvestment in the local fishing industry. Should Additional Quota be distributed to community quota schemes it would have a huge impact on the fishing industry on a local level and result in more diversification and regional reinvestment in much needed infrastructure.
- 9.3 The Scottish Government states that it does not intend to use this methodology as a form of distribution due to the potentially significant administrative and potential financial costs associated with doing so. Secondly, that consideration would be required as to the question of how quota management responsibility would be devolved to local groups - and that no area has been identified to commence such an initiative. Given the overwhelming benefits such schemes could have, this is considered to be a disappointing position to take on such a rare opportunity.

DIVERSIFICATION OF FISHING OPPORTUNITIES

- 10.1 In setting out an option for the special allocation for non-sector groups to allow for diversification (primarily away from shellfish stocks) the Scottish Government also wishes to explore whether this proposal could be extended to larger or specific vessels to enable them to fish for stocks they have not targeted previously. It is understood that this could be done under a system where fishers are

invited to apply for additional quota. This process could establish fishing opportunities for new entrants and facilitate fishing with lower environmental impact gear for a target species where there has been a significant increase in additional quota, such as pelagic species. This would allow more of the fishing fleet to target pelagic species, which many have never had the opportunity to do so. However, this would require further consultation and is not currently an option being considered for the allocation of Additional Quota from 2024.

HISTORY OF COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS RELATING TO FISHING

- 11.1 The Fisheries Act 2020 sets out that a criterion that can be used to distribute fishing opportunities is one which relates to a vessel's history of compliance with regulatory requirements relating to fishing. This could be met by restricting or withholding a vessel's access to fishing opportunities if it breaches fishing regulations. The consultation questions whether this option could be utilised in Scotland in relation to additional quota. For example, if the Marine Directorate determines that a vessel has not adequately complied with legislation or regulations, it could elect not to allocate additional quota to the vessel. Again, the Scottish Government feels this change is not deliverable by the Marine Directorate for 2024 quotas and requires further development.

CONCLUSIONS

- 12.1 This consultation represents a real opportunity to redistribute fish stock quotas more equitably and to enhancement of local fishing industries on the whole. This is also a rare opportunity to issue quota to parts of our fishing industry that may not get the opportunity to access it again. The current pelagic fleet in Scotland is disproportionately advantaged in comparison to the rest of the fishing fleet - and to issue that sector with the vast majority of Additional Quota from 2024 would be considered extremely unfair.
- 12.2 The Comhairle's response to the consultation is appended to this report. The proposed response was circulated to the Primary Industries Member Officer Working Group (PI MOWG) in advance - for finalising and approval - prior to formal submission. It is recommended that the Comhairle's response be homologated, given that the closing date of 11 January preceded the current committee series.

APPENDIX 1

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON THE ALLOCATION OF ADDITIONAL SCOTTISH QUOTA FROM 2022: RESPONSE BY COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

Consultation Questions

1. Should AQ be awarded on the basis of landings by individual vessels? Please provide reasoning for your answer.

No.

Additional quota should be distributed on a fairer bases for example through the use of community quota schemes. Using Historic Track Record (HTR) results in those that have received more and those that have not received anything - and may never have an opportunity to access certain quota. For example, when it comes to Pelagic species an exceedingly small number of operators control the vast majority of quota. It is extremely rare that this quota ever comes onto the market for sale or for lease - therefore very few vessels ever have an opportunity to build up a track-record. The rationale for using this method is that it reduces costs to the industry. The vessels that have the vast majority of the pelagic quota earn multiple millions of pounds in a short period of time - and therefore costs of leasing quota would be miniscule to such operators. Scottish Government cannot sell the quota, rather it has to be distributed without charge. If this is simply handed to operators on an HTR basis, that immediately develops value as a commodity and makes these companies wealthier. If it were distributed to community quota schemes it would generate revenue for the local regions and also allow fair access for the entirety of the fleet in these areas. It would continue to do so and allow fleets to diversify. Also, if it were distributed this way it would also enable coastal communities to develop markets on a local basis, rather than the catch being landed to foreign ports and therefore have no benefits for the local regions where the fish was caught.

2. Should the reference period for assessing an active vessel's HTR be fixed (2015-19), another period, or should it move to a rolling five-year period? Please provide reasoning for your answer.

Don't know.

The historic track-record presents several issues when using this method for quota distribution. It would be more accurate to move to a rolling five-year period in order to allow for the most up-to-date information to be gathered. If, however, the quota was distributed to regional community quota schemes vessels could access quota at an optimal time for seasonal fisheries, or when targeted stocks are less plentiful and the issues with HTR are mitigated.

3. Should the provision to enable vessel owners to retain an HTR between the original and subsequent replacement vessel be continued? Please provide reasoning for your answer.

Don't know.

This is another issue that HTR presents. If the quota was distributed to regional community quota schemes, then quota can be purchased by active vessels when its required. If vessels were sold or spent periods of time inactive, it would not affect the quota they received if they were leasing it when required. Similarly with new entrants, as they would have the same ability to access quota without having to build up five years of HTR.

4. Should Special Allocations of AQ be awarded to the non-sector? Please provide reasoning for your answer.

Yes.

Vessels in the non-sector groups have been more restricted than sectoral vessels in fishing for quota stocks. Without the Scottish Government allocating to these vessels some may never have an opportunity to acquire a share of these quotas. Allocating additional quota to these groups would result in the use of fishing gear with a much lower environmental impact. Under 10m vessels methods are often associated with higher selectivity, reduced bycatch of fish species and a lower impact on the marine environment. Additionally, by allocating these vessels species covered by quota, it would also allow for diversification and remove the heavy dependence on non-quota species. It would allow for a fairer distribution of the additional quota and facilitate more resilience in the smaller Scottish fishing districts.

“Some criticism of distributing quota to the non-sector is that where this fishing opportunity has been provided to this fleet in the past, it has often not been fully utilised.” This should not be a cause for concern to SG - as where these species are not caught, they are not lost. These stocks will continue to exist in our waters and continue to be a natural resource even spawning and improving the health of the stocks. The point made in the consultation on the “lack of onshore infrastructure to handle the resultant catch” can be resolved with a wider distribution of quota across the entire fleet. That would allow for investment to be made in processing and handling facilities in multiple locations if there was the possibility of certain stocks being landed into these areas. It would provide much needed support to coastal ports and districts as well as reducing food miles and not have as much of our natural resources taken from our coastal waters and processed in foreign ports.

Geographic issues where certain species are not present in certain areas could be resolved through regional groups and local management of these quota stocks.

5. Should these Special Allocations be focused on the 10 metre and under non sector vessels?

Yes.

These special allocations would allow for a diversification away from these vessels’ heavy reliance on Nephrops. It would ensure that stocks were caught and processed within Scotland and that the additional onshore value would not be lost to foreign ports. By issuing quota to smaller vessels, it would also allow for many more new entrants to come into the industry - as the cost of entry would be more achievable than, for example, entering the current pelagic fleet. It would be of greater economic benefit to Scotland of having a larger number of smaller vessels, than a small number of very large vessels holding the vast majority of available quota.

6. What stocks should we award to the non-sector? Please provide reasoning for your answer.

All stocks available through any additional quota received should be awarded. It should be fairly distributed if this method of distribution is chosen. Particularly for pelagic species, as the pelagic fleet is currently very profitable, holding a vastly disproportionate share of the existing quota.

7. Should any of the previous Special Allocations (see Table 2) be increased/decreased? Please provide reasoning for your answer.

Don’t know.

This would need to be increased or decreased in line with current stock level data.

8. Should the Special Allocation be a fixed tonnage (no year-to-year change in the tonnage available to these groups) or a fixed percentage (delivers an output commensurate to Scotland's share)? Please provide reasoning for your answer.

Don't know.

If the share of additional quota were to increase and tonnages and percentages were to stay fixed this would not allow for all the quota to be issued - however a fixed allocation would allow for future planning. The most important issue in this case is that vessels receive a share of additional quota that is substantial enough to ensure it is viable for these vessels to fish for the additional species.

9. Should the Scottish Government have the capacity to vary the tonnages available to the non-sector from year to year, so as to increase tonnages for stocks where there is clear demand and vice-versa? Please provide reasoning for your answer.

Don't know.

This would need to be done carefully so as not to disadvantage the smaller vessels that may take time to diversify their efforts. The larger pelagic fleet will always have the capacity and capability to catch additional stock, however smaller vessels that may not have the financial means to make the alterations to these vessels immediately must be allowed time to do so. This is a unique opportunity to re-establish a pelagic fishery amongst our smaller coastal ports, reduce food-miles and increase food security in our rural communities. This should be fostered and allowed to develop rather than prioritize a pelagic fleet that can catch hundreds of tons of fish at a time and deliver it all to foreign ports, resulting - as is so often the case - having to purchase our own fish from foreign markets.

10. Should AQ fishing opportunities be distributed on an equal basis between all active commercial fishing vessels? Please provide reasoning for your answer.

Yes.

With the vast majority of quota available being pelagic, and pelagic species being widespread around our coastline there is no issue with allocating this to the entirety of the Scottish fleet on an equitable basis. The argument of not catching the entire quota of fish fully should not be of concern, as this is additional quota which will not impact the profitability of the existing pelagic fleet. If the stocks aren't caught, they remain in our seas to breed and improve the health of our stocks. However, equitable distribution across the fleet could make a positive difference to the profitability of some smaller vessels. Where stocks are specifically located in a certain region this should be evenly distributed to the vessels in that region. With pelagic species being distributed throughout the whole Scottish coastline, this does not apply to these species.

11. Should pelagic AQ fishing opportunities be distributed equally between the recognised pelagic fleet (as set out above)? Please provide reasoning for your answer.

No.

The Scottish Government should see this unique opportunity for what it is - a chance to re-establish pelagic fisheries in our smaller coastal ports, reduce food miles, and increase food security in our rural areas. We can keep the fish caught in our Scottish waters to be processed in our country and add value to our economy and port infrastructure. This opportunity should be fostered and allowed to develop rather

than prioritize a pelagic fleet that currently benefits disproportionately from existing quota distribution methods. These vessels deliver millions of pounds worth of fish to foreign ports annually, resulting in lost revenue to Scotland. To prioritise a mere 21 (already exceptionally prosperous) vessels with such a rare opportunity is appalling! There should not be any additional quota issued to these vessels, as the pelagic quota system is already flawed - benefiting the very few rather than the many.

12. Should landings into Scotland be used as a basis for allocating AQ? Please provide reasoning for your answer.

Yes.

Additional quota should be regulated to ensure that all additional quota stocks are landed into Scottish ports. If this could be extended to all quotas caught by Scottish vessels in Scottish waters that would also be a worthwhile amendment in the future through the future catching policy legislation. The loss of fish stocks landed to foreign ports has a detrimental effect on our coastal towns and the inshore fishing fleet in particular. This could be avoided by issuing the additional quota to smaller inshore vessels that would not have the ability to transit to foreign ports to land Scottish caught quota stocks.

13. Should AQ for those species covered by economic link licence conditions be excluded from this allocation criterion? This is on the basis that eligible vessels landing these stocks are already required to provide a benefit to Scotland through these economic link provisions.

No.

The value of landings and residual benefits to the Scottish economy is far greater than that of a link licence. Especially the possibility of developing opportunities within rural coastal areas for increasing markets, developing food processing, and selling capabilities and any other benefits additional quota could bring. This quota was lost to the EU, and it is now returning to Scotland, therefore the Scottish Government has a duty to ensure that it presents the greatest advantage to the Scottish fishing industry as a whole.

14. Are there any stocks which should be excluded from this provision and if so, why do you think this should be the case (for example, if there is only a limited domestic market)? Please provide reasoning for your answer.

No.

All stocks should be included. If there is a demand for a stock internationally but not domestically then it could be transported to the market via Scotland. The greatest gain from this additional quota for Scotland should always be to Scotland. If there is a demand for products from the non-domestic market, then additional revenues will be generated from Scottish landings and transportation from Scotland to the market destination.

15. Over what time period should vessels' landings into Scotland be a reference for this allocation method? Please provide reasoning for your answer.

The rolling five-year period seems appropriate. All vessels should be encouraged to land into Scottish ports that are operating within Scottish waters. This could be something that is developed in the future catching policy legislation.

16. Should there be a minimum qualifying percentage of landings for individual stocks into Scotland? That is: what percentage of landings of an individual stock into Scotland would be required to be eligible for a share of AQ? Please provide reasoning for your answer.

Yes.

It should be 100%. With the pelagic fleet holding large tonnages, even a small percentage represents a large amount of revenue lost to the Scottish economy. The vast majority of smaller vessels will land locally to Scottish ports and generate revenue for fish buyers, hauliers, and transportation networks. They would generate more income from their product if they could land to the international markets where their catch is destined. However, the scale of their operation dictates that they cannot do so – therefore, why should the much larger vessels be able to do so, increasing their profits and at the same time not generate as much revenue for the Scottish economy?

17. Should allocation of AQ be linked to the welfare of the crew in all fishing operations, or the manner in which fishing operations are carried out (as set out above)? Please provide reasoning for your answer.

Neither.

The industry is already well regulated, and this would disadvantage small vessels that may not need to comply with some of the regulation that larger vessels are required to comply with. Also, larger pelagic vessels that can catch their quota in a matter of weeks and spend the largest proportion of the year tied-up would find it far easier to satisfy this criterion than those that require to be at sea for the majority of the year.

18. Should this eligibility criterion be for pelagic vessels only initially? Please provide reasoning for your answer.

Don't know.

Under this option the allocation of additional quota would be made to vessels with an independent accreditation in recognition of standards achieved for conditions aboard the vessel or the manner in which fishing operations have been conducted. This should not be a means of distributing additional quota as it allows a disproportionate advantage to the pelagic fleet.

19. Should this be considered for demersal and Nephrops vessels in the future?

No.

This would disadvantage these vessels and not allow a fair distribution of additional quota.

20. Which standards or accreditations could be used as a basis for the allocation of AQ?

Quota should not be distributed in line with accreditations or standards. This is not how the quota system should be distributed, as the wealthy - that can afford to have the highest forms of accreditation - would gain a greater share of the available additional quota. The quota should be distributed evenly - and this opportunity to increase the available share of pelagic quota for the entire fleet should be issued to all vessels without current pelagic quota.

21. Should the option be available for vessels to potentially have access to AQ fishing opportunities where action by the Scottish Government has removed well established fishing opportunities with no ready alternative (on an exceptional basis)?

Yes.

With large developments planned in our coastal and offshore waters any assistance that could be given to limit the effects of displacement on the fishing industry would be welcomed.

22. Should a portion of AQ be retained and Sectoral Groups invited to bid for quota on behalf of some or all of the Scottish vessels they administer (as set out above)? Please provide reasoning for your answer.

Don't know.

This doesn't appear to be the ideal option for distribution. However, if implemented, it would need to be widely distributed by sectoral groups to the wider fleet - and not allow a small number of larger fishing businesses to be given the majority of quota. If it were to be allocated to the various POs to distribute via community schemes, this would result in greater value for the industry and a much fairer distribution outcome.

23. What fish species in particular should be set aside and what quantities? Please provide reasoning for your answer.

Any and all available additional quota species should be distributed evenly whatever measure is chosen for distribution.

24. Please provide any general, or specific, comments/views you may have on utilising AQ to allow for increased selectivity in fishing operations in line with the Future Catching Policy and FMAC.

If additional quota, especially pelagic or whitefish quota, is allocated to the smaller vessels in the fleet then naturally more selective fishing methods would be employed. This could be beneficial for both the inshore fleet and fish stocks.

25. If you have any comments on the benefits/costs arising from such a potential scheme, please provide them.

None at present as such a system would need to be specifically drawn up to fully assess its costs and benefits.

26. Please provide any general, or specific, comments/views you may have on the potential for using a portion of Additional Quota to manage 'Community Quotas'.

The Scottish Government states that: "Community Quota Schemes could allow for the utilisation of fishing opportunities in line with local priorities, develop socio-economic benefit and allow for communities to develop opportunities for new entrants to the fleet. Such a move would allow for local quota management that could seek to increase local governance in fisheries, widen socio-economic benefit from Scotland's quota and allow for diversification – particularly important to Scotland's shellfish and inshore fleets." Distribution to community quota schemes would then generate revenue for the local regions and allow fair access for the entirety of the fleet in these areas. It would continue to do so and allow fleets to diversify - and if distributed this way would also allow coastal communities to develop markets on a local basis, rather than the catch being landed to foreign ports and have no economic benefit to the local regions where the fish was caught.

This should be the blueprint as to how all quota is distributed, i.e. local authorities with devolved powers over the allocation of the fishing quotas in their own waters. The various well established Regional Inshore Fisheries Groups could manage these waters on a local or regional bases and many of the current issues with quotas would be resolved. It would give many coastal areas a much-needed boost and the revenue generated could be reinvested in infrastructure and processing capability for the fleet instead of being lost to a small number of multi-million-pound fishing businesses.

Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar currently runs a community quota scheme through a PO, and this has proven to be successful, with 100% of the available quota leased most years. It allows for local vessels to catch quota stocks and lease the required tonnage for a fraction of the landed value of the stocks. However, the local authority had to purchase it at market rates, though with this additional quota it could receive it cost free. Having this quota scheme available to local vessels has been instrumental in maintaining a strong and profitable local fleet. The revenue generated from this scheme has also been reinvested into the local fishing industry. Should additional quota be distributed to community quota schemes it would have a huge impact on the fishing industry on a local level and result in more diversification and regional reinvestment in much needed infrastructure.

It is disappointing to see the Scottish Government state that it does not intend to use this methodology as a form of distribution, due to the potentially significant administrative and financial costs associated with doing so. Secondly, that consideration would be required as to the question of how quota management responsibility would be devolved to local groups and that no area has been identified to commence such an initiative.

Given the overwhelming benefits such schemes could have, this is a very disappointing position to take on such a rare opportunity. This may be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to redistribute (particularly) pelagic quota in a more equitable manner. In 1973, 97.5% of landings by volume into Stornoway comprised pelagic and whitefish species. Since then, this volume has been steadily eroded to the point where the local fishing industry is extremely reliant on shellfish stocks. Should these stocks suffer a collapse then the entire industry would disappear in Stornoway.

27. If you have any comments on the benefits/costs arising from such potential schemes, please provide them.

The benefits of a community quota scheme far outweigh the costs involved. These schemes are currently being run successfully through POs, so it would require little additional cost to the Scottish Government. Given the advantages that such schemes could have, Scottish government should prioritize these as the only means by which to distribute additional quota.

28. Please provide any general, or specific comments, in relation to allowing for diversification of fishing opportunities through inviting applications for AQ.

This option could have positive effects on the fishing fleet to provide for them opportunities to fish for stocks they have not previously targeted for example pelagic species. Allowing vessels that have had no previous pelagic quota to diversify and access pelagic stock it could be instrumental to the longevity of the inshore fleet.

29. If you have any comments on the benefits/costs arising from such potential schemes, please provide them.

None at present, as such a system would need to be specifically drawn up to fully assess its costs and benefits. Any system that would allow (particularly) pelagic quota to be distributed to the wider fleet and not to the already very wealthy pelagic fleet would be a system worthy of support.

30. Please provide your views on whether this option should, or should not, be developed by the Scottish Government.

If the system was aimed at allocating all additional quota (especially pelagic species) to the wider fleet to allow diversification - and not allocate it to the existing pelagic fleet – then, yes, this is an option that should be developed by Scottish Government.

31. Specifically, what type of fishery-related breaches should result in a vessel becoming ineligible for an allocation of Additional Quota and over what period?

Unsure. The severity of the breaches would need to be examined and consequences fully understood.

32. Please provide details on any alternative suggestions for the distribution of AQ not explored in this consultation document.

No alternative suggestions at present, though these options could remain open to legitimate suggestions or requests on an annual basis.

33. If you have any comments on the benefits/costs arising from such potential schemes, please provide them.

Not Applicable.