

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
Y Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd,
Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig
MCD mewn perthynas â Bil
Pysgodfeydd y DU
NHAMG (5) FB04
Ymateb gan James Wilson -
Cynhyrchwyr Cregyn Gleision
Bangor

National Assembly for Wales
Climate Change, Environment and
Rural Affairs Committee
LCM in relation to the UK
Fisheries Bill
CCERA(5) FB04
Evidence from James Wilson -
Bangor Mussel Producers

Please find below for consideration some comments from the perspective of an individual engaged in the mariculture of blue mussels - *Mytilus edulis*, in the Menai Strait, that is the extensive cultivation in the sea of a native bivalve mollusc.

The Fisheries Bill is designed provide a framework for the future management of fisheries, aquaculture and marine conservation around the coastline of the wider UK. Some of the principles evident within the Fisheries Bill seek to replicate the scope and intent of the EU Common Fisheries Policy.

However, whilst the CFP was widely criticized policy within the UK context, and indeed from within the fisheries sector throughout the EU, with some justification, that criticism has masked much of the far reaching contextually solid vision contained and intent that the policy aspired to achieve.

The question for me, throughout the whole process of development of a UK wide Fisheries Bill, is does the vision contained seek to replicate or even better exceed that within the CFP.

ON that front, the current review of the bill as stands, is timely however I fear that this is a train that wont be deviated.

As such I don't see the point in providing a comparative view on how this 2020 Bill compares to the 2017-19 Bill - for me they are both nuts and bolts, bare minimum approaches that can barely see beyond the end of the relative nose. The Fisheries bill as a document that seeks to provide the legislative competency in the post transition world, I am sure will stand the test - after all given the level of resource displaced from within WG (DEFRA, MMO, SG and NI) if it falls on this principle hurdle, that would ask some very serious questions about competency.

However, as a Bill, an Act that provides the framework for the future of the Fisheries and aquaculture sector, it is a flat out disappointment, and this is especially so for aquaculture. If I might illustrate below..

IN the CFP - article 2(1) lays out the following objective

The CFP shall ensure that fishing and aquaculture activities are environmentally sustainable in the long-term and are managed in a way that is consistent with the objectives of achieving economic, social and employment benefits, and of contributing to the availability of food supplies.

(My emphasis)

This (I think) is the single example of the application of the word 'manage' or 'management' within the wider CFP which is applied in a collective manner to both Fisheries and Aquaculture.

BY contrast the Fisheries Bill, within the Fisheries objectives

In (2) the sustainability objective

- (a) fish and aquaculture activities are— (i) environmentally sustainable in the long term, and (ii) managed so as to achieve economic, social and employment benefits and contribute to the availability of food supplies, and...

In (4) the ecosystem objective

- (a) fish and aquaculture activities are managed using an ecosystem-based approach so as to ensure that their negative impacts on marine ecosystems are minimised and, where possible, reversed, and

in (5) the scientific evidence objective

(a) scientific data relevant to the management of fish and aquaculture activities is collected, &

(c) the management of fish and aquaculture activities is based on the best available scientific advice.

And most egregiously within (9) the Climate change objective

(a) the adverse effect of fish and aquaculture activities on climate change is minimised, and

(b) fish and aquaculture activities adapt to climate change.

Storm in a teacup?? I agree they are it might look that way from the outside or perhaps to someone with a partial knowledge. What's the difference, between Fisheries and aquaculture, they both occur in the sea or other aquatic environments. And these are admirable commitments on behalf of UK and the devolved Governments after all. I agree they are.

HOWEVER the conflation of the *management* of 'Fisheries' and 'Aquaculture' within these broad scope areas, and indeed through the framework of the joint fisheries statements represents an absolute misunderstanding of their very different identities. This unfortunately is persistent and deep rooted.

It is perhaps most effectively articulated by using an analogy.

Imagine that instead of Aquaculture this document was considering Agriculture - they are the same things after all, the application of human intervention to cultivate a crop. Within that context - the Bill is akin to proposing management of the Agriculture sector via the cipher of the management of hunting, on common ground.

That would clearly be absurd. Much as this is and I fear that there will be very many unintended consequences that flow from this as a result.

'Fisheries' and 'Aquaculture' are not the same thing, pretty much at all. They share the same environment but that is about all.

Fisheries Objective (9) provides the best illustration of this distinction, certainly within the context of shellfish aquaculture - what precisely are the adverse effects of shellfish aquaculture on climate change?? Shellfish aquaculture, particularly of bivalves is one of the few forms of animal based protein production that bioremediates - i.e through natural processes restores environmental condition degraded by other human activity (such as pollution, eutrophication etc), bivalves also assimilate carbon, nitrogen and phosphates from the environment. Aquaculture is impacted by climate change, for sure, with oceanic acidification and the prevalence of extreme weather events in addition to the overall warming of the oceanic environments. So why the focus on negatives that don't really exist.

The CFP is very careful in the language that it applies toward aquaculture, and where fisheries and aquaculture are both mentioned within a particular paragraph - with the exception of the Art 2(1) as noted above - 'management' of the activities is not conflated.

The major textual reference to aquaculture within the CFP is in Part VII Art 34 - 'Promoting sustainable Aquaculture' - there is clearly no equivalent within the Fisheries Bill as stands. This section clearly recognises that aquaculture needs to comply with requisite requirements for all activities within the marine in terms of environmental, social and economic legitimacy. However - It recognises that it cannot 'manage' activity in the same way that it seeks to 'manage' fisheries.

The requirement detailed within Section 10 - Effects of fisheries statements and fisheries management plans and the feedback into the production of joint fisheries statements (in particular 3(4) a+b and the 6 yr timeframe) is not the appropriate way to seek to 'manage' the development of the aquaculture sector going forward.

Aquaculture, like Agriculture, requires stability and requires a well-established property right. The permitting of Aquaculture - be that shellfish or Fin fish in the UK going forward needs to recognise the risks associated with the activity and provide a

framework that effectively interrogates these during the permitting process. And whilst things do change and new evidence can come along (that can provide a stronger basis to describe the legitimacy of the activity as well as identify a negative) this needs to be conveyed and sectioned within an appropriate framework. The fisheries Bill, as stands, most certainly is not this.

As a final couple of points - it is disappointing that the ability of the Welsh Government and Assembly to effectively intervene within the process of developing this important legislation has been confined by the approach taken by Westminster to taking account of 'external voices'. One would hope that Welsh Government manage to develop a structure for fisheries management within Wales that reflects what Wales is, what Wales wants and what Wales can be. There is a lot of carry over within the Fisheries Bill that represents the perpetuation of a failed approach at the UK level.

This is most obvious and unavoidable within the central distinction between this Bill and the CFP it seeks to replace. Part VIII of the CFP details the 'Common Organisation of the Market' - the Fisheries Bill pretends that the market doesn't exist.

Wales exports the vast majority of its seafood, and the vast majority of this is exported live to the EU - where its value and provenance is well regarded. The UK Govt's approach toward the future trading relationship with the EU threatens to totally undermine this connection. It is quite simply a disaster for the Welsh seafood sector - what is the point in catching or growing more fish and shellfish if we have no market access - and please don't say domestic consumption will increase - that is not a plausible alternative.