



HOUSE OF LORDS
European Union Committee

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11 November 2020

Rt Hon George Eustice MP
Secretary of State
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Seacole Block
2 Marsham Street
London, SW1P 4DF

Dear George,

Fisheries: Remote Electronic Monitoring Call for Evidence

I note that Defra is currently seeking evidence on expanding the use of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM). You might recall that our predecessor committee reached conclusions regarding the use of REM in both of its reports on the implementation and enforcement of the landing obligation. We have therefore written to the relevant policy lead setting out the Committee's findings; that letter is attached for your information.

REM is an important tool for managing sustainable fisheries, and leaving the EU allows Defra the opportunity to mandate its use in UK waters without disadvantaging UK fishers. We welcome your call for evidence as a first step in taking it forward, and look forward to seeing the results.

Yours sincerely,

Lord Teverson
Chair of the EU Environment Sub-Committee

11 November 2020

Ayath Ullah
REM Policy Adviser
Marine and Fisheries
Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
By email

Dear Ayath,

Fisheries: Remote Electronic Monitoring Call for Evidence

In 2019 our predecessor committee, the EU Energy and Environment Sub-Committee, published two reports on the implementation and enforcement of the EU landing obligation.¹ In both the initial inquiry and its follow-up the Committee heard significant evidence on the role of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM), and reached the view that it has a number of benefits, including increasing compliance with fishing regulations, supporting enforcement efforts, and helping retailers to demonstrate the traceability of their products. The Committee arrived at the following conclusion: “Leaving the EU will give the UK Government and devolved administrations the power to place requirements on foreign vessels in UK waters. This gives Governments an opportunity to require remote electronic monitoring (REM) on all vessels, UK and non-UK, fishing in UK waters, thus removing any potential disadvantage to UK fishers. We urge Ministers to mandate the use of REM as soon as they are able to set their own rules for vessels operating in UK waters.”

We therefore welcome your call for evidence on expanding the use of REM. As a Select Committee we are not in a position to respond directly, but would like to draw a number of points to your attention where the evidence heard and conclusions reached are relevant to the questions you have posed.

2. Do you think it is right to maximise the benefits from any Remote Electronic Monitoring systems so that they are not just an enforcement tool, but could also be used to monitor our fisheries and collect scientific data? Have you any evidence or suggestions on how best to achieve potentially multiple outcomes from the technology?

The Committee heard views from different perspectives on this question. Skipper David Stevens told us: “What is the point [in REM] if this is simply used as enforcement and not to

¹ [Fisheries: implementation and enforcement of the EU landing obligation](#), and [The EU fisheries landing obligation: six months on](#).

first improve data collection which is at the heart of the problems we face?”² And Allan Gibb, Head of Sea Fisheries Division at Marine Scotland, warned that “you cannot not see something once you have seen it. The camera might be there for a scientific purpose, but if you see something else you cannot pretend you have not seen it.”³

4. Depending on the outcome of further trials, do you think a Remote Electronic Monitoring programme should be mandatory or voluntary? Please explain your reasons.

Many of our witnesses supported the use of REM on the over 10-metre fleet. As Helen McLachlan, Programme Manager at WWF-UK, pointed out: “the over 10-metre fleet ... represents 94% of the catch in weight and 88% in value, so it addresses a lot of the quota catch.” The Committee therefore encouraged Ministers to consider requiring the use of REM on at least those larger vessels.

Witnesses differed over whether REM should or could be used on the under ten metre fleet. The South East Fishermen’s Protection Association argued against it for reasons of lack of space.⁴ Julian Roberts, Head of Future Fisheries at the Marine Management Organisation, disagreed about the practical challenges, but he argued that “the risk profile for compliance with the landing obligation shifts towards larger towed-gear vessels and the large towed-gear fisheries, the large-scale pelagic and demersal fisheries”,⁵ and Allan Gibb agreed.⁶ However Helen McLachlan believed that REM should be installed throughout the fishing fleet: “Camera systems can be applied to many vessel sizes; they are absolutely applicable, even to under 10-metre vessels ... 80% of the fleet is under 10 metres. It is important that we understand what is being removed from a range of fisheries, so that we have an ecosystem-based approach to our fisheries management.”

In addition, the Committee concluded that REM should be mandatory in the case of vessels allocated a bycatch quota, to ensure strict compliance with the quota limits and whatever bycatch reduction measures are agreed in bycatch reduction plans.

7. Do you have information on the financial costs of Remote Electronic Monitoring, both initial and ongoing costs, and whether this delivers value for money?

Helen McLachlan told us: “We have looked at the costing for the over 10-metre fleet, and it is somewhere in the region of £5 million for all those vessels, which compares to an estimated annual running cost of current operation as usual of £20 million, which does not give us the eyes at sea. You could have 100% observer data at a quarter of the cost.”⁷

8. Do you think there is a need to support vessels using Remote Electronic Monitoring and, if so, what do you think this support should look like? For example, financial support, training, quota etc.

² Written evidence from skipper David Stevens ([IEL0001](#))

³ [Q 49](#)

⁴ Written evidence from South East Fishermens Protection Association ([IEL0005](#))

⁵ [Q 46](#)

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ [Q 33](#)

Samuel Stone, Head of Fisheries and Aquaculture at the Marine Conservation Society, spoke about the possibility of using additional quota as an incentive: “We would like [quota] uplift applied to fleets that can demonstrate that they are genuinely trying to comply with the discard ban, by employing best practice selectivity measures, with cameras on board to help to demonstrate that.”⁸ DiscardLess made a similar suggestion: “EM [electronic monitoring] vessels could be relaxed from several technical rules and benefit from additional quota against the full documentation and monitoring of their catches, while non-EM vessels would not receive any additional quota.”⁹

Julian Roberts told us such incentives had already been offered: “In the North Sea we have only allowed the English quota uplift for cod to be given to vessels that have cameras on board.”¹⁰

The Committee concluded that the Government could use existing tools, such as the ability to allocate quota or financial support to cover equipment costs, to incentivise the use of REM and that they would support this action in the short-term. However they also concluded that this does not remove the need for a comprehensive, mandatory roll-out of the technology that would enable REM to be used as an effective tool to monitor compliance with the landing obligation.

I hope you find these observations useful. The Committee believes that any licence to fish in UK waters, whether applying to boats from home or abroad, should include the compulsory use of REM. The large collection of real time data that would result from such a move is the only way to truly manage our fisheries in a sustainable manner.

We look forward to seeing the outcome of your call for evidence.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robin".

Lord Teverson
Chair of the EU Environment Sub-Committee

⁸ [Q 35](#)

⁹ Written evidence from H2020 DiscardLess ([IEL0014](#))

¹⁰ [Q 146](#)