



# Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

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## From the Chair of the Committee

Victoria Prentis MP

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Seacole Building

2 Marsham Street

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24 November 2020

### UK-Norway Framework Agreement on Fisheries

Further to my letter of 20 October the EFRA Committee has now concluded its scrutiny of the UK-Norway Framework Agreement on Fisheries (the Norway agreement) laid before the House on 19 October. It has also considered the similar agreement with the Government of the Faroes laid on 10 November and concluded that they raised essentially the same issues and that therefore the Committee would not scrutinise the Faroes agreement separately.

The Committee is minded not to make a Report to the House in relation to the Norway agreement as the evidence we received was generally positive towards it, albeit clear that it leaves much of the detail to the annual negotiations between the two parties and may in part be effectively superseded by any subsequent trilateral agreement also involving the EU. The evidence we received is published on our website.

However, the evidence we have received does raise some questions to which it would appreciate an answer prior to the expiry of Period A under S.20 of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010. They are:

1. The extent to which the parties will be bound by the principles set out in Article 1 in coming to any agreement as a result of the consultations under Article 4, and if not why binding commitments on sustainability were not included in the Norway agreement?
2. Notwithstanding the commitments in the framework agreement whether the Government intends to seek binding agreements on total allowable catches for target stocks as a result of the annual negotiations, as recommended by Professor Richard Barnes? What safeguards, if any, will be in place to ensure that annual agreements made under the framework agreement will not be subject to unilateral interpretation and

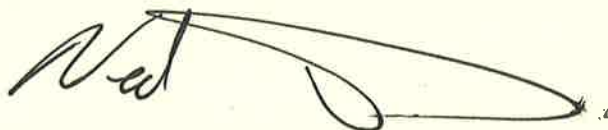
implementation by the parties possibly leading to the undermining of the sustainability of stocks?

3. How do you respond to the concerns raised by UK Fisheries LTD that the agreement fails to replicate the guaranteed access to the stocks in the Norwegian Economic Zone that some of the UK's fleet currently benefits from under the existing EU-Norway agreement?

As noted above the implementation of this agreement will be heavily shaped by any future tri-lateral agreement, or other arrangements, agreed between Norway the UK and the EU covering shared stocks. We are aware of, and will not repeat, the correspondence between yourself and the European Scrutiny Committee in relation to the EU's proposed mandate for negotiating that agreement and the UK Government's approach, as well as the interaction of the various bilateral agreements between the parties in the interim. The EFRA Committee is, however, likely to want to scrutinise closely any tri-lateral agreement and its implications as and when it is made.

I am copying this letter to the Rt Hon. Lord Goldsmith QC, Chair of the House of Lords International Agreements Sub-Committee, and Sir William Cash, Chair of the European Scrutiny Committee.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Neil Parish', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Neil Parish**  
**Chair of the Committee**