



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

Nusrat Ghani MP
Minister for Europe
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

26 April 2024

Lord Ricketts
Chair, European Affairs Committee
House of Lords
SW1A 0PW

Dear Lord Ricketts

I am writing to inform you that the EU has initiated the first stage of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement's dispute process in relation to HMG and Scottish Government measures, which ban sandeel fishing in English North Sea waters and Scottish waters.

We received a letter on 16th April from the Secretary-General of the European Commission formally requesting that we enter consultations. Consultations must now take place within 30 calendar days, unless agreed otherwise, with the aim of endeavouring to reach a mutually agreed solution.

We took the decision to close our North Sea waters to all sandeel fishing to protect seabirds. This closure is fully compliant with our obligations under the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement and applies equally to UK and non-UK vessels. This was a necessary step to safeguard vulnerable seabird populations, including species like kittiwakes who are at serious risk, and builds on domestic measures already in place - the UK has not allocated any quota to fish sandeel to UK vessels in three years.

We will keep you updated on developments as the case progresses.

Yours ever,

Nusrat Ghani MP
Minister for Europe