



Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs
Committee

Dame Angela Eagle DBE MP
Minister for Food Security and Rural Affairs
Department For Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
London
By email

11 February 2026

Dear Dame Angela,

Following our recent evidence session on 28 January with the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), The Crown Estate and Seafish, and further to your own appearance before us in December 2025, the Committee would be grateful for additional information to assist us in shaping our ongoing inquiry into fisheries and the marine environment. We appreciated the constructive engagement shown by you and your officials in December, and we hope the questions below will enable us to develop a clear and accurate picture of ongoing policy development in Defra.

Technical measures agreed in the UK–EU annual negotiations for 2026

We understand that the [UK–EU fisheries consultation](#) resulted in supplementary remedial measures to support the recovery of certain stocks assessed to be in critical condition. These include changes to mesh sizes that must take effect no later than 1 June 2026.

Michelle Willis, Interim CEO of the MMO, informed us that the MMO is working closely with Defra policy teams on the implications of these changes. However, she was not yet able to provide details of the measures while engagement with industry remains ongoing.

To assist our inquiry, we would be grateful if you could provide:

- the timings and process by which these technical measures were introduced into the UK–EU negotiations;
- details of any support or guidance being developed for industry to assist with implementation;

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- an outline of the legal mechanisms required to implement these technical measures into UK law, including any forthcoming secondary legislation; and
- an explanation of how compliance and enforcement may differ for EU and UK vessels in view of the respective catch composition rules, as the larger mesh sizes must be used “in accordance with each Party’s catch composition rules”.

Marine Spatial Prioritisation Programme (MSPri)

Throughout the oral evidence session, both Michelle Willis (MMO) and Olivia Thomas (The Crown Estate) referred to the Defra-led Marine Spatial Prioritisation programme (MSPri). Ms Willis indicated that outputs from MMO modelling have been incorporated into the MSPri process (Q126). However, the Committee has been unable to identify any publicly available documents or outputs from the programme.

We note that the [2023 Three-year Report on the East Inshore and East Offshore Marine Plans](#) states that *“the outputs of the MSPri programme will evolve the marine planning approach and inform the development of the East Inshore and East Offshore Marine Plans.”*

We would be grateful if you could provide:

- the outputs of the MSPri programme that have been used to shape the development of the East Inshore and East Offshore Marine Plans;
- details of the membership of the MSPri board and the dates it has met in the last twelve months; and
- the annual cost of operating the MSPri programme, including staffing and contracted research or analytical support.

In your [Department’s response](#) to the Environmental Audit Committee’s report on Marine Governance, you stated that the aims of MSPri are to *“optimise the use of the sea, maximise co-location and, where necessary, to prioritise the use of the sea.”* To help the Committee understand its practical application, we would be grateful if you could provide details of specific cases in which the MSPri programme has directly informed a sea-use prioritisation decision, together with an outline of:

- the process by which prioritisation was assessed and determined;
- the evidence inputs considered; and
- how stakeholders, including fishing interests, were engaged in the decision-making process.

Thank you for your continued engagement with the Committee's work. We would welcome any other comments you may have in relation to the evidence session on 28 January.

We would be grateful for your response by **2 March**.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Alistair Carmichael." The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underlining the name.

Alistair Carmichael MP
Chair, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee