



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

**Victoria Prentis MP**  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State  
Minister for Farming, Fisheries and Food

Seacole Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

T 03459 335577  
defra.helpline@defra.gov.uk  
[www.gov.uk/defra](http://www.gov.uk/defra)

Angus Brendan MacNeil MP  
Chair, International Trade Select Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

25 May 2021

Dear Angus

**The Fisheries Act 2020 (Scheme for Financial Assistance) (England) Regulations 2021**

I am writing to you as you and your committee may have an interest in the above Statutory Instrument (SI) that Defra will be introducing to Parliament in the coming months. The SI will provide a long-term legal underpinning for the delivery of grant funding to the seafood sector in England. Funding will be delivered through the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme (FaSS), which opened for applications on 6 April 2021. The SI will ensure the Marine Management Organisation has the necessary long-term powers to deliver funding to the seafood sector, whilst also setting limits on the nature of the support that can be delivered.

The FaSS will support the long-term sustainability and success of seafood businesses throughout England and help safeguard our marine environment through investment across the catching, aquaculture and processing sectors. The scheme will also play an important role in supporting businesses to flourish outside the EU and recover from the impacts of COVID-19. Longer term, the scheme will drive meaningful change to increase sustainability, provide world-class fisheries management, and support decarbonisation of the sector and a thriving marine environment.

As well as delivering the benefits set out above, the scheme will meet our manifesto commitments to maintain funding for the seafood sector and to support coastal communities. Failure to deliver this funding would represent an economic blow to the English seafood sector and could cause reputational damage to Defra and the Government.

To prevent any funding gaps and to allow us to open the FaSS as early as possible, we chose to rely on an alternative spending power to deliver the scheme until this SI has come into force. However, this was on a temporary basis only and it would not be appropriate to rely on this power permanently. The new financial assistance power in the Act has been specifically designed to replace European funding and deliver funding schemes for the seafood sector. Laying this SI will allow us to fully transition towards the new Fisheries Act power.

The SI will not make any significant policy changes to the scope of grant funding for the seafood sector, but instead just ensures that we are using the most current and appropriate regulations for this purpose. Please do share this with the rest of the committee, and if you have any questions or comments on this important work then please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

*Victoria Prentis*

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