



# Northern Ireland Affairs Committee

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Rt Hon Michael Gove MP  
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs,  
Nobel House,  
17 Smith Square,  
London SW1P 3JR.

12 December 2018

*Dear Michael,*

I am writing to express my Committee's disappointment with the Government's response to our report 'Brexit and Northern Ireland: fisheries' which lacks the detail we, and those in the Northern Ireland fishing industry, hoped for. It also reflects a lack of urgency in addressing key issues such as the asymmetric implementation of the Voisinage arrangement, securing a management agreement for Lough Foyle and tackling crushing manpower shortages in the Northern Ireland fleet.

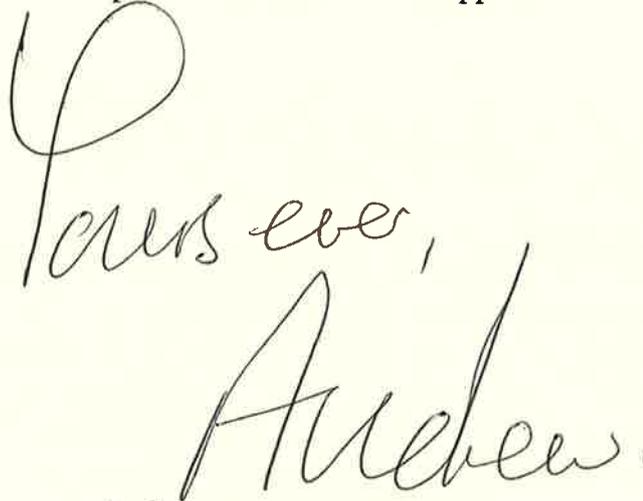
On the former, we had expected to see firm dates for progress. The Committee is seeking further information from the Government on the action it is taking now to resolve these issues in the short to medium term. The Committee would like clarification on the following points raised in the report:

- Can the Department set out the timescale for delivering the new digital catch certification system and will it be ready for businesses and fishermen to use by 29 March 2019?
- Will the Government list any recent meetings it has had with the Irish Government to discuss: suspension of the Voisinage arrangement; and maritime borders in Lough Foyle?
  - Will the Government set a deadline by which the Irish Government must reinstate the Voisinage arrangement or the UK will also suspend it?
  - Will the Department set a timescale for reaching a management agreement with the Irish Government for the management of Lough Foyle?
- Does the Government intend to take any action in the next 12 months to tackle the immediate crisis of workforce shortages in the Northern Ireland fishing fleet?

The Committee would also like clarification of the meaning behind the following passages in the Government response which pertain to the governance gap in Northern Ireland:

- Does “amendments to domestic sea fisheries and aquaculture legislation using powers separate from those in the EU Withdrawal Act” refer to Schedule 6 of the Fisheries Bill?
- Relating to “These will be laid at the Northern Ireland Assembly as part of normal business procedures” – What is the thinking behind this sentence and what will be done if there is no Assembly before 29 March 2019?

The Committee is encouraged by the Government’s progress towards securing a non-detriment finding for the eel fishermen of Lough Neagh and we thank the Department for its work on this crucial matter. We hope to see that determined approach in the other areas we have outlined.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Murrison'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

**Dr Andrew Murrison MP**  
Chair, Northern Ireland Affairs Committee