



Richard Benyon MP  
Minister for Fisheries  
DEFRA  
Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
London SW1 3JR

29<sup>th</sup> of July 2010

**Subject: Consultation on possible Marine Protected Areas in UK waters**

Dear Mr. Benyon

I write on behalf of the North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council (NWWRAC) to express our grave concern over the timetable for inclusion of data to the process of establishing a network of marine protected areas in UK waters.

The NWWRAC is the officially designated stakeholder body which is tasked with providing advice to the EU on fisheries matters in north western waters, including those off west and south coasts of the UK. It comprises environmental NGOs and fishing interests from all relevant countries.

The NWWRAC had a presentation from JNCC the 8<sup>th</sup> of July on this issue. We were advised that the cut-off date for inclusion of data from fishermen at port/harbour level both in UK and European Member States with access to UK waters is October 2010. This process is yet to commence.

The potential for displacement of fishing activity from customary grounds, with serious direct and indirect consequences for the economic viability of fishing vessels and indeed fishing communities, could be huge if this process is mishandled. The effect on other areas to which activity is displaced is also a serious issue. It is therefore in everyone's interest that the fishing community be fully engaged at every level with the process of establishing MPAs.

We are unanimously of the view that the necessary degree of dialogue and consultation cannot be undertaken in such a truncated time-frame for data supply as is currently envisaged.

In view of the foregoing we would earnestly request you to reconsider the timetable for inclusion of data, to afford the possibility of the genuine involvement and engagement that has been promised.

Yours faithfully

Sam Lambourn, Chairman