

PE1782/D

Petitioner submission of 21 December 2020

We are writing to update the Petitions Committee on recent dialogue with Marine Scotland regarding our petition for a full stakeholder consultation on the subject of stocking on Scotland's salmon rivers.

The SGA Fishing Group took part in a Zoom call with Marine Scotland on 14th December. The purpose of the call was to discuss the science which Marine Scotland has developed on the subject, ahead of a promised consultation in the new year. In line with our petition, we welcomed the opportunity to discuss this, along with other stakeholders, and we are grateful that Marine Scotland has opened dialogue.

It is important that, whatever shape future stocking policy takes, it is flexible enough to be reflective of local knowledge and experience as well as the best science. In a Scottish context, this knowledge may equally come from adaptive management processes and the experience and learning many individuals have gleaned from work in this field such as on the River Carron and elsewhere.

A criticism of the science which Marine Scotland has pulled together so far is that it is heavy on science from Europe and elsewhere but light on examples from Scotland. The discussions with stakeholders outlined other examples from home which ought to be cited if the future consultation is not to be regarded, again, as a form of fait accompli.

The science was also very technical and difficult for practitioners to read and understand, particularly in the short time frame of it being produced to the point where preliminary discussions were held on Zoom.

We appreciate that the pandemic has made deadlines very difficult for everyone. We welcome the initial discussions and trust that the future consultation will take account of the most relevant international science and the best local knowledge from different parts of Scotland and will involve the full range of stakeholders in what is a very important and relevant topic given conservation considerations, jobs and socio-economics, the advancement of knowledge and the wider programme of government commitments.