

Fisheries Division
Sea Fisheries Policy and Grants Branch



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Dear Sir/Madam,

2nd May 2008

Consultation (second phase) on the European Fisheries Fund UK Operational Programme

I am writing to invite you to participate in the second phase of consultation on the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) UK Operational Programme (OP) and the associated funding priorities for Northern Ireland (NI).

This follows the first phase of consultation which was issued in early March. A summary of the responses to the first phase consultation, and how these have been incorporated into the OP, can now be found on the Defra website
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/eufishfund/index.htm>

I enclose the final draft OP, together with the draft Northern Ireland Investment Plan that has been developed in line with EFF Regulations and the United Kingdom OP. The draft NI Investment Plan can also be found on the DARD website at www.dardni.gov.uk/fisheries-grants.

Background

The EFF¹ is the new fund for EU fisheries grants operating until December 2013, replacing the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIG) grants. It is intended to promote a fisheries sector that is sustainable, profitable and supports strong local communities, and is managed effectively as an integral part of coherent policies for the marine environment. The UK has about £97m of EU funding for the period covered by the programme, of which Northern Ireland's allocation is approximately £14.4m (€18.1m at current exchange rate of 1.25). With EU support being matched by national public funding, the overall public investment through the EFF Programme, at today's prices, would be around £28.8m.

The EFF targets five priority areas (axes):

1. Adaptation of the Community fishing fleet;
2. Aquaculture, inland fishing, processing and marketing of fisheries and aquaculture products;

¹ [Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1198/2006 on the European Fisheries Fund](#); [Commission Regulation \(EC\) No 498/2007 laying down detailed rules for implementation](#)

3. Measures of collective benefit;
4. Sustainable development of fisheries areas; and
5. Technical assistance to facilitate the delivery of assistance.

The UK National Strategic Plan, which outlines the UK's high level objectives for the fisheries industry, has been finalised and formally submitted to the Commission. A copy can be found at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/marine/pdf/fisheries/20080104uknspf.pdf>. The Operational Programme, detailing specific funding priorities and implementation for the EFF grant scheme, has been formally submitted to the Commission for approval. It is now the subject of negotiation with the Commission which will be informed by your response to this second phase consultation.

Second Phase Consultation

This stage of the consultation will last for eight weeks. The first phase of the consultation sought views on the analysis and objectives of the OP, but not on the specific measures that we propose to fund, which are set out in Chapter 5. In this second phase of consultation, we welcome your views on these measures.

The Operational Programme is a strategic document which applies to England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and its format must comply with the requirements set out in the EFF Regulation. The EFF Investment Plan is not part of the Operational Programme but it has been produced by DARD to help explain how the EFF will work here and outline proposals for investing the public money that will be available under the EFF.

Fisheries Ministers have agreed a split of the UK EFF budget which results in Northern Ireland getting €18.1 of the total allocation. Although we are not prioritising projects within the EFF axes themselves, as part of the OP requirement, we must allocate a proportion of the funds to each of the Priority Axes. We propose to do this as follows (all figures are approximate and are based on an exchange rate of 1.25 for conversion from Euro to Sterling).

	Equivalent spend under FIFG		Proposed public investment under EFF		
		%	€000	£000	%
Axis 1	11,041,665	38.3%	14,100	11,280	39.0%
Axis 2	2,266,142	7.9%	5,700	4,560	15.7%
Axis 3	15,538,868	53.9%	12,400	9,920	34.3%
Axis 4	0	0.0%	3,000	2,400	8.3%
Axis 5	0	0.0%	1,000	800	2.8%
	28,846,675	100.0%	36,200	28,960	100.0%

During the course of the EFF Programme, there will be opportunity to re-align the funds should we not receive sufficient applications under a particular Priority Axis to spend the allocated funds.

In this second phase of consultation, we would be grateful if you could let us have your response to the following questions:

Section 3: Do you think that the issues raised in “Strategic context for investment” are the most relevant or are there other things you think we should have covered?

Section 4: Do you think that measures included in the NI Investment Plan are appropriate to the needs of all stakeholders?

Section 4: The EFF provides for the possibility to support some measures which have not been included in the Department’s proposals. Do you agree that these should remain excluded?

Section 4: What do you think about the proposed final split (see 4.7) across the five EFF priority axes?

- Do you think we should be spending more in one Axis and less in another?
- Do you think the split is realistic in terms of potential uptake and spend?

Section 5: What do you think about the proposed implementation arrangements for Northern Ireland?

- Whether you foresee any difficulties or problems with these arrangements?
- Do you have any suggestions for how they can be improved?

You may find it convenient to use the form enclosed with this letter to make your response. **Please note the deadline for responses is Friday 27th June 2008.**

How to respond

We would prefer to receive responses by email to norman.anderson@dardni.gov.uk, but are also happy to receive comments by post to:

Norman Anderson
Fisheries Division Grants Team
Department for Agriculture and Rural Development
Fourth Floor
Dundonald House
Upper Newtownards Road
BELFAST
BT4 3SB

As part of the consultation process, DARD has arranged 3 public consultation meetings for stakeholders. These public meetings have been scheduled as follows:-

Date	Venue	Time
Thursday 29th May 2008	Lodge Hotel, Coleraine	7.00pm– 9.00pm
Friday 30th May 2008	Marine Court Hotel, Bangor	7.00pm – 9.00pm
Saturday 31 st May 2008	Slieve Donard Hotel, Newcastle	10.00am - 12.00pm

In addition, DARD proposes to engage with key stakeholder groups during the consultation, including groups and individuals associated with the catching, processing, aquaculture, science, education, central and local government and environmental sectors.

In line with DARD's policy of openness, at the end of the consultation period copies of the responses we receive may be made publicly available. We will also publish a summary of the points raised at public and stakeholder meetings. The information the responses contain may also be published in a summary.

If you do not consent to this, you must clearly request that your response is treated confidentially. Any confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system in e-mail responses will not be treated as such a request. You should also be aware that there might be circumstances in which the Department will be required to communicate information to third parties on request, in order to comply with its obligations under the Freedom of Information Act and the Environmental Information Regulations.

We will supply copies of consultation responses to personal callers or in response to telephone or e-mail.

This consultation has been prepared in line with the Government code of practice which is available from the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform at: <http://bre.berr.gov.uk/regulation/consultation/>.

An "Expression of Interest form" is included with the enclosed consultation documents to allow prospective applicants to register their possible interest in applying to the EFF when the programme is opened for applications. This information will assist DARD in gaining an insight into the level of interest by stakeholders as well as allowing timetables for applications and assessments to be developed. In addition, such information will allow staff to liaise with prospective applicants to discuss proposals and assist develop their outline proposals into firm applications to the EFF.

We look forward to receiving your views and appreciate your participation in this process.

Yours sincerely,



Ian Humes
Head of Sea Fisheries Policy and Grants