

Defra – Sustainable Fisheries

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Our Ref: E-VariationsConsultation
12 December 2011

Dear Sir/Madam,

Consultation on Introducing Electronic Notification of Variations to Fishing Licences

I am writing to inform you that we are carrying out a consultation on the introduction of a system of electronic notification of fishing licence variations and to invite your comments on our proposals.

The purpose of the consultation is to set out our proposals and seek your views on the implementation of this system.

EU legislation requires that all commercial fishing vessels must have a valid fishing licence and authorisation. In England, this licence is currently issued in paper format and must be produced on request to Enforcement Officers during inspection. During the quota year, numerous variations to these licences are produced and issued in paper format. This is a costly, resource intensive and time consuming process for the Marine Management Organisation and fishermen who must ensure that they keep the paper licence on board the vessel up to date.

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We propose to replace the issue of paper variations with electronic notices of variation to all fishing vessel licences in England by publishing the notices on the MMO website. Licence holders, or their nominees, will be notified in advance via email or sms text message alerts of any changes to be made to their licence and they can then view the licence variation on the MMO website. The front page of the licence will still be issued as a paper document, as is current practice, and must be made available for on board inspection.

The intention is to amend The Sea Fishing (Licences and Notices) Regulations 1994 No. 2813, under which the provisions to grant licences and issue notices of variations are set out, to allow for the introduction of an electronic system of notifying licence variations. We aim for this to take effect on 6 April 2012.

The Marine Management Organisation will be responsible for implementing and administering the new system once the Licence Order has been amended.

It is anticipated that introducing electronic notices of variation in place of the process of paper systems will provide Government and vessel owners with a more efficient and cost effective means of communication. This will ensure compliance with EU regulations, which aim to protect fish stocks and the marine environment through sustainable management of the fishery.

Defra invites the views of all stakeholders who will be affected by this new system. These include, amongst others, those in the commercial fishing industry, including licence and entitlement holders for all English administered vessels.

I attach the impact assessment and the consultation document which I would be grateful to have your comments on.

Comments should be sent by 23 January 2012 either by letter to:

Margaret Branson
Defra
Area 2C Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR

Or by email to: evariationsconsultation@defra.gsi.gov.uk

The following documents may be found on Defra's website at the following link:

Consultation document, Impact Assessment and List of Consultees

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2011/12/12/fishing-licence-1112/>

This consultation is in line with the Code of practice on Consultations. This can be found at: <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/bre/consultation-guidance>

When this consultation ends, we intend to put a copy of the responses in the Defra library at Ergon House, London. This is so that the public can see them. Also, members of the public may ask for a copy of responses under freedom of information legislation.

If you do not want your response - including your name, contact details and any other personal information – to be publicly available, please say so clearly in writing when you send your response to the consultation. Please note, if your computer automatically includes a confidentiality disclaimer, that won't count as a confidentiality request.

Please explain why you need to keep details confidential. We will take your reasons into account if someone asks for this information under freedom of information legislation. But, because of the law, we cannot promise that we will always be able to keep those details confidential.

We will summarise all responses and place this summary on our website at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/default.asp>. This summary will include a list of names of organisations that responded but not people's personal names, addresses or other contact details.

To see consultation responses and summaries, please contact the library at:

Defra
Information Resource Centre
Lower Ground Floor
Ergon House
17 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3JR

Telephone: 020-7238-6575

Email: defra.library@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Please give the library 24 hours' notice. There is a charge for photocopying and postage.

If you have any comments or complaints about the consultation process, please address them to Defra Consultation Co-ordinator, Area 7B Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR, or email consultation.coordinator@defra.gsi.gov.uk.

Thank you for your help in this matter. If you have any queries please contact us as above.

Yours faithfully

Margaret Branson
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs