Strategic Planning and Corporate Services Group
Strategic Support Division



Department of
Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
An Roinn
Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe
Depairtment o'
Fairmin, Environment an' Kintra Matthers
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Your reference
Our reference

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12 October 2026

Dear Janice,

Proposed amendments to the Fisheries, Aquaculture and Water Environment Bill

I am writing to inform the Committee of proposed amendments to the Fisheries, Aquaculture and Water Environment Bill which have been approved by the Minister. The purpose of this correspondence is to provide the Committee with details of the amendments and the rationale underpinning the proposed change.

The first proposed amendment is at clause 6 and would remove references within the proposed section 26 that provide for the creation of offences through subordinate legislation. A general offence provision, modelled on the existing section 26(4) of the Fisheries Act (Northern Ireland) 1966, would instead be inserted. This amendment is intended to preserve the current enforcement position for future regulations and ensure continued applicability to current regulations made under section 26.

The Department further proposes an amendment to clause 15 of the Bill to provide that the regulation-making power in new section 11(7), which enables the Department to

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specify descriptions of undertakings that are included in, or excluded from, the definition of "aquaculture farm", comes into operation automatically on Royal Assent.

The purpose of the amendment is to ensure that the Department can prepare and bring forward any necessary regulations relating to the definition of an “aquaculture farm” in advance of the wider aquaculture licensing regime being commenced. Without this amendment, the Department would be required to bring forward a separate Commencement Order to bring the power in section 11(7) into operation before the remainder of Part 5.

This amendment is therefore procedural in nature and is intended to facilitate the efficient implementation of the new aquaculture licensing framework. It does not alter the policy intent of the Bill but ensures that the necessary subordinate legislation can be developed and made in advance of the wider provisions taking effect.

I hope this information is of assistance but should you require anything further please contact me directly.

Yours sincerely,



Paul McGranaghan
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

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