

Outcome Report - recommending the total allowable catch for Herring in the Firth of Clyde 2025

July 2025

1. Introduction

On 30 May 2025, the Marine Directorate (MD) of the Scottish Government issued a public consultation seeking views on a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for herring in the Firth of Clyde for 2025. The consultation process closed on 20 June 2025.

Accordingly, this report provides a summary and analysis of the written responses to the question posed in [Section 2](#) of the consultation document and describes the outcome of the consultation.

1.1 Background

The Clyde herring stock is defined as those found in the maritime area situated to the north-east of a line drawn between the Mull of Kintyre (55° 17,9' N, 05° 47,8' W), a point at position (55° 04' N, 05° 23' W), and Corsewall Point (55° 00,5' N, 05° 09,4' W), all of which lie exclusively within Scottish territorial waters.

The MD carried out this consultation on behalf of the UK Fisheries Administrations, to seek views on the level of the 2025 Clyde herring TAC. Following consideration of the consultation responses, the Scottish Government has made a recommendation to the UK Secretary of State who will make a decision on the TAC level.

1.2 Requirements for determining the TAC

As set out in Annex 36 of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA), the Clyde herring stock is present only in UK, namely, Scottish waters and is not a shared stock with the EU.

Setting the TAC for Clyde herring is therefore the sole responsibility of the UK. It should be noted that, similarly, responsibility for setting the Clyde herring TAC was delegated to the UK by the EU prior to 2021, in line with Article 6 of the EU TAC and Quota Regulation (Council Regulation (EU) 2020/123).

1.3 Consultation

A three-week consultation was undertaken, mirroring the approach used in previous years, and afforded respondents the same length of time to provide views. The consultation document proposed to set the TAC level at 583 tonnes for 2025, the same TAC level in 2024 and 2023 and between 2015 and 2021.

Respondents were asked: What is your view on the proposed Total Allowable Catch (TAC) level for Clyde herring in 2025?

2. Overview of responses

During the consultation, a total of 18 responses were received via Citizen Space. Respondents to the consultation were asked whether they were replying as an individual or on behalf of an organisation. Eleven responses were received from organisations, and seven responses were received from individuals.

2.1 Analysis of responses and key themes

In total 18 responses were received, which comprised the following:

- Eight responses supported a rollover approach of setting a TAC of 583 tonnes, seven of which were submitted by organisations, and one submitted by an individual.
- Four responses suggested that a 0 TAC should be applied for 2025, of which one was submitted by an organisation and three by individuals.
- Two responses, submitted by organisations, stated that the TAC should be reduced. One of those respondents suggested a more precautionary TAC of 466 tonnes, in line with the 2022 TAC level. The other respondent did not propose a specific number.
- One response, submitted by an individual, stated that there should not be an increase but did not state whether the TAC should rollover or decrease.
- One response, submitted by an individual, stated that there should be an increase in TAC for 2025 but did not propose a specific number.
- Two responses from individuals did not indicate a position on the TAC recommendation.

The following points were made in response to the consultation, as reasons to set the TAC at 583 tonnes, which is maintaining the TAC level from 2024 and 2023 and between 2015 – 2021:

- Some respondents stated that, based on the provided scientific evidence there is no justification to change the TAC.
- Some respondents highlighted the need for additional data and offered to support initiatives which would aid with data collection, including some suggestions of work which could be considered. These included collecting additional scientific information about the Clyde herring stock and the wider ecosystem in the Clyde basin.
- Four respondents asked for the licences to be available by early August to allow for late summer fishing.
- One respondent suggested that a proportion of the TAC should be set aside to allow licenses to be available earlier in the year.
- One respondent suggested more work was needed to assess the effectiveness of the closure in the Ballantrae Bank spawning ground closure on the Clyde herring stock.
- Two respondents requested considerations be made to improve local infrastructure for landing herring in the Clyde.

The following points were made in response to the consultation, as reasons to reduce the TAC or set at 0:

- Many respondents highlighted a lack of evidence available on the stock as a justification to be precautionary and reduce or set 0 TAC until the time more robust evidence is available. They suggested methods of increasing the data, of which, one suggested a request to ICES and data collected from any landings of herring in the Clyde.

- Some respondents considered that the data shows the population is in a collapsed state with no signs of recovery and that it is dominated by juvenile herrings. They concluded that until evidence of recovery is shown, the TAC should be reduced, or fishing ceased.
- Some respondents suggested that the current management has not been effective in the recovery of the stock so there needs to be a change in the management approach.
- One respondent noted that there is no commercial reliance on this stock and that the state of the stock does not allow it to be commercially viable.
- Three respondents noted the low landings in previous years yet still little sign of recovery of the stock.
- Two respondents highlighted the population links between the Clyde herring and the wider west coast population therefore giving the rationale for setting a much more precautionary TAC or 0 TAC.
- Some respondents noted the lack of discard data.
- Two respondents stated that no fish zones should be put in place to preserve the stock and wider marine and biodiversity needs.

The one respondent who supported an increase in TAC suggested that doing so would allow for a sentinel fishery to take place and use that fishery to give an indication as to the state of the stock.

One of the respondents who did not indicate a TAC position made comments outside the scope of the consultation.

3. Outcome and next steps

In this section we have set out the Scottish Government's recommended outcome and next steps.

3.1 Consideration of scientific advice and consultation responses

The Scottish Government, as responsible fisheries managers, have a long standing objective to set sustainable TAC limits based on the best available scientific evidence while considering our stakeholders' views and wider obligations. As outlined above, a wide range of views have been submitted through the consultation process. While a number of respondents supported the rollover TAC proposal on the basis of the current evidence base, at the other end of the spectrum, some respondents suggested a 0 TAC should be taken until more robust evidence is gathered, and another suggesting an increase in TAC in order for a sentinel fishery to take place.

We fully considered all views submitted by respondents. We acknowledge the concerns cited around limitations in the survey data, however, we remain confident in the available scientific evidence used to inform our proposal.

For data limited stocks, where MSY cannot be quantified, a precautionary approach must still be taken based on the information available. Current knowledge of the Clyde herring stock is insufficient to be able to estimate MSY, but the MD's report

informs a management approach which is expected to be sustainable in the long-term for both the stock and the ecosystem.

The ICES advice for the 6aN West of Scotland autumn spawning herring component is not a suitable alternative, as while it is noted that Clyde herring are likely linked to other herring stocks in the region, the levels of intermixing are currently unknown. Therefore, Clyde herring and 6aN autumn spawning herring are currently deemed as separate stocks, and subject to their own evidence base and TAC setting process.

The specific stock surveys provided in section 6 of the [consultation document](#), suggest an apparent increase in biomass, particularly during Q4, as well as the presence of an adult cohort which gives rise to some optimism that Clyde herring stocks are increasing. However, we have remained precautionary in our approach by proposing a rollover of the 2024 TAC rather than increasing it at this stage, particularly given the relatively poor state of several herring stocks to the west of the British Isles and the high likelihood that juvenile herring in the Clyde are from one or more of these stocks.

While not a pelagic focused survey, the data collected would signal any significant changes of Clyde herring compared to historic data sets. Therefore, the lack of a specific herring survey is not a sufficient reason to decrease the TAC any further at this time.

The limitations of the currently available fisheries data prevent a formula or model that can be used to determine an analytical TAC level, although it is a longer-term aspiration to develop a stock assessment model suitable for inclusion into the ICES process. Therefore, any changes that are proposed are done as proportional increases or decreases against this historical TAC depending on signal changes seen in the long-term annual science surveys. We are confident that the baseline historic TAC, which we may propose proportional changes against, is accurate. This was determined when more surveys were conducted and analysis of the herring landed occurred.

The uptake on this stock has been extremely limited in recent years. However, regardless of fishing activity, we remain confident that if the quota was fully utilised in compliance with the control measures, then the fishery would still be fished at sustainable levels. Furthermore, we consider the current control measures to be proportionate to protect the herring population and the wider ecosystem while providing the opportunity to fish the stock, particularly during late summer.

3.2 Wider obligations

When setting or recommending TAC limits, one of our fundamental objectives is to set sustainable limits which are informed by the best available scientific evidence. This is an underlying principle which reflects national and international commitments and objectives, including the UK Fisheries Act, the Joint Fisheries Statement, the National Marine Plan, and the Fisheries Management Strategy, which have been at the forefront of the decision-making process for recommending the 2025 Clyde herring TAC.

The evidence available indicates that the management approach for 2025:

- a) is environmentally sustainable in the long term, managed to achieve economic, social and employment benefits and contribute to the availability of food supplies.
- b) aligns with the precautionary approach.
- c) ensures negative impacts on marine ecosystems are minimised.

3.3 Conclusion

Having considered the best available scientific information, the wider obligations and analysed all responses submitted through the consultation process, the TAC for 2025 has been recommended to the UK Secretary of State at 583 tonnes. This is a rollover of the 2024 TAC and retains the existing management measures.

3.4 Next steps

The Scottish Government has made a recommendation to the UK Secretary of State. A determination on the TAC level will subsequently be made by the Secretary of State and licences issued.

The majority of respondents noted that additional and more recent data was required to give a more robust assessment of the stock.

As highlighted during the stakeholder meeting on 9 June 2025, there is currently limited resources for MD to carry out a specific Clyde herring survey. However, we remain confident that any signal changes in the population will be detected as part of the long-term annual Bottom Trawl Survey in Q1 and Q4.

In addition, and as outlined in the consultation, the MD continues to request any relevant additional data that fishers, research organisations, universities or other stakeholders may hold on the Clyde herring stock. A number of respondents also offered to provide evidence and/or assist in collection of data to provide greater understanding on the health of the stock. MD observers also have availability to accompany fishers on vessels to conduct bycatch surveys as an additional means of gathering data. If this is an opportunity stakeholders would be interested in then please contact Campbell Pert (Campbell.Pert@gov.scot) to facilitate this.

Consideration will be given to any data which:

- Is verified numerical data.
- Records some or all of: fish weights, lengths, ages, and maturities. Examples may include herring surveys, herring sampling data, fishers' logbook data (detailing catch, location, reported landings).

Please submit any data to mss.fisheries.advice@gov.scot and Campbell Pert (Campbell.Pert@gov.scot) by 31 December 2025, to allow for consideration during 2026.

As also outlined in the consultation document, we intend to engage with stakeholders in the coming months to discuss future management of the stock, for 2026 onwards, which will include the option of recommending moving to a monitoring

TAC for Clyde herring for 2026. If you have not already done so, please register your interest via email to clydeherring@gov.scot. Officials will also engage with other UK Fishing Authorities on the discussions and options under consideration.



© Crown copyright 2025



This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3 or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at www.gov.scot

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-83691-911-7 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, July 2025

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS1619674 (07/25)

W W W . g o v . s c o t