

Jón Bjarnason, Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture
The Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture
Skulagata 4
150 Reykjavík
Ísland



7th September 2011

Dear Jón Bjarnason

Fuglavernd warmly welcomes the recent publication of an Action Plan for Seabirds in Western-Nordic Areas by the Nordic Council of Ministers, following a cross-sectorial workshop in May 2010¹ and applaud Iceland's input to this plan. We were particularly encouraged by the identification of 57 priority actions the group considered feasible to implement at low cost and in a timeframe of less than 3 years.

Given this short timescale, however, we are writing to enquire what the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture sees as the priority next steps towards implementing those priorities of relevance to Icelandic seabird populations.

Fuglavernd in liaison with BirdLife International would welcome the opportunity to input to such a discussion and provide advice where appropriate. Specifically, we are keen to see progress made towards assessing the scale of seabird bycatch currently occurring in Icelandic fisheries, notably in the demersal longline fleet – where anecdotal reports point to tens of thousands of birds being killed per year.

BirdLife International has considerable experience in seabird bycatch mitigation techniques and working with fishing communities to achieve bycatch reductions and improve target catches², and is particularly interested in working with government and industry to investigate new methods of preventing seabird bycatch, once the true scale of the problem has been properly assessed.

We would particularly welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues with you further. We have a colleague, with particular expertise on this issue, visiting Iceland on 21 September and, if possible, would like to request a meeting that afternoon if you are available.

¹ <http://www.norden.org/en/publications/publications/2010-587> Nordic Action Plan for Seabirds

² http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/callingcard_tcm9-224606.pdf BirdLife Intl Global Seabird Programme

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

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