



Paul Davies MS
Chair of Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

25 November 2021

Dear Paul,

Thank you for your letter of 10 November regarding questions not reached on fisheries and aquaculture policy during the Committee meeting on 21 October.

I will address each question in turn.

- **How are you prioritising implementation of the Fisheries Management Plans?**

Alongside the other UK Fisheries Administrations, I will be publishing, in the Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS), a list of Fisheries Management Plans (FMP) to be delivered over the lifetime of the first Statement. Some of these FMPs will be joint approaches with other Administrations to reflect the geographic extent of the particular fish stocks. Others will be regional Wales plans and will reflect and support the considerations I am undertaking in relation to our own policy aims and ambitions.

- **Can you provide an update on the Assessing Welsh Fishing Activities Project, and particularly, when you will bring forward a consultation?**

Bottom trawling impacts are being assessed through the Assessing Welsh Fishing Activities (AWFA) project being delivered by NRW. The project has so far delivered the high priority assessments and we are expecting the 'medium priority' towed gear assessments at the end of this financial year.

When the assessments are complete, the Welsh Government is planning to develop and consult on any proposals needed to address both the 'high' and 'medium' priority assessments. The timing of the consultation will be determined alongside other Welsh Government priorities once the assessments have been considered.

- **Can you provide more information on how the Welsh Government is supporting future production of sustainable shellfish aquaculture in Wales?**

Growth of sustainable shellfish production in Wales is a key element of the Welsh National Marine Plan, we are aware of the environmental benefits of low trophic aquaculture, such as shellfish and seaweed production brings. We recently published an online story board for aquaculture. The storyboard provides contextual information on relevant policy, legislation and sources of guidance and an overview of consenting and environmental assessments relevant to the sector to support applicants. The storyboard can be found at the following link. [Marine Evidence packages | GOV.WALES](#)

The Menai East Fishery Order covering the majority of mussel production in Wales is due to expire next year, I have prioritised resources to deliver a replacement to provide security to the businesses which rely on it. However, Brexit, and the subsequent loss of access to EU markets, provides a significant threat to sustainable shellfish production in Wales. We continue to press this issue with the UK Government who have raised this issue direct with the EU. While we await a response from the EU, 11 months down the line we are no closer to finding a solution which would allow the resumption of trade.

I will be meeting key industry operators in December to discuss these challenges and the opportunities for aquaculture production in Wales as we develop our strategic approach to the sector.

- **To respond to reports that the ‘Wales Marine Fisheries Advisory Group’ is no longer ‘functioning’: What impact has this had on policy implementation?**

Following the end of the tenure of the previous Chair, we have taken the opportunity to review the Group. I accept that due to competing pressures, and resourcing issues, this has taken longer than I would like. I have asked my officials to finalise the work within the next few weeks. The Group essentially does three things – an advisory group to the Government on Fisheries issues; stakeholder engagement and co-management of fisheries. I am committed to a co-management / co-production approach and I want to be assured the Group, as presently structured, is the best mechanism for doing this.

I will be writing to Committee separately on the JFS shortly. However, I can confirm the next stage for the JFS will be a public consultation and scrutiny in each UK legislature in early 2022.

Regards,



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