

Y Pwyllgor Amgylchedd a Chynaliadwyedd

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



Commissioner Karmenu Vella
karmenu.vella@ec.europa.eu

27 February 2015

Dear Commissioner Vella

Environment & Sustainability Committee Inquiry into the proposed prohibition of driftnet fisheries

I am writing to you in your capacity as Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries to draw your attention to work undertaken by the **Environment and Sustainability Committee of the National Assembly for Wales** on the European Commission's proposals on the prohibition of driftnet fisheries. I wish to highlight some initial findings based on evidence from a range of stakeholders in Wales including fishing organisations, environment NGOs and government bodies.

Whilst the Committee fully support the taking of action to address large scale illegal and environmentally damaging driftnet fisheries **it is gravely concerned about the potential impact of a blanket ban.**

Economic Impact

In Wales there are a significant number of fishermen for whom small scale sustainable driftnet fishing is a vital part of their business. Of the 280 small scale driftnet vessels operational in the UK 70-100 of these vessels are based in Wales. Although small in number they make a significant contribution to the coastal fishing communities within which they reside. We are concerned that the Commission's proposal could have **a devastating impact** on this sector of **our fleet** and consequently **our coastal communities.**

Environmental Impact

Evidence provided to the Committee by both fishing and environmental organisations has demonstrated that the type of small scale driftnet fisheries in operation in Wales have **negligible environmental impact.** We are concerned that a prohibition of these fisheries could encourage vessels to use gear such as bottom-set gillnets that could be more environmentally damaging to marine mammals and seabirds than driftnets.

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Better Enforcement and a Regional approach

We strongly believe that the strengthening and proper enforcement of existing legislation could address the issues caused by illegal driftnet fisheries without the need for a blanket ban.

Given that a complete withdrawal of the proposal is now unlikely we would support the inclusion of exemptions for small scale sustainable driftnet fisheries. Where action is needed to address the impact of these fisheries we believe this can most effectively be achieved through regional fisheries measures, as envisaged by the reformed CFP.

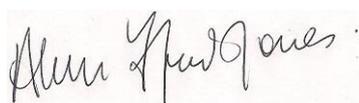
Fisheries Committee Draft Report

As such we are pleased to support many of the proposals contained within the Draft Report presented to the Fisheries Committee and believe that they are a significant improvement upon the Commission's initial proposals. In addition to the amendments suggested we would welcome further amendments to ensure that fish caught via illegal driftnet fishing cannot be bought or sold within the EU seafood supply chain.

Further information about our work and the evidence we have gathered on driftnets can be found on the National Assembly for Wales' webpage [here](#).

We look forward to engaging further with you on these issues and we hope the information provided in this letter is of use to you.

Yours sincerely,



Alun Ffred Jones AM
Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee