

Written Response by the Welsh Government to the report of the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee entitled “The impact of Brexit on fisheries in Wales.”

Committee Recommendation 1

“The Welsh Government should publish a focussed and ambitious strategy to grow Welsh fisheries. The strategy must ensure that the highest environmental standards are maintained”

Welsh Government Response: Accept

I accept this recommendation. The Welsh Government will be publishing a consultation in the new year entitled “Brexit and Our Seas” as a first step in delivering a post-EU fisheries policy for Wales, designed with stakeholders to reflect the needs of the modern Welsh fisheries sector and to manage the impact on the environment. The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act provides a firm foundation for action, committing us to improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. I remain committed to the stewardship of our marine environment whilst generating economic growth for our coastal communities at the local and national level.

Committee Recommendation 2

“The Welsh Government should report back to the Committee within the next 12 weeks on discussions it has had with the UK Government about future fisheries policy. This should include discussions about the proposed common framework for fisheries management and any proposals for an inter-governmental mechanism to facilitate agreement between the UK Administrations on common frameworks, including fisheries policy.”

Welsh Government Response: Accept

I accept this recommendation. I confirm the Welsh Government officials have been working closely with UK and devolved counterparts on future fisheries policy. Official discussions continue to develop terms of a UK-wide fisheries framework, which is mainly administrative. The UK fisheries bill makes provision for a jointly agreed policy statement to underpin the legislative and non legislative elements of the framework. I will be pleased to update the committee at the conclusion of these discussions.

Committee Recommendation 3

“The Welsh Government must ensure that it engages on an ongoing basis with representatives from across the entire fisheries sector. It should report back to this Committee within the next 12 weeks on actions it will take to broaden engagement.”

Welsh Government Response: Accept

I accept this recommendation. The Welsh Government has established and worked closely with a number of fisheries and marine stakeholder groups which meet regularly. These groups represent a broad cross-section of the views of all stakeholders. I am content to set out the engagement activities the Welsh Government has undertaken across the fisheries sector and if we see any need for even broader engagement.

Committee Recommendation 4

“The Welsh Government should report back to this Committee within the next 12 weeks on whether it believes its capacity on fisheries policy, both in terms of staffing numbers and expertise, is sufficient in the short term. The Welsh Government should also report back to this Committee on any plans it has to increase capacity in those areas.”

Welsh Government Response: Accept

I accept this recommendation. We believe we have sufficient capacity in relation to fisheries policy and are seeking to increase capacity to deal with short term work to prepare for exit from the European Union. We will keep this under review and write to the Committee within the next 12 weeks should we see the need to deviate from our current plans.

Committee Recommendation 5

“The Welsh Government should report back to this Committee within 12 weeks on its plans to increase domestic demand for Welsh fish and shellfish.”

Welsh Government Response: Accept.

I accept this recommendation. The Welsh Government recognises the value of seafood as a sustainable protein source for future generations.

We are committed to engaging with key stakeholders to seek to increase domestic consumption and have funded ‘Menter a Busnes’ seafood marketing project, in the region of £1m through the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. We have developed and contributed to recipes in Seafood’s ‘Fish is the Dish campaign’.

Welsh Government will continue to promote Welsh products at trade events such as Seafood Expo Global, which is a worldwide event attended by all major UK retailers and processors. The Welsh Government funded Seafood Cluster has also been in

dialogue with UK based retailers. If necessary, we would be happy to provide further details.

Committee Recommendation 6

“The allocation of quota to Wales under the 2012 UK Fisheries Concordat is not a fair allocation and is constraining the development of Welsh fisheries. The Welsh Government should seek to renegotiate the UK Fisheries Concordat, with the aim of ensuring an increase in quota allocation.”

Welsh Government Response: Accept.

I accept this recommendation. The share in the 2012 UK Fisheries Concordat, was based on the track record of the Welsh industry at the time. Larger commercial vessels, operating as part of producer organisations, appear to have the lion’s share of fishing opportunities across the UK. Whilst the total amount of fish to be caught sustainably will continue to be set for the European area as a whole, I believe we can negotiate, over time, a greater share of the fish for the UK and Wales. Any additional fish realised through these negotiations should be top sliced and used to rebalance any historic disparity in the fleet segments.

Committee Recommendation 7

“An ecosystem-based approach must be embedded and enforceable in future Welsh fisheries policy.”

Welsh Government Response: Accept

I accept this recommendation. The Welsh Government is committed, through the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), to manage the marine environment through an ecosystem-based approach. Maintaining fish stocks at sustainable levels are an integral part of a healthy marine ecosystem. The assessment of fishing opportunities, undertaken by the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas, takes an ecosystem-based approach to assessing fishing opportunity. Welsh and other UK Fisheries Administrations will continue to work with ICES to assess stock levels after we have left the European Union.

Committee Recommendation 8

“Financial support for fisheries should reflect the Welsh Government’s strategic priorities. The Welsh Government should explore the possibility of introducing a system of financial support that, at least in part, rewards sustainable outcomes and the provision of public goods.”

Response: Reject

I reject this recommendation. Prosperity for All makes clear Welsh Government spending, including any fisheries financial support, will always reflect government strategic priorities. The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act commits all Welsh public services to consider sustainable outcomes as part of their normal business. Welsh Government will seek wider views on financial support mechanisms as part of the “Brexit and our seas” consultation. I will be happy to write to the Committee following the conclusion of the consultation to make you aware of stakeholders’ response and in which areas I may seek to offer future financial support.