**WRITTEN STATEMENT**

**BY**

**THE WELSH GOVERNMENT**

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| **TITLE** | **Successful prosecutions of fishing vessels for scallop fishing offences** |
| **DATE** | **2 August 2016** |
| **BY** | **Mick Antoniw AM, Counsel General** |

The seas around Wales are blessed with a variety of nationally and internationally important species and habitats, protected under European, Welsh and UK law. These natural resources and the services they provide are crucial in helping our coastal communities thrive through fishing and tourism, as well as having important cultural significance. Effective and proactive management of these resources is vital for our future prosperity, protecting not just our natural resources but also safeguarding future opportunities for responsible fishermen who rely on them, which in turn helps to enhance the resilience of our communities.

The Welsh Government takes seriously its responsibility for managing and protecting Welsh seas and all our natural resources. We know unfettered exploitation of resources can lead to unsustainable practices which can result in damage and degradation. To do this we closely regulate fishing, and other activities, in marine waters. Using a number of assets at their disposal - such as our Fisheries Patrol Vessels - Welsh Government Marine Enforcement Officers actively enforce a wide range of regulations and work hard to ensure compliance with them. Where we find evidence of offences, Welsh Government Marine Enforcement Officers investigate fully and take proportionate action. This can range from written advice to written warnings and, in some cases, prosecution.

Prosecutions under fisheries legislation in Wales are taken in the name of the Counsel General. Over the past 5 years, around 15 investigations per year have been taken with approximately 30% of these leading to proceedings through the courts.

Most recently following investigations and enforcement action by our Marine Enforcement Officers, three vessels received penalties from Haverfordwest Magistrate’s Court earlier this month totalling £62,000 for scallop fishing offences.

The owner and master of the fishing vessel *Lisa Leanne* received combined penalties and costs of £6,070 for illegal scalloping in north Wales. The owners and masters of the fishing vessel *Cloudy* received combined penalties and costs of £14,309 for scallop fishing without a functioning vessel tracking device. The Owner and Master of the fishing vessel *Morning Star* received combined penalties of £41,782 for scalloping without a functioning vessel tracking device and log book offences. In the case of the *Morning Star*, penalties applied included a fine of £22,769 for the value of the illegal catch.

These successful prosecutions serve as a clear warning and deterrent to others that I, as Counsel General, and the Courts take fishing offences in Wales seriously and will seek to protect, with the full force of the law, our marine natural resources for the benefit of current and future generations.

This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Assembly returns I would be happy to do so.