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Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas AM  
Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee,  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
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19 October 2011

I am writing to you today in your role as chair of the Assembly Environment and Sustainability Committee. Firstly I would like to thank you for inviting me answer questions at the committee held at the Royal Welsh Show on the 19 July at the Young Farmers Centre. I wanted to take this opportunity to update the committee on two key fisheries issues that we discussed at that time.

At the committee I mentioned my intention to legislate to protect inshore fisheries in Wales. As a first stage in that process I wish to remove the iniquitous situation where a small number of fishing vessels are able to prosecute stocks that their contemporaries can not. To do this I propose to remove historic rights sometimes known as grandfather rights or sunset clauses. These rights allow these individuals to use vessels that are larger than the legislation would otherwise allow. I will be launching a consultation shortly on these proposals and hope to have the necessary secondary legislation in place within 6 months. In addition to this I will be launching an informal consultation with the three Welsh inshore fisheries groups looking at provisions for inshore trawling more generally in Wales. I will bring my proposals to the committee as soon as possible.

The Welsh Government is currently exploring the options for a restrictive permit scheme for cockle fishing in the area of Carmarthenshire known as the 'three rivers'. For some time the local community has been working together in relation to this fishery. I want to further build on that and deliver a management regime that will deliver a real benefit to the industry and the local communities. The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 makes provision for a permitting scheme under secondary legislation. Schemes of this nature takes significant time, often a number of years, to work through to address the requirements of the various stakeholders. A full public consultation would be needed before any decision could be taken. The area is also within a European Marine Site and so any measures would need to meet the stringent requirements of the Habitats Regulations.

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*Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)*

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I will keep the committee informed of progress on these matters and will be happy to give further evidence to the committee at the appropriate time.

*Alun*

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