



Dai Rees AM
Chair, External Affairs and Additional Affairs Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff

23 May 2019

Dear Dai,

I am writing in relation to a question from Mike Hedges AM at the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee on 29 April, I promised to provide a written response. The question was about control of fishing boats from other parts of Europe wishing to fish in British and Welsh waters.

The UK Fisheries Bill, when enacted, will revoke the automatic access of EU vessels to UK waters, reflecting new arrangements whereby access to British Fisheries will be negotiated through annual coastal state agreements.

The Bill will establish a licensing regime for non-UK vessels. Following our departure from the EU, vessels from coastal states with which the UK has an agreement and who wish to fish in the Welsh Zone (or wider UK Waters) will require an authorisation in the form of an annual licence. These will be issued by the Single Issuing Authority on behalf of Welsh Ministers and Fisheries Ministers from other UK administrations. At the point we are no longer bound by the Common Fisheries Policy, a new licensing system for foreign vessels will be launched and will provide us with greater control over the actions of foreign fishing vessels within Wales and the Welsh Zone than ever before.

Fishing opportunities in European waters (including UK waters) for 2019 were negotiated and agreed at the December 2018 EU Council meeting. Should we leave the EU during 2019, these opportunities (e.g. fish quota) are likely to continue to apply and EU vessels wishing to fish against these quotas in UK waters, would be able to do so subject to receiving a UK authorisation (licence). This will not lead to additional fishing opportunities in UK waters for EU vessels. Any continued fishing opportunities will be subject to annual coastal state negotiations between the UK and the EU. Third country vessels wishing to fish in UK waters and land into their home port would also need to meet increased controls before they are able to land their catch.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

While it is possible, moving Flag State is a difficult and expensive task, in part due to the restrictive nature of the UK licensing system. Any incoming vessel would need to purchase a UK license appropriate for their vessel, and the necessary fishing opportunities both of which are not readily available. Further, the vessel would then face the additional controls and possible tariff and non-tariff barriers facing UK registered fishing businesses exporting their catch to Europe.

Consequently, I would think it unlikely any European vessels would seek to base their operations in the UK as we leave the European Union.

I hope this information is helpful to the committee

I am also copying this letter to the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee as requested during the session.

Best wishes,
Mark

MARK DRAKEFORD