



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP  
From the Secretary of State for Environment, Food  
and Rural Affairs

Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
London SW1P 3JR

T 03459 335577  
defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk  
www.gov.uk/defra

William Morris  
4 Vincent Square  
London  
SW1P 2LX

Our ref: PO2017/10675/MH

15th January 2018

Des Williams

Thank you for your letter of 10 November about the fishing industry following the UK's departure from the EU. It is good to hear from you and I apologise for the unacceptable delay in responding.

The UK has made good progress towards protecting our marine species and habitats, with over 23% of our waters now covered under marine protected areas (MPA). These MPAs protect a range of species and habitats including several commercially important species of fish and shellfish. Although many of the MPAs in the network are not specifically focused on commercially important fish species, there are significant wider benefits to the ecosystems on which they depend. MPAs are not primarily 'no take zones', however all activities which will have a damaging impact are managed to minimise the effects and ensure these important areas are protected. A final tranche of marine conservation zones will be consulted upon during 2018, with the aim of completing a network of ecologically coherent sites across the UK.

In terms of helping our fish stocks to recover, the UK has long championed sustainable fisheries management, and we are working with other member states and the EU Commission to ensure the recovery and long term prosperity of our fish stocks. As we prepare to leave the EU, we will place science based fisheries management at the heart of future policy.

You suggest the introduction of a 10 nautical mile limit for vessels over 10m in length to be allowed to fish within the UK. When the UK leaves the EU it will be an independent coastal state under international law, which includes the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). As an independent coastal state we will have control of our Exclusive Economic Zone (out to 200 nautical miles or the median line with other states) and will be responsible for the management of resources within our waters. The Fisheries Bill will allow us to develop our own world leading fisheries management regime, which will control access to UK waters and the allocation of fishing opportunities outside the EU. This means we can decide which vessels, and on what basis, are allowed to fish within our waters including our inshore area from 0-12 nautical miles. Any decisions about giving access to vessels from the EU, and any other coastal states, will be a matter for negotiation.