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James Gray MP & David Hanson MP  
House of Commons  
London  
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Dear James & David

I am writing to inform the Committee that the government has tabled the following amendments today to be considered at Commons Committee stage of the Fisheries Bill.

First, I have tabled a new clause to extend the legislative competence of the National Assembly of Wales in relation to fishing, fisheries and fish health in the offshore zone. The Welsh Assembly does not have legislative competence for sea fisheries in the offshore zone, which is the area of sea outside the territorial seas but within the Exclusive Economic Zone – although the Welsh Government do have executive competence in the offshore zone as these have been devolved previously. The Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly already have legislative competence for fisheries in their offshore and inshore areas.

As we leave the EU, this distinction from the other devolution settlements has been drawn into sharp relief. The government believes that it is right for this technical correction to be made to the Welsh devolution settlement, and today I have tabled an amendment to the Government of Wales Act 2006 to extend the competence of the National Assembly for Wales in relation to fishing, fisheries and fish health in the Welsh offshore zone.

Secondly, I have tabled two amendments to clarify the policy intention of Clause 22 and to add a consultation requirement to Clause 22. The Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee published a report on the Fisheries Bill which contained just two recommendations for amendments to make to the Bill, both of which relate to Clause 22 (sale of English fishing opportunities for a calendar year). The government is happy to accept these recommendation.

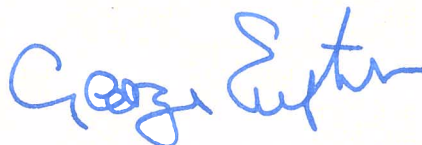
One amendment adds a requirement that the government must consult before introducing regulations providing for the sale of English fishing opportunities, and the other makes clear our intention not to sell fishing opportunities solely based on price but also to require that other conditions are met. This was always the policy intention and made clear in the explanatory notes, but it will now be on the face of the Bill.

Finally, I have tabled a new clause and amendment to Schedule 3 to amend existing statutory instruments relating to vessel licensing which currently apply to English, Welsh, Scottish, and Northern Ireland boats so that they also apply to foreign boats, and consequential amendments to that. The new clause simply clarifies that these changes to existing statutory instruments could

have been made under existing powers, but for expediency they are being made in this Bill. These amendments are the products of extensive discussions with the Devolved Administrations.

I look forward to debating these amendments in Committee in the next few weeks.

I am copying this letter to Fisheries Bill Committee members.



**GEORGE EUSTICE MP**