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From Jonathan Shaw MP

Minister for Marine, Landscape & Rural Affairs and Minister for the South East

Dear John

Today, I announced my decision not to increase the minimum landing size (MLS) for bass. Details of my decision are set out in the latest edition of Fishing Focus; I believe you will have received a copy.

I understand that this will be disappointing news for you and your members. I recognise that anglers have done a lot to ensure the sustainability of the stock to the benefit of all stakeholders.

However, bass is a particularly important stock for the inshore fishing fleet, which would have borne the brunt of the short to medium term cost of increasing the MLS. Given the current pressures this fleet faces, which I recognised have changed since Mr Bradshaw made his original decision, I could not justify introducing a measure which would have had such an impact on those fishermen, especially in view of the healthy state of the stock at present.

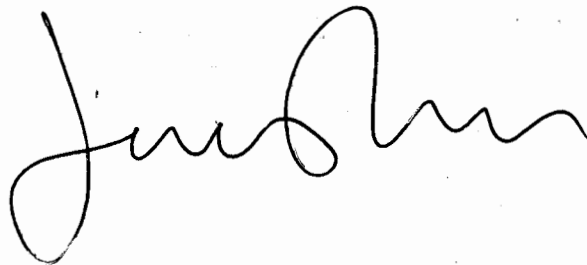
I understand that, since our meeting on 1st October, you have raised concerns with my officials about data that appears to indicate bass stocks are declining. Advice from Cefas suggests this does not present a complete picture of the true situation. My officials will

shortly be writing to you to explain these points further. I should reassure you that my final decision was based on all the available evidence, and not just that presented at the meeting on 1 October.

However, there is no room for complacency. We need to be proactive in our approach to fisheries management, which is why I have also announced a package of new measures that will provide benefits to the bass stock, and more widely for recreational anglers. We need to take a collaborative approach to fisheries management, sharing information and agreeing the way forward together. Critical to the success of the measures I have announced today, will be the participation of all stakeholders in this process.

I want to be personally involved in taking this forward. We will be setting out our plans soon, and I trust you will be fully engaged in these discussions.

Kind regards



JONATHAN SHAW

I am very grateful to you and other colleagues for taking part in the debate and attending the meeting with me in London.

I recognise my decision will be of great disappointment to your members - I wish to assure you that I am determined to develop a productive working relationship between all sectors.