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From George Eustice MP
Minister of State

Dear David

Thank you for your letter of 18 November on behalf of the North Western Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (NWIFCA) about its funding, in light of the Spending Review.

It was good to discuss this matter briefly with you in the House last month. As you know, the NWIFCA manages the inshore marine environment in Morecambe Bay. Since 2011, Defra has provided a little over £400,000 annually to support its day-to-day work as a share of the £3M available for all ten IFCAs.

As you are aware, the Chancellor gave the Autumn Statement last month and announced the spending review outcome. Resources are limited at all levels of Government, and I realise the review has led to some uncertainty among our stakeholders. Like other Government departments, Defra had to negotiate a smaller budget envelope with HM Treasury. However, I am pleased to confirm that we will continue to support dedicated inshore fisheries and conservation work delivered by the IFCAs, and will continue to allocate a £3M budget for each year of the new settlement, to 2020.

Of course, public money needs to be spent wisely, and Parliament should have confidence that taxpayers' funds are managed properly. Over the last four years, IFCAs have provided that assurance and demonstrated value for money by basing their annual planning and reporting against seven high level objectives and 61 performance indicators. Although those indicators are now obsolete, I am pleased that NWIFCA, alongside colleagues from the IFCA Association and the IFCA Chief Officers' Group, worked with Defra officials to revise them over the summer. I anticipate that new performance metrics which are up-to-date, written in plain English, linked to the five UK Marine Policy Statement High Level Objectives and supported by 27 indicators, will form the basis of IFCA business planning and reporting from April 2016. In due course, I expect they will be the foundation for the next statutory report to Parliament that describes how all ten IFCAs have delivered their objectives, which should be published in 2019.

George Eustice

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