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Our ref: MC400809/JAL

19<sup>th</sup> April 2016

**From George Eustice MP**  
Minister of State

*Dear Sheryll*

Thank you for your letter of 23 March about the zero Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for small-eyed ray.

I understand the importance of this species and the impact that a landing restriction would have on the local industry. While I was pleased to secure a rollover of the skates and rays TAC for the South West at December Council, in the face of a proposed 20% cut, I was disappointed we could not prevent the landing restriction on small-eyed ray.

That is why we quickly reacted and, working with scientists and industry, submitted a proposal to the European Commission to request these restrictions be reversed in areas where the species is locally abundant. In order to limit the impact on industry, we maintained pressure on the Commission for our proposal to be included in the first in-year amendment of the TACs and Quota Regulations (TQR).

The first in-year amendment has now concluded, and I am pleased to confirm that the Commission did propose changes to small-eyed ray that were agreed by EU Member States. This change does not fully reverse the landing restriction but, in line with the scientific advice, provides a species-specific TAC that allows landings of small-eyed ray in the Bristol Channel and parts of the Celtic Sea (VIIIf, VIIg).

We have also spoken with industry stakeholders, such as the North Devon Fishermen's Association and the Cornish Fish Producers Organisation, to inform them of this change. This amendment is a positive step, and we will continue to engage with industry and scientists to consider whether a further proposal should be submitted for consideration at the next December Council.

*George Eustice*

**GEORGE EUSTICE MP**