



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

**Victoria Prentis MP**  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State  
Minister for Farming, Fisheries and Food

Seacole Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

T 03459 335577  
[defra.helpline@defra.gov.uk](mailto:defra.helpline@defra.gov.uk)  
[www.gov.uk/defra](http://www.gov.uk/defra)

Professor Michael V. Williams  
Chair

Devon & Severn IFCA

Brixham Laboratory

Freshwater Quarry

Brixham

Devon

TQ5 8BA

[office@devonandsevernifca.gov.uk](mailto:office@devonandsevernifca.gov.uk)

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Dear Professor Williams,

Thank you for your further letter of 25 May about the Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA). I welcomed the opportunity to further discuss the IFCA's concerns with Mat Mander during my visit to Brixham last week.

While I acknowledge your frustration with the issues that the Devon and Severn IFCA face, I can assure you that Defra officials have been working hard to develop bespoke assistance options with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Any solution does of course have to operate in accordance with the local government funding mechanism and consider wider consequences for the funding of all ten IFCAs. We must also take account that IFCAs are local government committees, and the responsibility to work together to reach consensus in determining budgets is a matter for the IFCA and the local authorities.

Defra provides New Burdens funding annually to all those new authorities brought into the IFCAs in 2011. Defra officials are working with MHCLG to develop options regarding the payment of New Burdens funding to Devon and Severn IFCA for 2021/2022. I note your concerns that the resolution of these issues also needs the involvement of the local authorities in the Devon and Severn district, and accordingly, I have asked Rachel Muckle and her team to also discuss the matter of the 2022/2023 budget setting when she meets with the local authorities.

At the same time, Defra officials will continue to work with all the IFCAs to develop metrics for evaluation. In the short-term, this will help demonstrate the value that the IFCAs bring to effective fisheries management. More widely, metrics will also help to align local priorities with our overall vision of ensuring our fishing industry is productive and resilient, whilst protecting the marine environment so that marine ecosystems can recover and thrive.

Defra officials are committed to maintaining the regular engagement it has with the Chief Officers, and look forward to participating with them on developing a future approach to ensure the IFCAs are appropriately funded.

Yours sincerely,

*Victoria Prentis*

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