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for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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19 May 2021

Dear Professor Williams,

Thank you for your letter of 19 March to the Secretary of State about the Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (DSIFCA). I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

Thank you for outlining the funding challenges that the DSIFCA is currently facing for the 2021/2022 financial year. The additional information you provided is helpful to understand the current funding situation within the DSIFCA district.

It is concerning to hear DSIFCA does not feel it will be able to secure the necessary funding to fulfil its statutory functions beyond the 2021/2022 financial year. While New Burdens funding paid through Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 is not ring-fenced, the Government continues its long-standing policy to provide funding to local government on an un-ringfenced basis. However, Defra is accountable for the funding it provides and expects to see value for money and delivery against the duties laid out in the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009).

I can confirm that Defra officials have been in regular dialogue with officials in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) since 2019. More recently, Defra officials have discussed the specific challenges that DSIFCA face as outlined in your letter of 19 March to explore the options available to either Defra or MHCLG with regards the mechanism through which New Burdens funding is paid to DSIFCA.

In the first instance, I suggest Rachel Muckle (Rachel.Muckle@defra.gov.uk), Deputy Director in the Marine and Fisheries team, meet with you to discuss the issues you raise in your letter with a view to exploring the options available. Involving the Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group in this initial meeting would, I think, also add value in exploring options.

Yours sincerely,

VICTORIA PRENTIS MP