Dear Sir/Madam

DISTRIBUTION OF ADDITIONAL 2006 NEPHROPS QUOTA

1. My consultation letter of 17 February 2006 sought views on options as to the allocation of the increased West of Scotland and North Sea nephrops quota received by the UK on conclusion of the December 2005 EU Fisheries Council Meeting (the UK’s fishing quotas being allocated annually at the discretion of Fisheries Ministers.) This consultation letter was in line with the UK’s Quota Management Rules, paragraph 20.2 of which states:

   “Fisheries Administrations reserve the right, after consultation wherever possible, to depart from the Rules should the need arise.”

2. After consideration of all the relevant factors, including the points made by the consultees, Fisheries Administrations have decided in favour of the second option set out in the consultation paper, namely a departure from the rules, with an increase in the allocation for 2006 of the stocks in question to the non-sector and under ten metre fleet.

3. Fisheries Administrations were particularly swayed by the benefits of this option in avoiding the potential for early closure of fisheries to the non-sector and under 10 metre fleet at the cost of a small percentage of the overall allocation. This possibility of a significant benefit to the under 10 metre and non-sector fleet accruing from what is a small adjustment in the current UK nephrops quota allocation was highly persuasive, particularly in light of the difficulties currently facing that sector of the industry. They have taken into account the possible detriment arising for vessels in the sector from the decision, but consider that the fact that the amount of quota in question is around 0.6% of the total UK quota for the stocks in question and that full uptake of these quotas by the sector has not generally occurred in previous years, the balance struck by way of departure from the Quota Management Rules is the right one in all the circumstances.

4. Fisheries Administrations emphasise that the departure from the rules is an unusual step, taken for this year after careful consideration and in light of the particular set of circumstances arising. The Quota Management Change Programme will consider the broader question of quota management for the non-sector fleet and under 10 metre fleet. A summary of the responses to the consultation will be published on our website shortly.

Simon Doggett
Head of Economic Policy
27 March 2006