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Mr Bob Seely MP
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Dear Bob,

Thank you for your letter of 1 October to the Secretary of State on behalf of your constituents about the Margiris Trawler. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

The UK is a global leader in the fight to protect our seas, with our 'Blue Belt' of protected waters nearly twice the size of England.

While we are still part of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), EU registered vessels are legally entitled to fish in our waters. The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) closely monitored and inspected the Margiris trawler while in UK waters to ensure their fishing activities adhered to current rules and did not take place in restricted areas.

Currently, the Common Fisheries Policy restricts our ability to implement tougher protections, but leaving the EU and taking back control of our waters as an independent coastal state gives us the opportunity to introduce stronger measures. We expect to hold annual negotiations with the EU and third countries on access and fishing opportunities. We have been clear that all vessels will have to comply with UK rules when operating in our waters.

The Government remains fully committed to sustainable fishing, including ending the wasteful discarding of fish. We are committed to protecting vulnerable marine species such as dolphins and seabirds in UK waters. We are currently developing plans and implementing regional measures, in close collaboration with the fishing industry to reduce bycatch of these iconic species.

George Eustice

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