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Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd, Ynni a Materion Gwledig  
Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-778  
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/00021/20

Janet Finch-Saunders AM  
Chair of the Petitions Committee

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 January 2020



Thank you for your letter of 6 January, regarding the extension of the razor clam fishery closure on Llanfairfechan Beach and any work relating to the species.

As you may be aware, the Llanfairfechan razor clam bed was subject to heavy gathering between 2013 and 2017 which lead to concerns the bed was being fished unsustainably. Existing fisheries legislation sets a minimum capture size of 100mm but no limit on the amount an individual may gather.

At the time, advice was also received from Bangor University stating the unregulated overexploitation of adult razor clams, which make up the vast majority of catches and act as the brood-stock for future generations, could lead to stock collapse. In the absence of any evidence of recruitment or any contrary evidence from a quantitative survey, it was deemed prudent to close the Llanfairfechan bed to allow stock recovery.

Officials are awaiting the results of a genetic profiling study commissioned by the Welsh Government which is being carried out by Aberystwyth University. The work will describe the genetic structure and habitat preferences of razor clam populations in Welsh waters, including those at Llanfairfechan. A map illustrating sample areas and any areas of connectivity will also be produced.

Further work is planned for 2020 to improve our understanding of sustainable levels of harvesting the intertidal bed, the presence of a subtidal bed and its ability to support the intertidal fishery. The results from these studies will inform future management decisions relating to razor clam exploitation in Wales.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The studies will also improve our understanding of the vulnerability of particular razor clam stocks to gathering activities, such as at Llanfairfechan, and which management measures may be most appropriate to help ensure sustainable fishing practices. The fishery closure will therefore need to continue until the status of the stock is better understood and confidence is such it can support a sustainable fishery.

Regards  
Lesley

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