Thank you for your letter of 19 June, requesting an update on the Government’s preparations for fisheries after the UK has left the EU.

Defra is planning for all eventualities in negotiations with the EU on fisheries this year. This includes negotiations with the EU on fishing opportunities and access to waters for 2020. Defra has a strong and experienced team of fisheries officials and negotiators supported by scientific and technical experts from CEFAS and the Marine Management Organisation.

Officials are currently examining the latest fisheries science advice from ICES and are engaging with devolved administrations and key stakeholders to prepare UK negotiating objectives.

We also aim to negotiate a new fisheries framework agreement with the EU setting a process for annual negotiations for 2021 and future years, on access to waters and fishing opportunities. Considerable planning is being undertaken to prepare for those negotiations and the fisheries team has been strengthened to meet these new demands. We will continue to keep the resources and skills needed for these important negotiations under close review.

With regard to Parliamentary engagement, it is only right that we look to learn lessons from Phase I on Parliament’s role. We recognise that Parliament will want to debate its own role and there are strong views on this. This will clearly be a matter for the new Prime Minister.

The next stage of the Fisheries Bill will be announced through normal parliamentary procedures. However I would like to reassure you that if the Bill has not passed by exit day, we have the necessary powers under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 and other legislation to ensure that we have a fully functioning statute book to manage our fisheries.
The suite of statutory instruments made under the above Act will ensure that retained EU law will be operable and will come into force on exit day. This provides certainty and stability to fishermen and the seafood industry.

Thank you again for your letter.

With every good wish,

Yours,

Michael Gove