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I write to congratulate you on your appointment as Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

The City of Plymouth welcomes you in your new role and I would personally like to take this opportunity to invite you to visit our city, to view first-hand the world class facilities, capabilities and expertise that the city has to offer.

I am hopeful that we will be able to develop a productive relationship with you and your ministerial team throughout your term of office, around issues of mutual concern such as fishing policy, extending our marine protection areas and the proposed independent statutory body, to hold Government to account for a comprehensive set of environmental principles.

Plymouth's fishing industry continues to grow, supporting more than 600 jobs locally. Our fish market has the highest landings of fish by volume in England, with a first sale value in excess of £18m attracting buyers from all over the world. We have secured the future of the fish quay, but it requires investment to ensure that it thrives and prospers in the future.

More than 50% of the fish landed in Plymouth is exported to Europe. If we leave the EU without a deal, it is expected that there will be disruption and delays at the ferry ports that will have a direct effect on the value of the fish. Exporters in Plymouth will no longer be able to send produce directly via ferry from Plymouth, as the port is not a recognised border inspection port (BIP) and additional layers of documentation will be required, including catch certificates and export health certificates.

The fishing industry will play a key role in future social and environmental projects, such as our proposed National Marine Park and Sustainable Food City programme.

As Britain's Ocean City, Plymouth's marine environment provides a link to our proud heritage as well as being integral to our future prosperity, well-being and culture. Plymouth Sound is a beautiful and

unique natural environment that is integral to what makes Plymouth special, it is a place where people and nature coexist.

Following a conference held at the National Marine Aquarium in June 2018 and attended by over 130 delegates, a Task Force has been established to support the development of Plymouth Sound as the UK's first National Marine Park.

A marine park is a specially recognised coastal or marine space important for its environment and community health and wellbeing. In New Zealand 44 marine reserves have been designated since 1975, resulting in hundreds of thousands of visitors with the associated socio-economic benefits. A National Marine Park could be even more socially inclusive than terrestrial National Parks. In many deprived communities there are children that have never visited the water. Research has demonstrated that engaging with the marine environment has major health and wellbeing benefits, particularly its restorative capacity to protect mental health.

Since 2008 the closure of Government structures and agencies at the regional level, and the associated loss of substantial devolved development funding to the centre have resulted in a net loss of circa £400-500m per year in the South West. We therefore support the case advanced by the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership for the proposed new Office for Environmental Protection to be based in the South West region.

We were among the first council's in the UK to declare a Climate Change Emergency and to set a target of becoming Carbon Neutral by 2030. It is because of this emergency that I believe that the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP), should be independent and accountable to parliament. It should have sufficient powers and resources, to hold government to account. Ideally it should be independently funded – with a three-year funding settlement.

Our natural environment has continued to be degraded with more than one in 10 of the UK's wildlife species threatened with extinction. Only a truly independent environmental watchdog can ensure that future governments are held to account for maintaining this commitment.

We also have our concerns regarding food justice. Our Grow, Share, Cook programme delivered free fruit and vegetables to 3,000 people from disadvantaged households and people at risk of developing diabetes last year. However the number of adults and families with children receiving a food parcel from our foodbank grew for the fourth year running reaching 8,509 in 2018/19. Over 26,000 meals were given out by the city's soup runs in 2018 and the number of people in Plymouth who have diet related type 2 diabetes continues to grow.

I have tried to set out for you some of the principle challenges, risks and opportunities we face over the next few years. Our ability to work with you to deliver our mutual; ambitions would be greatly enhanced if your department could agree to: -

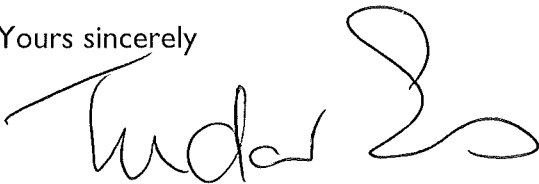
- Consider the feasibility of establishing a Border Inspection Point in Plymouth.
- Agree to meet in full our 2018/19 financial claim to the Food Standards Agency so that we are able to deal with an expected uplift of demand for catch and export health across Plymouth and Torbay.

- Open a dialogue with us about funding the port infrastructure we may need to enable our export goods trade to continue uninterrupted by Brexit and to enable the necessary redevelopment of our Fish Quay.
- Enshrine the UK's existing commitment to UN Sustainable Development Goal 2 to eliminate hunger by 2030 into domestic legislation.
- Designate and support Plymouth Sound as the country's first National Marine Park
- Consider home basing the UK's independent environmental watchdog, the Office for Environmental Protection in the Heart of the South West LEP area and ensure that it has the power to hold future governments to account.

I call on you to support wholeheartedly what we are trying to do in Plymouth and the citizens we support and collectively unite to meet the challenges we both face.

Congratulations once again on your appointment and we look forward to hearing from you and welcoming you to Plymouth.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tudor Evans', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Councillor Tudor Evans OBE
Leader, Plymouth City Council