

Fall in absenteeism from primary schools over the last decade

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Kirsty Williams said:

“These figures are to be welcomed as they show absenteeism from our primary schools has fallen over the last decade.

“Once again, I want to thank pupils, parents and teachers for their hard work in achieving this. The fact is if our young people are going to achieve their full potential, going to school regularly and consistently is crucial.

“Despite the progress we have seen, we can’t afford to be complacent and we will continue to take action to improve attendance in our schools.

“Understanding the needs of individual learners and providing the right support at the right time is what can make all the difference. Indeed, the Pupil Development Grant evaluation published yesterday highlights the benefits of improved attendance for our disadvantaged learners.”

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[A significant deal to safeguard Wales’ fish stocks – Lesley Griffiths](#)

As part of the UK Ministerial negotiating team, the Welsh Government helped secure the deal at the EU Fisheries Council in Brussels which concluded in the early hours of this morning.

The Welsh Government secured deals to:

- avoid needless discards of sea bass and protect the interests of commercial and recreational fishers
- increase quotas for cod and plaice in the Irish sea, sole and cod in the Bristol channel while still meeting sustainability targets
- substantial increase quota for skates and rays.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“I would like to thank the commercial fishers and recreational angling representatives who have helped identify the key issues around sea bass and other key stocks in Wales. As a result, we were able to present a robust Welsh case to the Presidency and Commission, along with colleagues from the UK Government and other Devolved Administrations.

“We are committed to ensuring our natural resources are sustainably managed. This meaningful deal goes a long way to achieving that goal by securing a positive outcome for coastal communities whose economies and livelihoods depend so much on the sea while protecting our precious marine environment.

“As a Government, we are committed to the key principles of the Common Fisheries Policy and this week’s negotiations underline the importance of following sound science and evidence.

“Securing the right balance in the negotiations is always

challenging. This deal strikes the right balance between protecting the economic interests of small-scale fishers and recreational anglers with the need to move stocks toward the position where they can be fished sustainably into the future.”

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Cabinet Secretary considers a Wales wide approach to tackle nitrate pollution

Following an extensive [consultation on Nitrate Vulnerable Zones](#) last year, the Cabinet Secretary said work would get underway with partners over the coming months to develop the right balance of comprehensive regulatory measures, voluntary measures and investment.

This will also include exploring further options to provide land managers with flexibility, where these would achieve the same or better outcomes than a regulatory approach.

Cabinet Secretary said:

“Pure, clean water is vital to human health and well-being, as well as to natural ecosystems and economic development. While nitrogen is a vital nutrient that helps plants and crops grow, high concentrations are harmful. The agricultural use of nitrates is a major source of water pollution.

“We had a considerable interest in our consultation on Nitrate Vulnerable Zones, reflecting the importance of water quality to Wales as a nation.

“Most respondents recognised the significant impact nitrate pollution is having on our waters, businesses and human and environmental well-being throughout Wales and agreed further action was needed.

“Poor nutrient management is still a major problem across Wales. Pollution of this kind is entirely preventable and is simply not acceptable in the 21st century.

“We should not at the end of 2017 see significant stretches of some of our most well known and popular rivers largely devoid of fish, proving just how much work remains to be done.

“Wales’ waters need much greater protection from agricultural pollution and that is why I am minded to introduce a whole Wales approach to tackling nitrate pollution from agriculture.

“Over the coming months, I intend to work in partnership with our stakeholders to get the right balance of comprehensive regulatory measures, voluntary measures and investment. I also intend to

explore further options to provide land managers with flexibility, where these would achieve the same or better outcomes than a regulatory approach.

“We have some of the finest countryside and stretches of water in Europe which we have a duty to protect and enhance. This new regulatory approach will help deliver this and ensure current and future generations continue to benefit from our natural resources.”