

Dear XXXXXXX,

I am writing to you in support of our fishermen who are very keen that the Common Fisheries Policy legislation, in particular Regulation 1380/2013, is excluded from the European Union (withdrawal) Bill which “repatriates” the EU *acquis communautaire* onto the UK’s statute books.

Brexit offers an unparalleled opportunity to rejuvenate our fishing industry and the coastal communities where it is based. We are delighted that the Rt Hon. Michael Gove has already announced the termination of the 1964 London Fisheries Convention and hope this is the beginning of a process which will turn the UK into one of the world’s leading nations in the areas of fisheries management and conservation.

One of the biggest challenges the Government will face will be pressure from vested interests. Due to the mistaken decision by a previous UK government to allow fishing quotas to acquire a market value, the right to catch fish in UK waters is held in many cases not only by non-fishermen but non-residents of the UK. I believe that this is unacceptable, although I would acknowledge that holders of these quotas will need some form of compensation.

However, the problem with quotas goes deeper than this. The Common Fisheries Policy is ample proof of the shortcomings of any quota-based system. It encourages cheating and misreporting of the catch, as you will have read if you studied the Campaign for an Independent Britain’s booklet *Seizing the Moment*, a copy of which you should have received earlier this year. The only alternative to cheating is to discard surplus fish for which you have no quota. I would urge you to consider the proposals put forward by Fishing for Leave whereby an independent UK manages its fisheries along the lines of the Faeroe Islands, which operate a “days at sea” basis, thus encouraging fishermen to be honest in reporting the catch and eliminating at a stroke the problem of discards.

As Fishing for Leave has pointed out, while Iceland and Norway are in control of their own Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ), they have still chosen to manage their waters via a quota-based system and thus their fishermen face many of the same problems as their UK counterparts.

I believe that Fishing for Leave’s bold proposals could be transposed into UK law before Brexit Day and thus there is no need to include the flawed CFP legislation in the European Union (withdrawal) Bill. If you have studied Regulation 1380/2013, you will note that it would need substantial re-working to make sense. You only have to go as far as paragraph (2) on the first very page before encountering the terms “Union waters” and “Union fishing vessels.” At the moment, these terms refer to the boats and EEZs of all EU28 countries - at least, all those which have a coastline and therefore a maritime fishing industry. On Brexit day, the term will mean something different as phrase containing the word “Union” will refer to EU27 - in other words, not the UK.

There are also references to various EU treaties. Once we leave the EU, these treaties will no longer apply, so these references will need to be struck out, along with the cross-references to other pieces of EU legislation which derive their authority from the treaties.

Most importantly, however, including this document - even in a highly modified form - in the European Union (withdrawal) Bill would raise the question of who actually determines who can fish in the UK's EEZ. We can be sure that fishing vessels from EU member states will test any legal weaknesses in our fishing policy, just like Kent Kirk who deliberately fished in UK waters in 1983.

I believe it is important that the UK authorities and the UK authorities alone should determine who can fish in our waters. This was one of the reasons why I supported Brexit. Currently 59% of all fish caught in our EEZ is caught by foreign boats. I appreciate that the fishing industry has been so decimated by the Common Fisheries Policy that our fleet is currently too small to catch all the fish which could be caught within sensible conservation parameters and also an immediate, total ban on all foreign vessels on Brexit Day would create great hardship in France and Spain, but essentially, we are talking about a resource which belongs to the people of the UK. It was given away by previous governments, with our fishermen being among the most unfortunate victims of Edward Heath's desire to see us join the European project.

I therefore urge you to ensure that a future fisheries policy will allow only time-limited rights for foreign vessels which will be entirely at the discretion of the UK government and to adopt a fishing policy along the lines proposed by Fishing for Leave which will rejuvenate our domestic fishing industry while at the same time ensuring that fishing is carried out in a sustainable manner.

Yours sincerely,

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