

A new UK fishing industry

Remembering past experiences of EU negotiations some fear another sell out of our fish. Unrelenting Remain supporters tell us as the fishing industry is so small, we should make concessions to secure other unspecified advantages in a general agreement. If the industry is as unimportant as they say it is to us, why would the EU be so keen to win concessions on it?

Isn't the truth that it is small today for the UK only because most of our fish are taken by continental boats and often taken away for processing far from our shores?

Fish is one of many important wins from Brexit for the UK. It is also totemic, because most agree our membership of the EEC, now the EU, came with the sacrifice of our once large and healthy fishing industry. We have gone from good surplus and plenty of stock in our seas, to overfishing from abroad and an astonishing net deficit in fish.

The government needs to take action to make the most of this opportunity. They must of course hold firm in negotiations and refuse to make any sacrifice of our fish. A Free Trade Agreement makes sense for the EU, so there is no need to sweeten the deal with a gift of fish.

The government should also get on with the following policies

1. Announce freeports, including our best fishing harbours, with favourable tax and regulatory conditions to found and grow a high quality food processing industry on the back of more landed fish.
2. Offer a fund to finance or guarantee finance on the purchase of new vessels from a UK yard or second hand vessels from a non UK owner, to undertake a rapid expansion of the UK fishing fleet.
3. Offer more training and training support packages to people wishing to undertake work in the industry.

I am sending this to the government for consideration.