

SNP must support Scottish fishermen in French trade row

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The Scottish Conservatives have challenged the SNP to support the Scottish fishermen in the upcoming trade negotiations with the EU.

As the first round of trade talks get underway regarding the UK's departure from the EU, France has apparently already threatened a trade battle with the UK if British fishing rights are not part of the negotiations.

The UK government has stated that they will not trade away Britain's fishing rights.

The Scottish Fishermen's Federation has stated that post Brexit, the UK must have sovereignty over who catches what, where and when. As a coastal state, the UK would then negotiate with the EU and others on an annual basis in international forums, similar to Norway and Iceland.

The Scottish Conservatives have therefore demanded that the SNP publicly declare who they back – UK ministers trying to secure Scotland's fishing assets, or France trying to gain further access.

Murdo Fraser, Scottish Conservative shadow constitution secretary said:

“Scottish fishermen are clear that when we leave the EU at the end of this year, we must have full control of access to our coastal waters – like other coastal states. Our fishing fleet is not for sale.

“It is no surprise that France is already threatening a trade war if we do not put our fishing waters on the table – but now the SNP has a choice to make.

“The Scottish Conservatives have always supported our fishermen and we have consistently argued that the hated CFP must go.

“Now it's decision time for the SNP: do they support this move by the French government, or do they support the UK defending our fishermen?

“Michael Russell must tell us: is he on the side of our fishermen, the communities and economies that depend on them, or not?”