

Conservative Manifesto – PM May Fail on Fishing

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Fishing For Leave is incredulous over 4 specific words in the Conservative manifesto which indicate the government will only take back a tiny slice of UK water out to 12 miles!

Analysis and scrutiny of every word is key in any legal or political document. One of the “acid tests” of Brexit is to take back sovereign control from the EU of all UK waters and resources within our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) out to 200 miles or the mid-line under international law.

This would allow Britain to reclaim a £6.3bn pound industry, worth tens of thousands of jobs, to rejuvenate coastal communities but the manifesto wilts on this key issue when scrutinised properly.

Many of the commitments in the manifesto are welcome. The government has committed to “work with the industry...to introduce a new regime... that will preserve and increase stocks... to ensure prosperity for a new generation” and FFL looks forward to fully engaging to do so.

However, without sovereign control of ALL waters and resources inside the EEZ all other commitments are worthless without the raw materials and the most important ingredient – regaining our waters.

The manifesto states that the UK “will be fully responsible for the access and management of the waters where we have historically exercised sovereign control”.

The choice of the last 4 words are the key. They are ambiguous and a delusory play on words.

They don't trip off the tongue and this peculiar yet deliberate choice of words are of dire concern and ring alarm bells for a total backslide and fudged deal.

Why hasn't the natural wording of "all UK waters" or perhaps "all our EEZ" been used??

Why? Because the UK has never been able to exercise sovereign control over our EEZ in the waters between 12 and 200 miles from our shores! The UK has only ever been able to exercised sovereign control out to 12 miles before joining the EU!

Britain was already an EU member and bound by the CFP when international fishing limits were extended to 200 miles.

The UK recognised her sovereignty over the EEZ out to 200 miles, with the Fishery Limits Act of 1976, but these waters were automatically subverted to the EU which exercised sovereign control instead of the UK as per the terms of the CFP foundation Regulation 2141/1970, the terms of which, in Article 2, Section 3, said the EU would control "the maritime waters.... which are so described by the laws in force in each Member State".

Therefore, although the UK recognised her sovereignty over the EEZ, the UK has never been able to historically exercised control between 12 and 200 miles because it was automatically subverted by the EU!

Before the UK joined the EU, Britain's controlled fisheries upto 12 miles. This was reduced to 6 miles when the UK signed the London Fisheries Convention of 1964.

The EU adopted the terms of the London Convention and the UK Accession Treaty, Article 100 only authorised member states "to restrict fishing in waters under their sovereignty or

jurisdiction, situated within a limit of six nautical miles”

Although we welcome the manifesto commitment of finally committing to scrapping the 1964 London Fisheries Convention, that FFL alone successfully campaigned for, that only regains exclusive control back up to 12 miles once the UK leaves the CFP.

Therefore, the manifestos choice of 4 words are deliberate and indicate, as FFL has continually warned, that the government has no intention of taking back control of all our waters.

Is only this to avoid being contentious to the EU as they look to build a “deep and special relationship” with their “EU friends and partners”?

For the last 40 years the Conservatives flatter to deceive when the small print is scrutinized.

FFL sincerely hopes we are proved wrong. We will now tenaciously press for answers to what’s defined as “waters where we have historically exercised sovereign control”

The Conservatives have got it absolutely right, that “When we leave the EU and CFP we will be fully responsible”. Responsibility will revert to Westminster for what is chosen for our waters and what areas of them, the buck stops entirely with MPs and the government.

The Conservatives had better mean that this includes all UK waters within our EEZ out to 200 miles, otherwise Brexit, the nation and the opportunity to reclaim all waters, for all fishermen and for all communities has been betrayed.

Without all our waters and resources the rest of the fantastic wording of “a new regime....for prosperity for a new generation of fishermen” is meaningless and they have failed on this “acid test”.

When these words are taken in conjunction with Fisheries

Minister George Eustace's utterances at Fisheries APPG and Brexit Committee meetings that the government "would perhaps look to do something inside 12 miles for smaller boats and something 'different' outside 12 miles" the picture is clear.

1) The Conservatives will only "exercise sovereign control" over the waters we have "historically" done so which is out to 12 miles and scrap the London Convention to do so.

2) There will then be a partition of the UK EEZ. Inside 12 miles they will implement a policy for a cottage industry which they hope will bribe and appease smaller vessels and assuage Brexit demands by having pretty boats in pretty harbours.

3) Outside 12 miles where the UK has, never "historically exercised sovereign control", having been kept prisoner within the CFP, we will run a mirror CFP as they propose to adopt in the Great "Repeal" Bill. This will throw the majority of the UK fleet to the wolves

4) The UK, with a separate inside 12 mile regime for smaller vessels, will shut down the waters of the Irish Sea, Shetland, West of Scotland, the Scilly Isles and St Kilda to the UK fleet.

5) Smaller vessels will be pinned inside 12 with only the fish that make it inshore and most British fishermen will be forced inside 12 miles increasing pressure.

We have grave suspicions of the superficially appealing logic of such an approach to the government, that it will; buy off smaller boats, appease the EU, larger interests will continue the consolidation of Britain's struggling fleet into fewer boats and fewer hands and despite Brexit we will have fulfilled the EUs goals of clearing our sea and leaving only a cottage industry around our shores.

It is the typical limp British establishment response to a

contentious issue. Create a partition, split the problem to fight amongst themselves with a fudge for everyone that keeps no one happy.

ENDS

PS:- FOLLOWING THIS PRESS RELEASE, FISHING FOR LEAVE RECEIVED A REPLY FROM GEORGE EUSTICE.

He said that it was wrong to suggest the manifesto committed to sovereign control of waters just 12 miles out to sea, saying:

"Fishing for Leave are shadowboxing and they are wrong. When we leave the EU we automatically regain control of the management of our Exclusive Economic Zone under international law.

"This means we will have full control over access arrangements and fisheries management out to 200 nautical miles or the median line".

However, this still leaves some questions unanswered. For instance, why were the Minister's words of 200 mile EEZ not used in the manifesto instead of ones that mean 12?

We welcome the minister's affirmation that the UK will reclaim control over our EEZ. However, the Conservative manifesto clearly states the UK "will be fully responsible for the access and management of the waters where we have historically exercised sovereign control."

Fishing for Leave has written to the minister to seek clarity as to which waters Britain "historically exercised sovereign control" and why these deliberately ambiguous words were used and what is now government policy, his words or the manifestos?

The Minister can dismissively opine FFL "shadowboxing" but we are concerned and seek clarity on his party's deliberate

choice of manifesto wording that can only mean waters within 12 miles from shore. Furthermore, the Prime Minister reiterated the manifesto wording in a speech in Scotland on the 20th May in contrast to the minister's earlier statement.

Due to the UK being bound to the terms of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) the EU automatically took and exercised sovereign control over the waters of the UK EEZ between 12 and 200 miles when international fishing limits were extended to 200 miles or the mid line to create EEZs in 1976.

Resultantly, due to this fact, the UK has never been able to "historically exercise sovereign control" over our EEZ in the waters between 12 and 200 miles; only between the shore and 12 miles.

When a simple "all waters within the UK EEZ" would have sufficed why was the manifesto written with such deliberate wording in contrast to the minister's statement when "waters where we have historically exercised sovereign control" clearly can only be out to 12miles?

In addition to "reclaim control" is different from "exercising sovereign control" over all those waters. and taking back all resources and access to those waters. One can gain something it is what is done afterwards that counts.

Brexit Speech

Furthermore, the manifesto also pledges that policy will be guided by Lancaster house speech and Brexit White paper and both merely add fuel to this particular fire, considering the only mentions of fishing state: *"Spanish fishermen looking for a good deal" and "Given the heavy reliance on UK waters of the EU fishing industry and the importance of EU waters to the UK, it is in both our interests to reach a mutually beneficial deal that works for the UK and the EU's fishing communities"*

Given that only 16% of UK catches are in EU waters but 54% of

the EU's catches are in ours it is clear who has "heavy reliance" and for whom a deal is "important" and "beneficial".

Clarity is Needed as to what the policy is

All these are deliberate words in speeches, papers and manifestos that are some of the most important in British history – are these clerical errors and clumsy writing or deliberate get-out clauses?

If there is an unequivocal commitment to taking back and exercising control over the UK's entire EEZ then why was the same direct and robust language as the ministers statement this not in the manifesto and why did the Prime Minister not echo his words in her speech that day?

It begs the question as to what is going on and who and why is responsible for these manifesto words. Why they were used? Which is the true policy, the manifesto's words or the ministers contrasting statement?

Ministers and officials can be moved on whilst the manifesto transcends all!

It is imperative that the Prime Minister gives immediate clarity and an unequivocal commitment to affirm what waters the UK has "historically exercised sovereign control" over and whether the Minister's statement has her full support and if it is the manifestos words or the minister's statement that is a full statement of the Conservatives' policy? Otherwise the door will be left wide open to accusations of backsliding.

There must now be a clear commitment to affirm that it is the entire UK EEZ and all waters and resources therein, along with an absolute undertaking that under no circumstances will they trade away the right to fish in Britain's waters as capital in the Brexit negotiations?

Until then the deliberately ambiguous wording in the manifesto

could render any commitment to reclaim British waters as "worthless". If the Conservatives are as good as the subsequent words extracted from them publicly by FFL then doing so should not be a problem.