

Fisheries: Oral questions following the Prime Minister's statement

Following on from Mrs May's announcement last week that Article 50 had finally been triggered, it was encouraging to note how many oral and written questions on the subject of fisheries were asked. Equally encouraging were the answers from the Prime Minister. We are still some way off from any definitive statement about future fisheries policies, but there seems to be a growing recognition of the problems that would ensue by transposing fisheries Regulation 1380/2013 onto the UK statute books. Here are the questions and answers in full, with my observations and comments in italics:-

ORAL QUESTIONS

(1) Mr Owen Paterson (North Shropshire) (Con)

May I thank my right hon. Friend for and congratulate her on resolutely sticking to her promise to the British people to trigger article 50 before the end of March? There will be celebrations all around the country, nowhere more so than in our remote coastal communities, where the health and wealth of our fishing grounds has been trashed by the common fisheries policy. To re-establish fully our national control of the full exclusive economic zone, we will have to abrogate our membership of the 1964 London convention on fisheries, which requires two years' notice. Does my right hon. Friend intend to trigger that soon?

The Prime Minister

I know that my right hon. Friend has always had a particular interest in the impact of the common fisheries policy, and he has looked at that issue very carefully. We are looking very

carefully at the London fisheries convention and at what action needs to be taken. He is right that this would require two years, but we of course expect to conclude the deal with the European Union within two years and there will then, as I have indicated, be an implementation period beyond that particular time. We hope to be able to say something about the London fisheries convention soon

(At least we have confirmation that they know all about London convention – JA)

(2) Kate Hoey (Vauxhall) (Lab)

On what is a genuinely historic day for our country, may I pay tribute to the Prime Minister and to the Brexit Ministers for their determination and dedication in getting to this stage today to implement the will of the British people? Does she agree that one area on which we should be able to move forward very quickly in negotiations is getting back control of our fishing grounds?

The Prime Minister

My right hon. Friend the Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson), the former Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, mentioned the London fisheries convention. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is looking at this issue and we hope to be able to say something soon. As we look at the whole raft of negotiations, we will be looking at policies that affect not just trade in goods and services, but agriculture and fisheries here in the United Kingdom, and security and crime. We will be looking particularly at the London fisheries convention in due course

(Further confirmation that Fisheries are being looked into)

(3) Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con)

For those of us who campaigned and voted for Brexit not just

last year, but in 1975 this is a great day and one for celebration. Some 70% of my Cleethorpes constituents and of those in neighbouring Grimsby voted for Brexit last June, partly as a result of continuing anger and resentment at the sell-out of the fishing industry in the original negotiations. The Prime Minister has already reassured me that the fishing industry will be looked after, but the associated seafood industry is very much dependent on the fishing industry. I have already met industry leaders in my constituency who see both opportunities and concerns, so will she reassure me that the seafood processing industry will be a key part of the negotiations?

The Prime Minister

I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that we want to ensure not only that we get a good future for our fishing industry, but that those parts of industry that rely on fishing will also have a good future here in the UK. We will be taking that into account.

(This looks as if they are keen to address the concerns of fishermen, but do they fully understand the pitfalls?)

(4) Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Con)

I welcome the Prime Minister's clear commitment to a positive, constructive and respectful approach to the negotiations that lie ahead. May I press her further on behalf of the fishing community in my constituency and around the United Kingdom? She will know that in the past these people have been badly let down during negotiations, so will she give an equally clear commitment that the fishing community will receive a sufficiently high priority during the negotiations ahead?

The Prime Minister

I can confirm to my hon. Friend that we are very conscious of the needs of the fishing industry. The Department for

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has been talking to the fishing industry. The Secretary of State and others have been looking carefully at the arrangements that will need to be put in place in the interests of the fishing industry, and that will be an important part of our considerations in future.

(I would love to know exactly who within the fishing industry they have been talking to!)

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

(1) Kevin Hollinrake Conservative, Thirsk and Malton

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which EU fishery regulations will be transferred to domestic legislation through the Great Repeal Bill.

George Eustice The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

We are currently analysing all EU fisheries legislation. No decision has yet been made on the extent to which the EU legislation governing the Common Fisheries Policy will be incorporated into domestic law.

The Government remains fully committed to controlling and managing UK waters after we leave the EU in accordance with our rights and obligations under international law.

We are considering the issue of the London Fisheries Convention carefully to ensure we have full control of UK waters after we leave the EU and, as the Prime Minister said on 29th March 2017, we hope to be able to say something about it soon

(2) Lord Pearson of Rannoch UKIP

To ask Her Majesty's Government under what arrangements vessels of other EU member states fish in UK waters between the six and 12 nautical mile limits; and by what process those

arrangements could be terminated.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Under Article 5 (2) of Council Regulation 1380/2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, and the 1964 London Fisheries Convention, vessels from Belgium, Germany, France, Netherlands, Denmark and the Republic of Ireland have access to fish in the UK's six to twelve nautical mile zone.

In order to withdraw from the London Convention signatories must give two years notice

(3) Lord Pearson of Rannoch UKIP

To ask Her Majesty's Government under what arrangements vessels of other EU member states fish in the UK's Exclusive Economic Zone between the 12 and 200 nautical mile limits; and by what process those arrangements could be terminated.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Under the EU's Common Fisheries Policy regime vessels from EU Member States have access to fisheries in the UK's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) between the 12 and 200 nautical mile limit. When it leaves the EU, the UK will control access to fisheries in its EEZ and will manage its waters in accordance with international law, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.