

# Could fisheries prick the SNP's bubble in Scotland?

The roots of the SNP lie in the coastal communities, especially the fishing communities that in the 1960s were safe Conservative seats. It was Edward Heath's surrender of our fishing industry which provided the impetus for SNP's subsequent growth. Alex Salmond, the previous leader of the SNP, once put forward a private members Bill to take back control of UK fishing grounds of 200 nautical miles/median line zone during his first stint as a Westminster MP.

How times have changed! Power has gone to the SNP's head and now they do not want to be in an union with the UK but want Scotland to be part of the Union of the EU.

But what would happen if, following Brexit, Scotland voted for independence and then re-joined the EU? The membership terms are unequivocal: Scotland would have to hand back her Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) to the EU on the basis of equal access to a common resource without discrimination, and not increasing fishing effort.

Furthermore, the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy state that EU fishing capacity must be balanced to EU marine resource, and with the loss to the EU of the UK's EEZ, even though Scotland would have its own EEZ, the loss of the English, Welsh and Northern Irish EEZs would result in the EU having to reduce its overall fishing capacity, but that reduced number of vessels would have to share in that reduced capacity – including Scotland's EEZ.

So if the SNP were to take an independent Scotland back into the EU, it would result in a further decline in the Scottish fleet, finishing off the already devastated coastal communities that originally helped to create the SNP.

It does not end there. The territorial waters of 12 nautical miles come back to the coastal state through a transitional derogation which expires on 31st. December 2022 and would have to be renewed. With the rest of the UK out of the EU and our Accession treaty of 1972 (which was the main reason for the 12 mile derogation) now confined to history, why would the EU wish to offer a fresh derogation covering Scottish waters only? In other words, Scotland could find herself with the EU vessels fishing up to her beaches.

The SNP will huff and puff over this, saying they will negotiate, but there is no way out. These are the rules of EU membership. If, therefore, the SNP is so desperate to rejoin the EU, it would be at the cost of destroying the party's roots.

The Conservatives, who are currently looking to become the main challengers to the SNP north of the border, would benefit immensely from including a clear fishing policy on the lines we have proposed in their manifesto. Who knows, it may enable them to recapture those seats they lost in the the 1960s and 1970s and tear the heart out of the SNP?