

Fishing for Leave welcomes Michael Gove's statement on discarding

This press release first appeared on the Fishing for Leave website.

It was good to hear Secretary of State Michael Gove at Conservative Conference and a sincere thanks for his kind words to John Ashworth – the unfaltering founder of the fight to free Britain's fishing from the EU and CFP.

One of the original Brexiteers in the 90s, without John's encyclopaedic constitutional knowledge of the EU treaties we may have never known nor understood the EU and its implications– many still do not.

Markets and Morals dictate discarding – where fishermen are forced to discard the “wrong” fish to match quotas – must end.

Quotas cause discards. Discarding distorts information on effort and abundance creating inaccurate science. Poor science leads to poor quotas perpetuating a system that only reflect quota limits and talks to itself in a downward spiral.

Banning discards addresses the symptom (discards) not the cause (quotas). ‘Choke species’ will see vessels have to stop fishing on exhausting their lowest quota to avoid any discarding –bankrupting the majority of the fleet and finishing off communities Brexit or not.

Fishing for Leave looks forward to continuing to work with government on the world leading, bespoke British system of refined effort control (days-at-sea) we propose which solves

both choke species by ending the cause – quotas.

Allowing vessels to land all catches in exchange for a limit on time at sea – meaning catch less but land all –will provide real-time science and management.

Government must accelerate engagement so this viable alternative is there to replace the CFP. Otherwise, due to lack of alternative, Britain will remain with the disastrous status quo of the CFP, quotas and discards or a ban that will finish the fleet.

The Icelandic approach is the quota system on steroids. It will accelerate the consolidation of the industry, especially as choke species under a quota system and discard ban will push what little fleet is left out, with only a few big operators able to survive.

Such a result would only benefit a few big operators and ‘slipper skippers’ who rent quota. Anyone advocating replicating what has happened in Iceland has a narrow perception of accelerating an “all for one – none for all” system.

Consolidation to a few, as in Iceland, will make it impossible to rejuvenate the industry and communities so everyone – large or small can survive and thrive.

Coastal constituencies that voted for Brexit and Conservative did not do so for an increased dose of the same bad medicine of Quotas in some sort of continuation of the CFP.

Continuing the same bad system in London instead of Brussels is no solution. Especially when there is a viable alternative that is more sustainable, gives accurate science and would allow a £6.3bn industry and communities to be rebuilt as a beacon of Brexit.

The Secretary of State and this government cannot continue the

same system on steroids as in Iceland to appease Remainers (who want to stay aligned with the EU) or to appease a few big interests and slipper skippers.

Many of who were happy to stay in the EU and to see the majority of the British Industry thrown to the Wolves so they can take all.