

# SNP confusion over fishing policy



Photo by stusmith\_uk



The roots of the SNP lie in the fishing communities of the North East of Scotland. The recent desire for Scottish independence, in other words, was borne out of a desire to regain national control over fisheries, which by then were under control of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy.

Now, of course, the SNP seems hell-bent on securing a further referendum on independence in order to rejoin the EU after Brexit. That, however, would mean rejoining the Common Fisheries Policy – and on even more disadvantageous terms than the present arrangements.

So what are we to make of those SNP MPs who have signed a pledge that would protect fishermen by, in effect, keeping Scotland out of the EU?

Signatories include Mike Weir, the party's chief whip, and Banff and Buchan MP Eilidh Whiteford. The pledge could not be more specific:- *"We must avoid any policy, practice, regulation or treaty which could return us to the Common Fisheries Policy and the enforced giveaway of almost two-thirds of our fish stocks."* If this doesn't mean staying out of the EU after Brexit, what does it mean?

True, the Conservatives, under Michael Howard, considered repatriating UK fisheries policy without leaving the EU, using the so-called "notwithstanding" clause which allowed the Westminster Parliament to enact legislation "any provisions of the European Communities Act notwithstanding" – in other words, to override the EU. Would Scotland, however, newly back

into the EU fold, wish to embark on such a confrontational act, even assuming the Scottish Parliament actually possessed similar powers?

While Dr Whiteford insisted that the party's policy "has always been consistent" in its opposition to CFP, the charges of hypocrisy levelled by Murdo Fraser, a Scottish Conservative MEP and fellow-signatory, are not without foundation. Ultimately, the SNP has a choice. Does it want to seize the opportunities provided by Brexit to rebuild the Scottish fishing industry or does it want to complete the work begun by Edward Heath in wrecking Scotland's coastal communities completely by dragging the country back into the EU and thus the Common Fisheries Policy it was formed to oppose? It cannot do both.

Photo by stusmith\_uk 