

Fishing for wins

As the government battles the virus we need more wins and optimism elsewhere. We need to get on with the great Brexit wins now we are free to set our own laws and taxes.

This is now crucial for our fishing industry who feel let down. There is scope for major growth in investment and jobs. The immediate task is to protect our fish stocks from plunder by aggressive foreign industrial trawlers, and to help the UK build capacity to fish the grounds in a sustainable way landing much more fish here in the UK. This requires

1. A ban on super large industrial trawlers. The Agriculture Department says there is no definition of a supertrawler . There can be. You could ban all boats of over 100 metres in length, or all boats of over 5000 deadweight tonnes. This would remove the huge Russian and Dutch vessels which dominate and leave more fish for our smaller boats. This would be very popular, and supported by Green groups.
2. Cheap loan and grant schemes to build new under 100m boats for our expanded fishery in UK yards, and a scheme to allow purchase of second hand vessels from abroad which can also increase capacity. With interest rates so low for the government it would be easy to offer soft loans with long repayment dates to get new fishing people involved.
3. Use available regional and development grant regimes to encourage harbour expansion around our coasts at suitable fishing locations.
4. Speed up Freeports and Enterprise Zones, allotting enough to fishing areas and use them to attract new and additional fish and food processing.
5. Help the UK fishing industry establish new markets for UK fish by adding value, using the fish in ready meals and frozen products, sending much more to fish hungry Asia.
6. For shipping generally, reverse the Factortame ECJ judgement, restoring a minimum UK ownership requirement for UK flagged vessels.
7. Draw up with our shipping industry improvements to requirements for the UK shipping Register to encourage expansion without diluting labour or safety standards.