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(WAVENEY)



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon. Theresa May MP  
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom  
10 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AA

Our Ref: LOW/DE/TM

*Dear Prime Minister,*

27<sup>th</sup> March 2018

**Brexit Implementation Period – The UKs Withdrawal from the Common Fisheries Policy**

I refer to the Implementation Agreement for the UKs withdrawal from the EU, in so far as it relates to fishing.

This matter is of specific interest to the Waveney constituency, where Brexit is seen as a once in a life time opportunity to revitalise the East Anglian Fishing Industry. On Thursday 15th March a conference was held in Lowestoft to launch REAF (The Renaissance of East Anglian Fisheries). George Eustice spoke and there was very much an upbeat mood with some exciting and interesting ideas emerging as to how we set about this task. This positive outlook has been replaced by anger and despair.

I am grateful to you for subsequently confirming that at the end of the Implementation Period on 31st December 2020 the UK will resume full control of the seas in our Exclusive Economic Zone, deciding on who can access these waters, and on what terms, and I thank you for your assurance that there will be no deals done beforehand as part of the wider Brexit negotiations.

Notwithstanding the wording of Article 125 of the Implementation Agreement, which sets out the specific arrangements relating to fishing opportunities during the Implementation Period, there is a very real worry that the best interests of the fishing industry will be irretrievably compromised during this period. We will be subject to the Common Fisheries Policy and the Landings Obligation, with the Maximum Sustainable Yield target, but will have a significantly reduced influence on the annual negotiations. The discards ban will be implemented during this period, and its negative impact on the inshore fleet will be significant, yet we will have a very much diminished opportunity to promote measures to alleviate its impact.

We also need to know what reciprocal agreements will be in place during the period, such as whether the UK will be able to access Vessel Monitoring System data transmitted by foreign registered vessels and what co-operation can be expected from all member states when seeking to monitor and if necessary apprehend vessels.

We will in effect be bound by the CFP during this period, but only "consulted" on fishing opportunities in UK waters. Clarification is required as to what "fishing opportunities" means, as to whether it just covers such issues as "Total Allowable Catches", quotas and days at sea, or whether it also extends to "technical measures".

There is also a concern that the provisions of Article 125 may set a precedent for any future negotiations with the EU. At the meeting that you held with Conservative colleagues on 20th March, I highlighted my worry with

regard to clause 4 of Article 125 which refers to maintaining the relative stability keys for the allocation of fishing opportunities during the Implementation Period.

The main challenge for East Anglian fishermen is that they are not able to land enough fish both to earn a fair living and with which to supply the local processing industry. "Relative stability" in many respects underpins the status quo and it is important that once we leave the CFP, we can start with a "clean sheet of paper" with regard to the allocation of fishing opportunities. Your confirmation that this will be the case would be greatly appreciated by those fishermen.

The East Anglian Fleet is predominantly an inshore one, comprising what has become known as "the Under Tens". As I mentioned at the meeting last Tuesday in many respects this part of the industry is at present "hanging on by its fingertips" and there is a worry that they will struggle to survive to the end of the Implementation Period. Action is needed to address this situation.

It is important that we use the additional preparatory time before we leave the CFP wisely and I make the following suggestions as to how we might do so:-

1. The UK becomes an Independent Coastal State on 29th March 2019 with duties and obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. We must be fully prepared and ready to discharge these rights and responsibilities.
2. The Fisheries White Paper and the Fisheries Bill should be published as soon as practically possible, so that the industry and parliamentarians can play a proactive role in shaping a future policy framework, which will enable the industry to flourish all around the coast, but with the flexibility to respond to different local demands.
3. East Anglian fishermen, and indeed many from around the UK, need to be able to land more fish so that they can earn a fair living. In the short term this could be achieved by a reallocation of a share of existing quota to the inshore fleet. In the longer term we need to tackle the situation where fish caught in UK waters is not landed in UK ports, with much of Britain's quota currently being held by overseas businesses.
4. The UK withdraws from the London Fisheries Convention on 3rd July 2019. This provides the right of full access to our fishing grounds in the 6-12 nautical mile zone. Consideration should be given as to how best to take advantage of this opportunity.
5. The industry must be in a position to fully benefit from the opportunities that will emerge under the new UK Fishing Policy. This requires investment in vessels, infrastructure, skills and supply chains. REAF will be coming forward shortly with proposals as to how we set about this task in East Anglia and it would be greatly appreciated if these could be considered fully and carefully, with the necessary funding being provided.

I acknowledge the very difficult waters that you and the Government have to navigate through as part of the Brexit process, but there are many people in Lowestoft and in fishing communities around the country who believe that they were short changed when the UK joined the Common Market in 1972 and it is vital that we do not let them down as we depart the EU.

I apologise for the length of this letter and its technical nature, but this is a complicated subject and success will only be achieved if we tackle "the devil in the detail". For my part, I remain positive as this is an exciting opportunity for Lowestoft and it is vital that we do all that we can to make the most of it.

With best wishes.

*James  
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