

As a supporter of the UK fishing industry, please find enclosed a briefing from the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations (NFFO) calling on you to urgently support the NFFO's campaign for a bespoke fisheries support package to support the fishing industry and coastal communities in England during the current COVID-19 emergency.

CURRENT GOVERNMENT COVID-19 RESPONSE TO UK FISHING INDUSTRY

There is virtually a complete cessation of fishing in some areas of the country and the whole industry is struggling with reduced demand and logistical challenges.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak has said he will do "*whatever it takes*" to support businesses and workers through the current COVID-19 crisis. However, despite the unprecedented support packages made available, these do not significantly help English fisheries and as a result, many businesses and jobs are at risk.

Very few fisherman are paid through PAYE so cannot access 'furlough' financial support, fishing businesses do not qualify for small business grants. Other measures such as reduction in business rates, which help most businesses, do not help fishing as our boats are subject to harbour fees, which continue, rather than rates. There are also other fixed costs, such as insurance and equipment rentals which remain under contract and continue to rise.

Bespoke packages of support have been provided in Scotland and Northern Ireland, and we understand that an announcement of support in Wales is imminent. The NFFO is deeply concerned about the lack of bespoke Government support available for the English fishing industry.

This briefing focusses on the need for a package of support in England, what our asks are, and how we would like you to help as an interested and supportive parliamentarian.

NFFO'S MAIN ASKS

Urgent action must be taken in order to support English fisheries. The NFFO would like MPs and Peers to call for:

- A bespoke fishing industry support scheme to ensure fishing businesses and coastal communities across the UK survive the COVID-19 crisis.
- A support scheme in England that is parallel to the bespoke packages in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.
- Support from the Government which will allow the industry to be in a strong position as we become an independent coastal state at the end of the Withdrawal Agreement transition period on the 31 December.
- A clear signal from the UK Government that the fishing industry is valued and financial support will be granted.

KEY MESSAGES

SECURING A BESPOKE FISHING INDUSTRY SUPPORT SCHEME

- In this unprecedented period of social and economic uncertainty, fishermen, many of whom are self-employed, will be feeling the pressures of having to cut costs to make ends meet. The Government has not delivered support that significantly helps the

industry and many are now in urgent need of financial provision to support them through this difficult period.

- Direct support is, rightly, being given to the hospitality and restaurant sector as they have been closed down during this health emergency. However, there is a clear gap in support for those whose businesses, like those in the fishing industry, who supply those restaurants.
- Apart from a few local landings, the shellfish market has evaporated, restaurants and fish and chip shops have largely closed, some supermarkets have closed their fish counters, and many export markets have collapsed. Some innovative ways to sell fish to the doorstep are under way but we are under no illusion that these initiatives cannot replace the mainstream supply chains.

SECURING A SUPPORT SCHEME THAT IS PARALELL TO SUPPORT PACKAGES ANNOUNCED IN THE REST OF THE UK

- The Scottish Government, the Northern Ireland Executive and the Isle of Man Government have already announced financial support packages for their respective fishing industries in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Scottish Government announced a £5 million Sea Fisheries Intervention Fund for its seafood industry. An initial payment of 50% of two months' average earnings will be made to owners of all full time Scottish registered fishing vessels of 12 metres lengths and under. These initial payments will be capped at a maximum of £27,000. The Scottish Government has also said that support is being developed for the onshore processing industry and the shellfish growing industry.
- The Northern Irish Executive has also announced a £1.5 million support package for its fishing industry, and the Isle of Man Government announced more than £370,000 for its own fleet.
- The UK Government must now announce parallel support for fishing businesses and coastal communities in England who are being squeezed by mounting fixed costs and collapsed demand, due to COVID-19, and who cannot access other business support mechanisms.

SECURING GOVERNMENT SUPPORT AHEAD OF BECOMING AN INDEPENDENT COASTAL STATE

- There is a very real risk that at a point when the UK fishing industry can see on the near horizon a great opportunity for our fishing industry as we become an independent coastal state, that we could lose fishing businesses and fishers due to the short term COVID-19 challenges.
- Brexit presents a unique opportunity for the UK fishing industry to control access to UK waters, ensure UK fishermen get a fair deal on quotas, revive coastal communities and grow the UK's industry's role as world leaders in sustainable fisheries management. The short-term challenges of COVID-19 cannot be allowed to erode these promised and prized opportunities.

SECURING A CLEAR SIGNAL FROM THE UK GOVERNMENT THAT THE FISHING INDUSTRY IS VALUED

- The Chancellor gave a commitment that the Government will "*do what it takes*" to support businesses and workers. The fishing industry, the iconic industry which speaks to the UK's identity as an island nation, must receive support.

- The NFFO has been making the case directly to the Government and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and we are in no doubt that it is well understood and accords with government data gathered on landings, costs, earnings and prices.
- Vessel owners need know that the sector will be supported by Government so it can survive this crisis.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT THE NFFO

- Write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to call for an urgent support package for England and Wales fisheries
- Agree to a one-to-one briefing phone call with the NFFO's Chief Executive, Barrie Deas
- Call on Treasury officials to take urgent action to draw up plans for a bespoke support package for the fishing industry in England and Wales.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT NFFO@CONNECTPA.CO.UK.