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CFPO Youth Board gives fresh perspective on future of fishing

A pioneering group of young fishermen from Cornwall engage Fisheries Minister Victoria Prentis and senior Defra officials in an open conversation as they begin to help chart a new course for future fisheries policy and management.

(16th October, 2020) On Wednesday 7th October, members of the Cornish Fish Producers' Organisation (CFPO) Youth Board were joined on Zoom by Fisheries Minister, Victoria Prentis MP and Defra officials - marking a pivotal moment for young voices in the fishing industry. The Youth Board puts young fishermen in Cornwall at the heart of decision-making - providing honest, forward-facing feedback as they develop programmes to encourage young entrants into the fishing industry, and shape future policies that will directly affect their own careers. For the first time since the formation of the Board in September 2019, members shared their concerns, ideas and future aspirations with policy decision-makers at the highest levels.

Fisheries Minister Victoria Prentis shared her support for the Youth Board:

"It was wonderful to hear the views of a new generation of fishermen."

"Leaving the EU gives us an opportunity to design a new domestic fishing policy that protects our marine environment while allowing our fishing industry to thrive. It is by listening to the Youth Board and other young fishermen across the UK that we will realise this ambition for a prosperous future."

The one-hour meeting began with the Minister's opening remarks, followed by the Youth Board as they outlined their top three priorities when looking ahead at their future in fishing. Their priorities focused on career progression, (which included suggestions for a help-to-buy scheme for acquiring vessels and a community-owned approach to improve management for future quota allocations), the importance of flexible regulations and the need for genuine co-management, which puts fishermen at the heart of fisheries management and policy development.

Joel Dunn, a Skipper and owner of an U10 vessel in Cornwall who has for aspirations owning a new vessel but is struggling to access quota, said: *"We need to knock down the barrier for young fishermen going beyond the U10-metre fleet. It's pretty impossible for myself and other fishermen to break into owning quota and going over 10m and this stops the natural progression in the industry. People can't fill my shoes because I'm not going anywhere."*

The Board went on to question the Minister about opportunities for flexibility in regulations and co-management. Will Treener, a Skipper from Newlyn, asked: *“If the distribution or abundance of a species changes, will the UK be flexible in their management approach to enable fishermen to take advantage of new fishing opportunities, if the science allows for it?”*. Following Will’s question, another fisherman from Newlyn, Tom Lambourn, highlighted the industry’s eagerness to engage in fisheries science processes: *“As young fishermen we’re very willing to count fish, and if you open an existing fishery or a new fishery, we can all work together to manage that. Let us provide the data you need to ensure the fishery is managed in a sustainable way.”*

After listening to the Board’s questions, Minister Prentis said future policies will be rooted in ‘ground-up management’ and that *“fishermen have a really important role to play in the new way we make policy with fisheries management plans...you have a louder voice if you work together.”*

The conversation moved on to a further 40-minute in-depth discussion with senior policy officials. Defra signalled there would be a number of innovative ideas put forward in consultations and were keen to maintain an open dialogue between the group and themselves to ensure their feedback was captured.

Paul Trebilcock, CEO of the CFPO, welcomed the opportunity to keep the channels of communication open with the Youth Board: *“Fishing policy is rapidly evolving as we come through the Brexit process it is fundamental that policy changes are rooted in the needs of the industry going forward and are aligned with the needs of the next generation of sustainable fishermen.”*

James Roberts, a young Skipper from Newlyn, commented on the value of the Youth Board: *“Even though we’re in the early stages of putting our ideas together I really feel like we’re achieving so much. I think this is because we’re able to look ahead and not at our past.”*

The webinar closed with an invitation from Paul Trebilcock to young fishermen throughout the South West to join the Youth Board – saying that it wasn’t exclusive to CFPO members. Tom Lambourn explained the Youth Board’s vision for the future *“The Youth Board is in its preliminary stages but the view is to have it as another platform to be heard. As the Youth Board is sitting in front of you now, it’s clear that it’s working. It shouldn’t be closed to Cornwall, the idea that it goes much further than that and we can all be heard together.”*

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If you are a young fisherman living a working in the South West and you would like to be part of the Youth Board, please email Chris Ranford on chris@roammarine.co.uk

[Cornish Fish Producers’ Organisation \(CFPO\)](#)

The CFPO was established in 1975 by local fishermen in Cornwall. Today, they are proud to represent fishermen from all over Cornwall and beyond who make up one of the most sustainable and diverse fishing fleets in Europe.