

CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

INQUIRY ON THE NEGOTIATION OF THE FUTURE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE UK GOVERNMENT

SUBMISSION FROM SCOTTISH CREEL FISHERMEN'S FEDERATION

The lockdown throughout Europe due to COVID-19 has given inshore creel fishermen a taste of what could be the reality under a no-deal Brexit. Closed borders, markets in Europe closed to their shellfish products, quarantine of goods, delays. This has created difficulties for survival of previously economically viable businesses, despite some government help to provide some support. This includes effects on secondary parts of fishermen's livelihoods, for example B&B and tourism charters for summer visitors.

To best secure the future of inshore creel and diving sectors:

Below we outline some of our aspirations and concerns.

- As close as possible to tariff-free borders for shellfish;
- Minimal customs paperwork, as now;
- Pressure on the UK negotiators so they fully understand the consequences for small communities in Scotland with the loss of young people if no jobs in the sector are a consequence;
- Another "Clearance" in the Highlands if the seriousness of the situation is not understood by either Holyrood or Westminster so talk and talk, or even SHOUT to the UK negotiators to ensure they realise the unintended consequences;
- Great fears the Scottish Government will head to more salmon aquaculture damaging ecosystems and MPAs and nursery areas in inshore waters;
- European visitors permitted entrance to UK without visas

For other Scottish Fisheries:

- Political will is the main skill required followed by COMPLIANCE;
- Since much of UK Quota have been sold off by Scottish fisheries, there needs to be a recognition of this fact and how the quota for sustainable fisheries will be managed by Marine Scotland and MS Compliance in the future. Past experience does not give rise to a positive hope. We have produced a Misallocation of Nephrop quota which clearly demonstrates the benefits of creel caught product over the use of bottom towed gear. This document can be made available on request.

So in a non-agreement /non-deal Brexit situation which the British appear to be heading for in the negotiations:

- Increased costs, less sustainable businesses which often are working at the margins of profitability;
- Less opportunities for younger entrants into the sector;
- Lower sales volumes;
- Live exports seriously damaged by delays at ports etc.

I have enclosed some notes on important points re the Scottish inshore creel and dive sector.

The creel and dive sector in Scotland supports over 3000 jobs on under 10m vessels within rural communities around the coastline of Scotland. The equivalent number of jobs will be affected through the supply chain into Europe and within the European market place.

We rely heavily on frictionless borders to ensure our product which is shipped 'live' arrives at point of sale in as good a condition as it has, having been caught by our vessels (live).

Our industry has a value of around £60m and is growing year on year.

Brexit is a very big concern for the inshore creel and dive sector.

We are the most vulnerable sector of the fishing industry. The creel and dive sector deals in high value premium quality Live Shellfish.

Such as:-

- Live langoustine;
- Live Lobster;
- Live velvet crabs;
- Live shrimps;
- Live brown crabs
- Live scallops.

All these products command premium prices and are greatly supported by our European customers. The key to this is, these products have to reach the end user alive. Any compromise to this removes the premium end of the value. Dead on arrival, is reflected in huge discounting and in some cases, no recoverable value at all. It can also result in cost to remove and destroy this product.

This is why we have highlighted the vulnerable nature of this trade.

As you can see this industry operates on very tight timelines.

An example is product packed on day one has to leave the Scottish depots from 1 pm in the north 5-6 pm in the central belt.

7-8 pm in the south, Scottish border area.

These lorries travel overnight to the channel ports to catch ferries or the tunnel. They have to be at Bolougne Sur Mer by 9.9.30 am French time. This is the major hub for most of the European transport distribution.

- Spain;
- Portugal;
- Greece;

- Italy;
- Croatia;
- Germany;
- Holland;
- Belgium.

These are examples of how the distribution works.

If anything impacts on these very tight timelines, the whole network of distribution is out of control. Product is left in the handling agent's platform, missed connections and frustrated and disillusioned customers.

Currently we enjoy access to these European markets, with very basic transport and customs documents. These are C M R transport documents. This document gives basic information: Sender Destination General info on the load e.g.: scallops, langoustine, lobsters, crabs, salmon.

Then number of pallets, and the weight of the good consigned.

There is no content for the end user.

A lorry can typically have product for over 150 customers on various pallets throughout the load.

The handling agent in Boulogne then distributes the load to the various transport companies. They in turn deliver to all the countries listed above.

This system works extremely well and delivers excellent success rates.

This has helped to create European markets for Scottish high value/premium catches.

If you look at the time constraints you can evaluate that impacts on this logistical operation would be devastating for fishers, merchants and European customers.

This is why we raise the point of border controls /custom's clearances. Also documentation both export and customs.

All of these points, if not fully explored now will have huge repercussions for the inshore sector.

An example would be, if we lost 2-3 hours at border or custom's controls, the whole logistical operation would collapse. Live product delivers premium product to our many European customers.

Also if you examine any one of these highlighted problems, you can understand numerous ways in which 2-3 hours can vanish!!!!

Each one of these areas needs special attention, and good logistical decision making. As an industry it is essential that these points are brought to your attention.

Another problem:- The imposition of World Trade Organisation trade tariffs. We would like to see some recognition that Live Shellfish should be in a separate category. If tariffs are imposed this would again affect both us as catchers /traders and the European customer.

We have highlighted through Jerry the value that the inshore creel sector contributes to the Scottish economy.

This is going through some remarkable growth just now. We have sustainable credentials and are now recognised at Scottish government level .The low impact credentials and proposed better management systems, are now beginning to bear fruit . Our industry has a dedicated voice within the Scottish fishing industry through the Scottish Creel Fishermen's Federation. We would implore you to give consideration to many families within Scotland's rural communities who rely on our sector producing low impact high value produce for our European family.

We all hope you can gauge how important these Brexit issues are to us all at this time!!!

Hope this helps.

Alistair Sinclair
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