

## Fisheries Committee chair discusses No Deal Brexit fears with fishermen and producers

Written by Martin Banks on 8 August 2019 in News News

The new chair of the European Parliament's Fisheries Committee was visiting the largest fishing port in France on Thursday amid fears that the threat of a No Deal Brexit will put cooperation between British and continental fishermen at risk.



*Photo credit: Press Association*

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Liberal Democrat MEP Chris Davies was at the fish auction in Boulogne-Sur-Mer before holding a series of meetings with fishermen and fish producers' organisations.

The UK deputy has already met with British civil servants responsible for negotiating fishing policy and with Barrie Deas, CEO of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations (NFFO).

Speaking to this website on Thursday, Davies said, "The UK fishing fleet is the second largest in Europe and the most profitable, but there will be no winners if existing arrangements collapse."

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“Hostility will only lead to retaliation on both sides, trade disruption and the poisoning of future relations.”

“Brexit is against our national interest. Changes in fisheries policy need to be secured through negotiation and the number one priority must be to build up fish stocks for everyone’s benefit.”

“I have met with British representatives. Now I want to hear what others have to say, including the people in France who buy much of the fish that UK vessels catch.”

Davies, who was re-elected in May after a five-year break from EU politics, added, “Time is short and the legislative process long. Five years passes so quickly and the problems in a fast-changing world mount up. Every MEP should bring with them a sense of urgency and a determination to get things done and make a difference for the better.”

“Brexit is against our national interest. Changes in fisheries policy need to be secured through negotiation and the number one priority must be to build up fish stocks for everyone’s benefit” **Chris Davies MEP**

“As chair of the Fisheries Committee, I want to know that in five years’ time we will be fishing sustainably in every one of Europe’s seas. That will be very hard to achieve. Progress has been made in the Atlantic, but the Mediterranean and Black Seas are in a terrible state with stock denuded and overfishing rampant.”

He added, “With each passing day the situation gets worse. Future generations will not forgive us unless we address this issue.”

Elsewhere, the NGO Our Fish has given a guarded welcome to the European Commission announcement of “emergency measures to save the ailing eastern Baltic cod stock from impending collapse” by banning, “with immediate effect, commercial fishing for cod in most of the Baltic Sea until 31 December 2019”.

Dave Walsh, of Our Fish, said, “We believe that the ban is too little, too late.”

It criticised both the decision to broadly exempt industrial fishing vessels with Eastern Baltic cod bycatch, and the “missed opportunity” to introduce obligatory monitoring for these vessels as an incentive to reduce their bycatch.

The Commission’s emergency measures for Eastern Baltic cod, which are in effect from July 23 until

the end of 2019, cover the most important parts of the Baltic Sea where Eastern Baltic cod occurs.

Meanwhile, the UK-based think tank, Open Europe, says that UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson “appears to have overcome” one of the major challenges “hamstringing” his predecessor: uniting his Cabinet behind the possibility of leaving the EU without a deal.

Open Europe added, “A united Government will enable Johnson to up the pressure on both the EU and Parliament. What happens as a result remains highly uncertain.”

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Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

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