

Environment and Economy Board Item 12

**The post-Brexit Implications for the Fishing Industry**

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| **Policy Development**The UK is due to leave the EU in March 2019. This paper opens a discussion on the implications for Local Authorities of changes to fishing policy after the UK leaves the EU.  |

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| **Summary and Recommendations**This paper is for information but if members are so minded, this paper could be a step towards COSLA developing a position on the role of local authorities in developing onshore infrastructure for the fishing industry post-Brexit. If this is to happen COSLA would be looking to Local Authorities with an interest in fisheries policy to carry out this work and to report to a future Board. The Board should be aware that Shetland Islands Council has indicated that it is willing to help develop this work for a future meeting. This paper was written with the help of the Council.The Board is invited to discuss the paper and to agree if it wishes to develop such a position.  |

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| **References*** There are no previous COSLA reports on this item
* Other references *-* [Fish Landings from the UK EEZ and UK Landings from the EU EEZ in 2016, NAFC Marine Centre report, October 2017](https://www.nafc.uhi.ac.uk/t4-media/one-web/nafc/research/document/eez-reports/EEZ-Report-10a---2017-10-25.pdf)
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**The post-Brexit Implications for the Fishing Industry**

**Policy Development**

1. The UK is due to leave the EU in March 2019. This paper opens a discussion on the implications for Local Authorities of changes to fishing policy after the UK leaves the EU.

**Current COSLA position**

1. COSLA does not have a current position on the role of local authorities in developing onshore infrastructure for the fishing industry post-Brexit. Members might wish to consider recommending COSLA developing such a position and that this work is developed by one or more Local Authorities with an interest in fishery policy.

**What is Changing?**

1. Under international law, Brexit will automatically transfer the rights and duties attached to its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) from the EU to the UK.
2. Unless those rights and duties are reassigned in law or practice to the EU, the Scottish fishing industry can reasonably expect to obtain (i) a greater share of fishing opportunities in UK waters, and (ii) the benefit of fisheries management powers reverting to the UK and, through devolution, to Scotland.
3. Taken together, these two factors could raise employment and income across Scotland, both directly from fish catching and indirectly through distribution, processing and distribution.

**Next Steps**

1. COSLA does not have a current position on the role of local authorities in developing onshore infrastructure for the fishing industry.
2. As the potential benefits of Brexit to the Scottish fishing industry are likely to be limited in some areas by a lack of onshore infrastructure, members may wish to consider taking such a position. Some of the issue which will need to be considered are set out in Annex A to this report.
3. We welcome members view on this paper and whether the Board would wish further work to take place with the help of one or more Local Authorities. If this is supported a further report could be made to the Board later in the year. If the Board agrees to this, Shetland Islands Council has indicated that it is willing to develop this work further for a future meeting.

**June 2018**

**Annex A - Background Information**

**1. Why Shetland’s perspective is useful**

* Shetland’s importance to Scottish and UK fishing industry (more fish landed in the islands than in England, Wales and NI combined, second-biggest port in UK after Peterhead)
* Shetland’s economic dependence on fishing
* A representative sample of entire Scottish industry, from pelagic to demersal fisheries, crabs & lobsters, scallops etc.
* Scotland’s most successful U10m fleet
* Overwhelmingly local owners & crews, with high proportion of share fishermen
* Long-established (and at times critical) Council involvement in the industry.

**2. The size of the Brexit opportunity**

* UK vessels currently catch barely a third of all fish caught in UK waters
* Under international law, Brexit automatically confers the right to decide who catches what, where and when in UK waters
* Were the UK to catch as much in its waters as Norway catches in Norwegian waters, for example, the value of catches would theoretically increase by over £1 billion per year, with Scotland reaping most of that benefit
* The devolution of fisheries management to Scotland could be expected to generate additional gains through more responsive management measures
* A revamped processing sector generates more jobs and value added, including in urban areas
* Free and frictionless trade in seafood products is in the EU’s interest as well as the UK’s.

**3. How our communities can take advantage of this prospect**

* Shetland’s success shows that additional fish is not enough…
* Infrastructure absolutely critical: ports, markets, distribution. Local authorities need to be involved
* Marine engineering needs critical mass
* Likely timescales.