

Bad Weather Bankrupting Cornish Fishermen

By Deborah Cowley



Newlyn Harbour, Cornwall

Cornish fishermen are still facing one of the worst winters to date as days out have been minimal and dangerous. New EU regulations were going to be challenging enough for both small and larger vessels without the one key factor that governs the industry even more than EU bureaucracy: the weather. Last week, UKIP MEP Ray Finch, Coordinator in the European Fisheries Committee, joined forces with **Better Off Out** leader, Rupert Matthews, to speak with Cornish fishermen after talks with CFPO (Cornish Fish Producers Organisation) in Newlyn. The location also saw the launch of a national campaign to high-light the plight of the UK's declining industry **SAVE BRITAIN'S FISH**. Public awareness is vital now as fishermen are losing income, tying up, selling up or handing over their boats to the banks.



Better Off Out Leader Rupert Matthews

Speaking on BBC local radio with the campaign team, retired fisherman, Dave Hicks, said: “The EU have been systematically destroying our industry for over 30 years.” (When Britain became part of the Common Fisheries Policy after joining the EU).

“The EU is sinking just like the Titanic, so there’s no point in re-arranging the deckchairs. With the referendum on the horizon we have a place in the lifeboat but there won’t be a second chance. Let’s start rowing.”



Ray Finch MEP with Dave Hicks

Mr Matthews said: “We should gain control of our own waters to give us a stronger hand negotiating trade elsewhere. Norway, by remaining outside the EU and Common Fisheries Policy, has shown the way forward.”

“It has a flourishing industry and Britain should follow.” “Our seas are rich and we should all seek to support our fishermen by moving away from a centralized ‘one size fits all’ policy that gives us little in return.”

SAVE BRITAIN’S FISH Campaign executive, Charlotte Fairbanks, said: “The day had been a real eye opener” and “Had no idea that fishermen were suffering to such a great extent.”

Mr Finch said: “It’s scandalous that Britain, once a great sea fairing nation, are reduced to import fish, caught in what were once our own waters and sold back to us at the British taxpayer’s expense. Outside the EU, the UK can run its own fisheries again.”

“With a sensible conservation strategy we can put an end to this harmful resource grab. Only then can we rebuild this industry to ensure there is enough fish in our sea for future generations.”

Supporter of local, sustainable fishing and founder of The School of Cornish Sardines, Sanjay Kumar, invited the team to film him cooking at Newlyn School, teaching the children how to identify and prepare the wide variety of fish caught by their parents and generations before them.

The award winning chef hopes that by education, with his popular cooking demonstrations in Cornwall, people will begin to realise why this traditional way of life, from shore to plate, is vital to the UK’s coastal regions.

“Britain has been historically cheated. Quotas should be distributed according to the natural resources available to artisanal fishermen.”

“Fishermen work day in and day out. They understand the industry more than scientists and officials. It’s a hard life for them.”



Sanjay Kumar: Asking the children at Newlyn School what they know about fish

Ending the day’s events, Mr Finch held a group meeting at Newquay Rowing Club, attended by fisherman from all around the Cornish Coast. Ben Eglinton (28) said: “The visit was well received by the fishermen. It seems the only solution to the problem is to leave the EU.”
“Boats are being sold and we’re struggling to pay bills.”

“The new Marine Conservation Zone plans are going to hit us hard. Fishermen agree that it is important to protect rare species and welcome no go areas when this is the case but the real issue is that we are at the forefront, out there every day, and know better than anyone what species are in those waters but our views are ignored.”

“We take issue when we are ‘told’ a species is rare but literally see thousands of it, as we are with Rays at the moment.”

“When the fishermen are out targeting other fish, such as monk or brill, and have an unavoidable and substantial by-catch of Ray it has to be discarded, injured or dead. So with 50% of Rays coming over the haul, we are not just harming the fish but throwing away what could be an extra wage for us, like pound notes over the side of the boat all the time.”

Mr Kumar served locally sourced, fresh fish chowder afterwards for the hard working men. He said: “We all need to work together to support this industry.”

“It is the fishermen who are the endangered species, not the fish.”



Ray Finch samples Newquay spider crab chowder



www.Betteroffout.net

Has the sun set for good at Newlyn Harbour?

