

European Scrutiny Committee

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

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From: Sir William Cash MP

21 May 2020

Victoria Prentis MP
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2020 Fishing Opportunities (Council documents 13438/19 and 6546/20) (40907, 41111)

We have considered your letter of 13 May.

The Commission's lack of communication regarding its plans for in-year amendments to the 2020 fishing opportunities relevant to the UK is of serious concern to us. Both the UK and the EU have obligations under the Withdrawal Agreement and it is imperative that both parties meet those obligations. These include the requirement under Article 130(1) of the Withdrawal Agreement that the UK shall be consulted in respect of fishing opportunities affecting the UK. While the nature and timing of that consultation is not identified, we consider that early and regular communication between Commission and UK officials would be within the spirit of the Agreement. We would welcome a further update within ten working days on any engagement with the Commission.

We note your comments on "choke" species. While we regret the impact of COVID-19 on the industry and recognise that this is affecting levels of fishing activity, we welcome the work that has been undertaken to manage such "choke" species.

Turning to the modalities for negotiating the 2021 fishing opportunities with the EU and coastal states, we welcome the information that preparation is already underway for annual negotiations sitting underneath framework agreements with the EU, Norway and Faroe Islands. We note that the preparation is taking

place in parallel with negotiations on the framework agreements and is already involving the Devolved Administrations.

We agree that it is a sensible working assumption for now that 2021 fishing opportunities will be negotiated under framework agreements successfully concluded with the EU, Norway and Faroe Islands. The challenge of negotiating opportunities without any agreement in place, however, would be substantial and we consider that the Government will need to make plans for such a “no-deal” negotiation from July onwards — following the publication of annual scientific advice — even if discussion on framework agreements has not been concluded by then.

We are copying this letter to Rt Hon. Hilary Benn MP, Chair of the Committee on the Future Relationship with the EU and Gordon Clarke, Clerk of the Committee on the Future Relationship with the EU; Neil Parish MP, Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee and Ian Bradshaw, Clerk of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee; the Earl of Kinnoull, Chair of the EU Select Committee in the House of Lords and Christopher Johnson, Clerk of the Lords EU Select Committee; your Departmental EU Scrutiny team; and Les Saunders and Donald Harris in the Cabinet Office.

CHAIR