

John Poynton's UKIP Policy Discussion Paper No.8

Fishing.

Fishing policy is one of the casualties of BRINO, and we must substitute our own policy unilaterally if necessary.

The current EU policy is based on multiple quotas for different types of fish. This leads to bycatch and excess catches being discarded dead at sea. There is also no limit to the size of quota by vessel with licences being granted to each vessel on the basis of ministerial discretion. Since the beginning of 2021 eight super trawlers have been granted licences by the UK government and no applications rejected.

We propose a single quota by weight per vessel per year, not exceeding its capacity and subject to a maximum limit, where the rarer fish are counted at a multiple of their actual weight. If a vessel exceeds its quota it can still land and sell all its catch, including the bycatch, but is then restricted to port until its quota has caught up with its cumulative actual. By careful setting of the weight multiples we can ensure vessels can sell the rarer fish and bycatch at a small margin and the plentiful fish at a higher margin over the period of their quota. New quotas cannot start until any excess has been made up over time.

It would also be a 2-tier system whereby British-ported vessels have priority within the overall quota we set for our waters, leaving the balance to be auctioned off to foreign vessels regardless of nationality. Swaps could be bought and sold on a secondary open market. This avoids national political competition for quotas undermining conservation and the decline in fish stocks. UK fish stocks and catch rates have declined by over 90% over the past century, and the CFP has nothing to slow the decline.

That said we do not want to see small French or other neighbouring country fishing families lose their business any more than our own, so a middle tier could be included for them with a separate maximum catch weight per vessel set to ensure access to our waters for vessels up to a certain size. Provided we exclude the super trawlers there should be enough for everyone.

We do not propose any government subsidy for the building of new vessels. The fleet should be expected to float on its own hull just like any other business. However regional grants may apply to vessel construction as part of regional capital investment policy.

We also propose that 25% of our waters (currently 10%) are reserved as No Fishing zones dedicated to marine conservation. Rewards should be offered for any information leading to the recovery of plastics and other pollution, including discarded fishing nets, by specialist teams set up for the purpose.