# Environment Secretary’s claim of Brexit fishing ‘no downside’ dismissed by outraged fishers



Environment Secretary Steve Reed has ignited outrage among fishers by claiming that the Government's recent Brexit reset brings “no downside” for the industry. During evidence to the Environment Committee, Reed suggested that the UK had successfully resisted European Union pressures seeking perpetual fishing access rights, asserting that limiting this access to just 12 years represents a significant victory for the UK fishing sector. But such claims are met with skepticism from an industry that has largely felt betrayed.

Reports from fishermen in regions like Devon and Cornwall echo widespread discontent with the new rules and regulations imposed post-Brexit. Many fishers are grappling with increased bureaucratic obstacles, including mandatory catch tracking applications and invasive vessel monitoring systems—measures that were sold as safety and management improvements, but are viewed as suffocating the very industry they should be supporting. If the Government's assertions of support for fishers were genuine, they should listen to the mounting frustrations of those on the ground.

Moreover, the post-Brexit fishing landscape is fraught with contradictions. Despite promises of greater independence and a more equitable allocation of fishing quotas, foreign vessels continue to dominate, landing over 60% of the fish caught in the UK. The much-touted breathing room for small-scale operators is being overshadowed by larger fishing companies, which maintain a stranglehold on lucrative fishing grounds, turning what should have been an opportunity for revitalization into an ongoing struggle for survival for local communities.

Reed's overly optimistic portrayal of the fishing deal comes at a time when many in the fishing community feel overlooked and undervalued. As the future of the industry hangs in the balance, it is clear that the ongoing negotiations around fishing rights are not just theoretical debates—they impact livelihoods and the sustainability of practices critical for both the fishing community and the environment.

While the Government celebrates this supposed success, the sentiment among fishers is marked by frustration and a profound sense of betrayal. As the post-Brexit era progresses, it’s crucial that stakeholders advocate for policies that directly support their interests, ensuring that promises made are promises kept. The reality facing those in the industry portrays a much more complex landscape, and for many, the hope of an equitable and thriving fishing future seems increasingly elusive.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2057862/steve-reed-brexit-fishing> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c066r811z7ro> - Fishermen in Devon and Cornwall express disillusionment post-Brexit, citing increased bureaucracy and loss of trust in politicians. They had hoped for increased fish stocks but faced more paperwork, including mandatory catch apps and vessel monitoring systems. The government claims these measures improve safety and fish stock management. Fishermen feel let down and question the effectiveness of major political parties in addressing their concerns.
3. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2020/11/05/brexit-fishing-became-deals-biggest-stumbling-block/> - The UK's departure from the EU has made fishing rights a contentious issue. Brussels reportedly compromised on the UK's demand for future fishing opportunities based on zonal attachment, which calculates catch shares based on fish location. British fishermen are set to receive a larger share of the catch, but exact quotas will be determined post-trade deal. Historically, over 60% of the UK's fish landed are caught by foreign boats, highlighting the stakes in these negotiations.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/jan/24/brexit-has-left-us-all-at-sea-even-the-fishing-industry> - Post-Brexit, the UK fishing industry faces significant challenges, including increased bureaucracy and trade barriers. The government's promises of a 'new dawn' for the industry have not materialized, leading to economic self-harm. The EU's chief negotiator points out the inevitable consequences of leaving the single market, and the UK government's claims about the benefits of Brexit are being questioned as the industry struggles.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jun/11/brexit-uk-fishermen-fishing-industry-quotas-uk-government> - The real issue for UK fishermen is not just 'taking back our waters' but the dominance of large fishing companies over small-scale, environmentally friendly boats. Powerful trawlers have squeezed out smaller boats, leading to a decline in local fishing communities. Brexit may not alleviate these issues, as the concentration of quotas among big fishing interests continues to harm small-scale fishermen.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/nov/05/brexit-fishing-became-deals-biggest-stumbling-block> - The UK's departure from the EU has made fishing rights a contentious issue. Brussels reportedly compromised on the UK's demand for future fishing opportunities based on zonal attachment, which calculates catch shares based on fish location. British fishermen are set to receive a larger share of the catch, but exact quotas will be determined post-trade deal. Historically, over 60% of the UK's fish landed are caught by foreign boats, highlighting the stakes in these negotiations.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jun/11/brexit-uk-fishermen-fishing-industry-quotas-uk-government> - The real issue for UK fishermen is not just 'taking back our waters' but the dominance of large fishing companies over small-scale, environmentally friendly boats. Powerful trawlers have squeezed out smaller boats, leading to a decline in local fishing communities. Brexit may not alleviate these issues, as the concentration of quotas among big fishing interests continues to harm small-scale fishermen.