# Kemi Badenoch condemns Starmer’s Labour-era fishing deal for sidelining British fishers



Kemi Badenoch, the leader of the Conservative Party, is right to call out Sir Keir Starmer for failing to meet the fishermen of Bridlington, East Yorkshire, who are facing dire challenges due to a trade deal negotiated under Labour's leadership. This agreement grants a staggering twelve-year extension of fishing rights to EU fleets, leaving local fishers feeling that their livelihoods are deliberately sidelined. Badenoch's visit, where she listened to the palpable fears of fishermen, underscores a growing sense of abandonment that has now become emblematic of Starmer's government.

Critics of Starmer’s deal, particularly within the fishing industry, argue that it overwhelmingly favours French fishing interests while systematically undermining British fishermen. The sheer disbelief among local fishers as they learned about the terms of this deal is telling. Many expressed shock at discovering that their rights were sacrificed, some stating that it felt as though they woke up to a business-threatening surprise. This sentiment highlights a growing disconnect between policymakers and those whose lives and livelihoods are directly impacted.

Badenoch also emphasized a looming crisis regarding the labor force in this vital industry. Young people are turning away from careers at sea for more stable and less hazardous opportunities on land, leaving the fishing sector struggling to attract new workers. “They cannot find staff. People would rather work at Tesco or be binmen than work on these vessels,” she lamented. This isn't merely an economic issue; it’s about the dwindling spirit and appeal of a historically significant profession.

The fishing agreement is a glaring example of Starmer's questionable stewardship of the UK's post-Brexit relationship with the EU. While billed as a means to restore trade ties, many view the deal's extension of fishing rights as a capitulation, once again tying the UK too closely to EU regulations. The ongoing debate around this alignment suggests that the UK might be transitioning into a "rule-taker" status rather than asserting its sovereignty, particularly in such an iconic sector as fishing.

Despite mounting criticism, Starmer has attempted to defend the agreement by asserting it provides stability for fishermen—a claim that rings hollow for many who feel their rights have been eroded. In the court of public opinion, the reaction to the deal has been muted, reflecting not merely a fatigue over Brexit but a troubling acceptance of a diminished sovereignty.

Ultimately, while the twelve-year fishing rights extension might present some assurances for EU fishermen, it raises alarming questions regarding the future of the British fishing industry. The voices of communities like Bridlington must be amplified in national policy discussions. Badenoch's insistence that “someone has to speak up for them” is a call to action, highlighting the urgent need for political figures to advocate strongly for the rights and needs of British fishers in this perilous new landscape.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/badenoch-urges-prime-minister-to-visit-fishermen-affected-by-eu-trade-deal-5UBNQUNIPJLF3NA5BHAMBKIRJA/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/badenoch-urges-prime-minister-to-visit-fishermen-affected-by-eu-trade-deal-5UBNQUNIPJLF3NA5BHAMBKIRJA/> - Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch visited Bridlington, East Yorkshire, to meet fishermen concerned that the UK's trade deal with the EU, which grants a 12-year extension allowing European fleets access to British waters, could harm their businesses. Fishermen expressed feeling 'forgotten' by the government and criticized the deal, believing it favors French fishermen in exchange for closer trade ties. Badenoch urged Prime Minister Keir Starmer to engage directly with affected fishermen to understand their concerns.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/ffe9c7ca-52de-457e-ab50-8bc6df5296b0> - The Financial Times' 'Political Fix' podcast discusses Labour leader Keir Starmer's post-Brexit EU deal and its political implications. The deal re-establishes trade and diplomatic ties, including a defense partnership and restored electricity market cooperation. A veterinary agreement easing food trade and a contentious 12-year fisheries access compromise are key elements. While Starmer markets the deal as economical and pragmatic, critics like Kemi Badenoch label it a surrender due to dynamic alignment with EU rules. Public and political response has been muted, reflecting Brexit fatigue, though concerns about sovereignty and immigration persist.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/04bf9ddc-1abf-4641-a4e3-f9b5f2689ebb> - Nine years after the Brexit referendum, the UK’s new agreement with the EU under the Labour government marks a modest but symbolically significant step towards closer cooperation. The centerpiece is a security and defence pact that formalizes collaboration in military training, cyber and space security, infrastructure resilience, and hybrid threats. This agreement also opens the door for UK participation in the EU's €150bn Security Action for Europe procurement fund. Economically, the deal includes a veterinary agreement to ease agrifood exports and aligns emissions trading systems, potentially adding £9bn to the UK economy by 2040. However, the UK has accepted dynamic alignment with EU rules in certain areas and extended EU fishing access to UK waters for 12 years, prompting criticism from rightwing parties as a loss of sovereignty and a betrayal of the fishing industry. While the Labour government has maintained red lines against rejoining the single market or customs union, the deal reflects a shift towards more pragmatic relations. With Europe facing rising security challenges, the agreement serves as a foundation for a deeper realignment, recognizing the UK's need to foster stronger ties with its principal trade and security partner.
5. <https://apnews.com/article/3181228316c3d0cd736ecbf93a1eff43> - Five years after Brexit, the UK and EU have signed new agreements marking a renewed chapter in bilateral relations. During the first formal summit since the UK's departure from the EU, Prime Minister Keir Starmer and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen celebrated deals focused on trade, defense, and youth mobility. Key developments include easing trade barriers by cutting border checks and aligning food standards, which aim to revive crimped exports and benefit the UK economy. A defense pact allows UK access to a €150 billion EU loan program for military procurement, partly to support Ukraine. Other agreements involve extending EU fishing rights in UK waters until 2038, enhanced youth mobility for temporary work and study exchanges, and expedited airport procedures for UK travelers via EU e-gates. While the British government touts the deals as economically and diplomatically beneficial, opposition parties criticize them as undermining Brexit, with complaints of becoming a “rule-taker” again. Starmer maintains the UK will not rejoin the single market or customs union. Analysts suggest a pragmatic approach to EU alignment is necessary given the UK’s trade dependencies. The agreements follow recent UK deals with the US and India, aiming to re-establish the UK’s global presence.
6. <https://elpais.com/internacional/2025-05-19/la-ue-y-el-reino-unido-alcanzan-un-acuerdo-historico-que-estrecha-lazos-en-defensa-pesca-y-juventud.html> - La Unión Europea y el Reino Unido han sellado un importante acuerdo que marca un “reinicio” en sus relaciones bilaterales tras el Brexit. En una cumbre en Londres con gran carga simbólica, ambas partes anunciaron avances clave en defensa, pesca, comercio y juventud. En materia pesquera, Reino Unido extenderá hasta 2038 los derechos de pesca a las flotas europeas, a cambio de inversiones para modernizar su sector marítimo. Este compromiso facilitó también un alivio en los controles sanitarios sobre productos británicos, impulsando sus exportaciones. Además, se firmó un acuerdo de cooperación en defensa, permitiendo a empresas británicas participar en el plan europeo SAFE de compras militares conjuntas. El pacto también contempla estrechar la cooperación energética y en seguridad fronteriza. En el ámbito social, se anunció el inicio de negociaciones para un Esquema de Experiencia Juvenil y la posible reincorporación al programa Erasmus. Tanto el primer ministro Keir Starmer como líderes europeos, como Ursula von der Leyen y António Costa, celebraron el acuerdo como un nuevo capítulo en una relación estratégica renovada, en un momento de creciente inestabilidad global.
7. <https://www.ft.com/content/36f02ca9-9692-49e2-b84a-17cf86fc1062> - Rupert Rogers, writing from Dubai, addresses the criticism surrounding the EU-UK agreement allowing EU fishing fleets access to UK waters for an additional 12 years. Contrary to claims of a 'sellout,' Rogers highlights historical precedents that justify such access. He references the 1964 London Fisheries Convention, which granted fishing rights to European nations based on traditional fishing activities between 1953 and 1962. These 'grandfather rights' affirmed mutual access within six to 12 nautical miles of each country's coasts. Additionally, he cites a much older precedent from 1666, when Charles II granted 50 Flemish fishermen perpetual fishing rights in English waters. Rogers argues that in the context of these longstanding historical arrangements, a 12-year extension is minor and consistent with past practices of shared use of maritime resources.