

Be a fisherman's friend – CFP reform – Letter Writing to MEPs

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1. Summary

We'd like folk in your network to write personalised, tailored letters to four target UK MEPs on the European Parliament Fisheries Committee, in advance of their vote on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy on 18th December. These letters will crucially let the MEPs know that you're watching them, and that they will be held accountable for the outcome of the CFP reform. They will also reiterate the campaign demands.

2. Campaign background

As you know, Greenpeace is working with coastal fishermen to call for strong reform to the law that governs Europe's fishing industry – the EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). The current policy favours the most environmentally destructive parts of the fishing industry. Meanwhile, responsible fishermen, who use sustainable, low-impact methods, are in danger of losing their livelihoods, and Europe is in danger of losing its fish stocks. Thanks to the incredible efforts of the Outreach networks, the campaign has gained the support of thousands of people – and we've given sustainable fishermen a voice, and politicians are hearing our demands for reform loud and clear. In fact, 28 MEPs have confirmed that they support those demands. But we need to keep pushing to ensure these demands are made a reality through the reform process.

In coming months there are key moments when Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) will have the chance to influence the outcome of that reform. The next key moment is on **18 December** when the Fisheries Committee is scheduled to vote on the CFP. This will shape the direction of the reform, and will form a foundation upon which all the MEPs will vote next year. It's crucial that the Fisheries Committee members vote for a strong reform. We need your help to make sure they do.

We need to put pressure on the UK MEPs who sit on the Fisheries Committee, to ensure that they don't water down the ambitious reform that is so desperately required. And so we'd like you to motivate and organise your networks to write personalised, tailored letters to **four** target UK MEPs on the Committee. These letters will crucially let the MEPs know that you're watching them, and that they will be held accountable for the outcome of the CFP reform. They will also reiterate the campaign demands.

This form of lobbying is vital – and recently a South West MEP told Greenpeace volunteers to keep up the "particularly effective" personalised letter-writing campaign that we've been doing nationally via our lobbyist network. So now it's your turn, as we hit crunch time with the Committee vote on 18th December. Please note the short period of opportunity.

3. Fisheries Committee and our UK targets

The Fisheries Committee is one of the smallest committees in the European Parliament; it only has 25 members and only 12 of 27 nationalities are represented. 14 members are from Mediterranean Member States (France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Greece), 4 from the UK, 2 from Germany, 2 from Poland and only 2 from Nordic Member States (Sweden & Finland). There are no Danes and no Dutch. There are also substitute members, who fill in when official members are unavailable. There are four UK members of the Fisheries Committee, and three UK substitute members.

The rapporteur (team leader in charge of negotiations) is Ulrike Rodust (German, Social Democrat). She's doing her best to ensure a radical CFP reform with sustainable policies, however, she's also trying to fashion a compromise that not only maintains most of the aspirations for reform but that can also command a Committee majority. There is a real risk that over the next few weeks she'll be forced to dilute her compromise proposals too far. The European Parliament has an opportunity to shape the draft CFP and it was hoped that they would take a more ambitious position than the Ministers, which would push the agenda forward for final negotiations between the two groups. However there's a risk that the Fisheries Committee will do more harm than good - which is why your contact with UK MEPs is so vital.

Our targets

We will only be targeting **FOUR** of the UK MEPs:

- **Struan Stevenson** (Scottish Conservatives, European Conservatives and Reformists Group);
- **Ian Hudghton**, Scottish National Party, Greens/European Free Alliance – but does not collaborate with the Greens)
- **Diane Dodds** (substitute member) (Democratic Unionist Party, Northern Ireland, Non-attached EP member).
- **George Lyon** (substitute member) (Scottish Liberal Democrats Party, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe).

These MEPs have been targeted because they are either very influential (Stevenson), “swing MEPs” who have the potential to be a progressive voice (Hudghton, Dodds, Lyon) and because in some cases they have taken positions that could obstruct or water down ambitious reform. Profiles of each of the MEPs are provided at the end of this briefing.

It just so happens that three of them are from Scotland and the other from Northern Ireland, but because these MEPs are representing the UK on the Fisheries Committee, you don't have to be a constituent to lobby them about their role and vote – in fact the more letters they get from all around the UK, the more we show them that the people of the UK are counting on them to do the right thing.

4. What we want you to do - step by step – MEP letter writing

i) Grab a pen and paper! Ok so you knew that. Writing in groups can be inspiring - why not gather some friends at a local café or pub? Or do a writing session at your local network meeting. Challenge each other as to who can write the best letter! Or, if on your own, make yourself comfortable, grab yourself a cup of tea and some biscuits.

ii) Choose which MEP you would like to write a letter to, or write one each to all of them. We've included a bio of each of the MEPs on the Fisheries Committee so that you can tailor your letter.

iii) Compose your letter.

This is the bit where your personal touch is important. MEP's receive lots of correspondence from organisations, lobby groups and other politicians all the time – but it's the opinions of ordinary citizens who elect them which really count. You can choose whether or not you make reference to your involvement in the *Be a fisherman's friend* campaign, it's good to have a mix of approaches/angles/content.

Here are some ideas you could include in your letter to give it a personal touch:

- Think about how current fishing laws affect your life: *do you struggle to find locally caught fish in supermarkets? Are you worried that fish is being transported from far afield to get to you? Are you worried that a popular species like cod, which is such a staple in British cuisine, is overfished?*
- Think about how fishing has changed since you were a child: *do you notice less small, traditional fishing boats in seaside towns? Do you worry that small-scale fishermen are less able to make a living off fishing?*
- Imagine a future without fish: *will your children or grandchildren need to eat their chips without fish? What will happen to the marine life if there are no more fish in the sea?*
- If you've been involved delivering this campaign, there might be some stand-out moments you'd like to mention, or poignant conversations you've had with people.

Demands

Please try to include one or all of the following demands (explained in detail in next section) in your letter. It helps to ask specific things of MEPs.

Ask each MEP to:

- Push for and vote for amendments to the CFP that address the three demands outlined below; and
- Encourage other MEPs on the Fisheries Committee to do the same.

The three demands are:

- ➔ Restore fish stocks to sustainable levels by 2015 i.e. adopt a strong approach on Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY).
- ➔ Require all Member States to put in place capacity management plans i.e. a specific deadline for reducing the overcapacity of the EU fleet.
- ➔ Provide priority access for low impact methods i.e. rewarding sustainable, low impact fishing practices.

These demands are explained in more detail in the next section – but please take as little or as much as you want from these explanations – it is key that every letter received is unique, written from a truly personal perspective rather than a cut-and-paste job.

iv) Include your details. It's important for MEPs on the Fisheries committee to know that there is support to change the CFP from all over the UK, so don't forget to include your full name, town and postcode.

v) Extras: if you've got time, why not include a picture of yourself, with your family and friends, or with your local group? If you live by the sea, take a picture near some boats, or with a local fisherman.

vi) **Send your letter(s) to:** [MEP name], European Parliament, Rue Wiertz, Altiero Spinelli [room number, see below] , B-1047, Brussels.

Struan Stevenson [room 12G302]

Ian Hudghton [room 08H161]

Diane Dodds [room 11G206]

George Lyon [room 10G210]

vii) **Network co-ordinators**, could you please let us know roughly how many letters have been written – please email Cristiana De Lia cristiana.delia@greenpeace.org

5. Detailed campaign demands

We want each MEP to:

- Push for and vote for amendments to the CFP that address the three demands outlined below; and
- Encourage other MEPs on the Fisheries Committee to do the same.

1) Restore fish populations - Maximum Sustainable Yield by 2015

Greenpeace is particularly concerned that the June outcome of the Council of Ministers proposes to further delay and weaken the goal of fish stock recovery. Instead of committing to meet the internationally agreed target of recovering fish populations to sustainable levels of abundance by 2015, ministers merely agreed to reduce fishing pressure progressively by 2015, where possible, and 2020 at the latest. This would allow overfishing to continue for the next decade and makes actual stock recovery an unspecified and distant target.

This watering down by the Council means that it is even more crucial that the MEPs adopt a strong approach on MSY. We must encourage the MEPs to reject the Council's approach and support strong language for MSY in the new CFP, in line with international agreements.

However, on 12 September there was a CFP-related vote by MEPs on an *unbinding* CFP report – the Salavrakos report. Don't worry about the details of this, but you should know that target MEPs Stevenson, Dodds and Hudghton were amongst those MEPs who voted for an amendment to the report, put forward by some other (non-UK) MEPs, which weakened the proposed commitment to recover fish populations to levels above the threshold of maximum sustainable yields by 2015. (And George Lyon abstained from voting).

The amendment changed the target for ensuring recovery of fish populations from “above” sustainable thresholds to “at levels close to achieving” sustainable levels. Science shows that having fish stocks “at” or “close to” MSY levels will not be sufficient for their long-term recovery. **To have a viable and thriving fishing sector, fish stocks must be allowed to recover to levels ABOVE the maximum sustainable yield.**

The amendment passed with a narrow margin of just 5 votes, so every vote against it counted. While not binding at this point, the outcome is very disappointing, and we are pushing both the Fisheries Committee and other MEPs to use all other future opportunities during the reform of the CFP to

vote for the speedy and full recovery of fish populations to levels that are above the sustainability threshold. **It is helpful, if you wish, to express disappointment about the weaker language that was supported via the Salavrakos report.**

Check out Chris Davies MEP (the most progressive MEP in respect of CFP reform) who gets really angry about it! <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zqSWZj4z7NY>

We want MEPs to support language that says “the CFP shall set exploitation rates with the aim to recover and maintain fish population to levels above those that can support the maximum sustainable yield by 2015”. In fact, language has already been tabled on the CFP reform, so MEPs just need to support the proposals of German MEP Ulrike Rodust – the lead draftsman for the CFP document. **Any language which waters down the requirement to meet MSY by 2015, such as the insertion of the caveat 'where possible' into any MSY provisions, must not be tolerated.**

A study by the New Economics Foundation showed that by restoring just 30% of EU fish stocks, we could have 3.53 million extra tonnes of landings, that’s enough for 160 million EU citizens a year, a profit of £2.7 billion and 100,000 extra jobs. <http://www.neweconomics.org/press-releases/lost-at-sea-27-billion-and-100000-jobs>

For a more accessible explanation of what MSY means see:
<http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/blog/oceans/recovery-europes-fisheries-or-just-wishful-thinking-20120704>

MSY – what?!

Every fish population has an equilibrium state with the fishing fleets that exploit it. The maximum amount of fish that can be taken from the fish population, while allowing it to keep its size stable over time, is called the Maximum Sustainable Yield (**MSY**). Before we can remove this fish sustainably, the fish population must be at a scientifically determined overall size – the biomass MSY or **bMSY** (scientists advise we should keep populations a bit higher than bMSY for precaution). Fishing mortality MSY - **fMSY** - represents the level or intensity of fishing, bearable for that level of stock. Fishing populations must be allowed to reach their optimal size, bMSY, first, and only then can we remove the optimal catch.

Using just fMSY is a less arduous target, and in effect simply means reducing fishing pressure in line with the available fish. And while that does make sense, it can only work once the biomass of a fish species is at a healthy level – ie at bMSY – which isn’t the case for 60% of Europe’s fish stocks. If we are to restore fish stocks we must have a new CFP which aims to achieve fish populations above bMSY.

2) Reduce the overcapacity of the EU fleet

We must stress the importance of having text in the CFP that provides both **an obligation for fleet capacity assessment, and a specific deadline for reducing excess fleet capacity.**

The new CFP should require all Member States to put in place capacity management plans. These should contain an assessment of the fleet and document how Member States intend to achieve and maintain a fishing capacity that is aligned with the fishing opportunities (i.e. the amount of fish that

can be caught sustainably). They should further ensure the adjustment of fishing capacity by aiming measures at those segments of the fleet that contribute most to stock depletion and damage to the wider marine environment, and least to the social, economic and cultural fabric that sustains coastal communities. Moreover, a deadline should be set for achieving an effective balance between fishing capacity and available resources.

3) Support low impact fisheries

The new CFP must **establish a criteria-based system of allocation of fishing opportunities**, to provide priority access for low impact methods. Managing access to fishing resources holds the biggest potential for motivating change. If used properly, the right access regime serves to incentivise good practice and a shift towards sustainable fishing, and deters unsustainable, unregulated and illegal practices.

The ability to access fishing opportunities should not be allocated irrespective of the performance of individual operators, nor exclusively on the basis of the operator's economic power. The new CFP should ensure that all Member States give priority access to those who use selective, low-impact methods and provide the highest levels of local employment.

On the issue of discards, it is disappointing that, at the June Council meeting, instead of backing a blanket ban on discards as soon as possible, ministers chose to dither and to pick and choose which fish species the ban should apply to. Discarding will not stop unless fishermen use more selective gear and fish more sustainably. The best way to stop discards is to reward fishermen who fish sustainably and phase out destructive, indiscriminate industrial fishing.

Additional points

In addition to these priority issues, we must make it clear to the MEPs that the rules of the CFP must apply EQUALLY to both European vessels operating within European waters and those operating in non-European waters.

Public money should be used to support public good, ie fisheries with low environmental impact and high societal benefit.

And, finally, we want UK MEPs to know that they WILL be monitored closely by the public, that you'll keep taking an interest and that MEPs will be held accountable for the outcome of the CFP reform.

Every letter counts! Thanks for your support!

Struan Stevenson



Struan is a member of the UK Conservatives representing Scotland and member of the European Conservatives and Reformists Group. He's been in the European Parliament since 1999. He is the rapporteur on the Common Market Organisation regulation (part of the CFP package).

He is UK vice-chair of the Fisheries Committee, and is the one who most UK MEPs go to for voting recommendations on fisheries issues. Struan is Spokesman on Fisheries for the Conservative Party, a position he's held since 2004.

Struan was elected Senior Vice President of the Fisheries Committee in 2009 and previously held the position of President in 2001. At that time he presided over the reform of the CFP, the long-term cod and hake recovery plans and the consequent crisis in the whitefish sector.

Struan is a VERY mixed bag of a politician, who has tabled amendments to get rid of the precautionary approach in the CFP, and is also for weakening MSY commitments, but he has also tabled amendments for priority access for inshore fishermen.

He is Scottish and was born in the small coastal village of Ballantrae located in South Ayrshire. He is very interested in fishing, and he is well-connected and very vocal in the Scottish media on fisheries issues. His main interests are regionalisation and multiannual plans. He is for less EU and more national powers over fishing rules.

On the 26th of July, Stevenson had a "very positive meeting" with two of our political lobbyists, where he agreed to "be a Fisherman's Friend." You may wish to thank him for his support, if you're mentioning the campaign. He was, at least outwardly, convinced of the need for sustainable fishing and, as a supporter of the UK fishing industry, in favour of laws which help the majority of small-scale, low-impact British operators rather than large-scale continental ones. Mr Stevenson agreed with two of our demands – he was in favour of capacity management plans for the fishing fleets and rewards for sustainable fishing, allied to penalties for the reverse.

He wasn't however prepared to commit to bMSY by 2015, favouring the less demanding fMSY target. However, he is willing to commit to bMSY by 2020 – which is, in principle, an acceptable compromise position. Struan sent an email to the lobbyist saying: "I enjoyed our discussion and we seem to be in broad agreement on the key principles of reform. On the first point, can we be clear that I am campaigning for fMSY by 2015 and bMSY by 2020. Otherwise I agree with the Greenpeace principles."

This means that Struan is campaigning for a less demanding approach to restoring fish stocks to healthy levels, ie reducing fishing pressure by 2015 and delaying restoration of fish populations until 2020. We can live with Struan's compromise position re bMSY by 2020, (but don't tell him that explicitly) – so rather than push him on this point, it's more important that we push to ensure that no language is added to water down the actual achievement of fMSY and bMSY. There mustn't be any "where possible" introduced into any MSY provisions, and the policy must refer to achieving levels ABOVE MSY, so that our depleted fish stocks are allowed to increase gradually, not refer to levels "at MSY" or "at levels close to".

Struan has focused his campaigns in support of Scottish farmers and fishermen calling for changes to the legislation on discards and he supports rewards to sustainable fishermen but doesn't agree with subsidising their incomes.

Despite the fact that he has some problematic positions, he is very approachable and, perhaps surprisingly, took into consideration several of our suggestions when tabling amendments. He is receptive to pressure from members of the Conservative Party in government.

George Lyon - Substitute



George is a member of the Scottish Liberal Democrats Party and substitute member of the Fisheries Committee. He represents Scotland.

He was born in the Isle of Bute, Scotland

He is very much focused on the Scottish fishing fleet. He said that the fishing industry plays a crucial role in coastal communities in Scotland and its long term sustainability must be safeguarded.

He also claimed that he will continue to work closely with Scotland's fishing industry so that future generations "can enjoy a fishing regime that is fair, sustainable and in the best interests of Scotland."

He supports WWF "More fish" Campaign, highlights the necessity of balancing the need for protecting the Scottish Industry and ensuring a sustainable fishing and tackling overcapacity.

George is supportive of MSY by 2015 but has major concerns about lack of data making this impossible.

George had a very constructive meeting with Greenpeace political lobbyists on 14 September. He was very knowledgeable about fisheries and sympathetic in support of the needs of small coastal/rural communities. He said "he saw no problem in supporting the campaign", but needed to review more information – we are waiting on his confirmation.

"The Common Fisheries Policy, as it stands, has failed both fishermen and fish stocks for a long time. We need to get the right balance between the needs of our fishing fleets and maintaining sustainable fishing grounds. The European Commission has itself admitted that far too much micro-managing from Brussels has not helped the situation". – George on CFP reform proposal 13 July 2011.

Ian HUDGHTON



Ian is a member of the Scottish National Party and has been a MEP since 1998 representing Scotland's interests in Europe. For domestic political reasons, he is a member of the Greens/European Free Alliance in the EP group, but he does NOT collaborate with the greens or share their positions. He doesn't even join the meetings of the Greens. He is against TFCs(1) but supports the status-quo and pro-industry positions in most if not all other issues. He now lives in Aberdeen and he was once elected in the coastal Angus District Council. Aberdeen is a busy port mainly for small scale vessels (under 10m).

Ian seems to be very interested in the fishing industry as shown by his visits to different fishing communities (like Aberdeen, Angus, Shetlands and Peterhead) and the Seafood expo where he stated that a reform of the CFP is needed to support the Scottish industry.

Ian wrote to us:

"Having been a member of the European Parliament's Fisheries Committee for several years, during which I have constantly called for the CFP to be ditched, I am more than happy to "Be a fisherman's friend"!

Many of my constituents' livelihoods depend on fishing and it is vital for these communities that we all work together to secure a sustainable future for them.

The current CFP has been a total failure. What we should be pursuing with all of our energy is a future structure of fisheries management which returns real powers to fishing nations such as Scotland, working together with our neighbours to build upon initiatives to eliminate the scandal of discards and to give clear incentives to devise conservation rules that are fit for purpose".

¹ Tradeable fishing concessions are the privatisation of fishing quota which has already effectively taken place by tacit government approval in the UK. Such privatisation concentrates quota in the hands of the most economically powerful players, at the expense of smaller operators.

Diane DODDS - Substitute



Diane is a member of the Democratic Unionist Party (**Northern Ireland**) and also a Non-Attached member in the EP. She does not support the MSY target and favours renationalisation of the fisheries issues. She has welcomed the General Approach adopted by the Council in June. But she may be receptive to some arguments, in particular in relation to the discard ban and certainly is more approachable than the French MEP she substitutes for, Le Pen (who often doesn't attend Committee – so there's good opportunity for Diane to influence matters).

Diane is from Northern Ireland and very interested in the fishing fleet in the North Sea and the Irish Sea. She has visited local fishing communities and reiterated her opposition to the CFP. She thinks that the CFP has had a negative impact on the local communities and fishermen and caused the virtual destruction of the Northern Ireland white fish fleet.

She appreciates that there have been some signs of decentralisation of the CFP but she claims that the real solution would be to return the control in local hands. In the meantime, she thinks that regional management is what is needed for fish stocks and the fishing industry rather than the existing top down European model.

Additional reading (only if you're really keen!)

The Greenpeace fisherman's friend campaign is here:

<http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/oceans/beafishermansfriend>

The Greenpeace CFP blogroll is here: <http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/tags/common-fisheries-policy>

Some more general links:

- Your MEPs: http://www.europarl.org.uk/view/en/your_MEPs.html
- CFP reform watch: <http://cfp-reformwatch.eu/>
- <http://cfp-reformwatch.eu/2012/05/ministers-we-support-msy-but/>
- EU Fisheries committee:
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/pech/members.html>
- Oceans 2012: <http://ocean2012.eu/>
- New Under Ten Fishermen's Association (NUFTA): <http://www.nutfa.org/>
- Fish Fight: www.fishfight.net/

Specific to the three key asks

Restoring fish populations

- http://assets.ocean2012.eu/publication_documents/documents/301/original/MEPS-reject-Council-Approach-on-CFP-reform.pdf
- <http://cfp-reformwatch.eu/2012/06/ngos-point-out-rio-deal-more-ambitious-on-msy-targets-than-eu-fish-ministers/>
- Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY):
http://assets.ocean2012.eu/publication_documents/documents/253/original/MSY-explained.pdf

Fleet management

- Greenpeace fleet briefing: http://www.greenpeace.org/eu-unit/Global/eu-unit/reports-briefings/2011%20pubs/April-May%202012/20120401%20BR%20fleet%20capacity%20management_FINAL%20long.pdf
- NGO coalition fleet briefing:
http://assets.ocean2012.eu/publication_documents/documents/173/original/overcapacity-briefing.pdf