

## PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Fishing and Fisheries</b>
<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Brexit, Infrastructure and Legislation</b>
<b>Date:</b>	6 June 2018
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	N/A
<b>CMT Member:</b>	Giles Perritt - Assistant Chief Executive
<b>Author:</b>	<b>Kevin Mckenzie - Policy Advisor</b>
<b>Contact details</b>	Tel: 01752 304318 email: kevin.mckenzie@plymouth.gov.uk
<b>Ref:</b>	BIL/001/18
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Part:</b>	I

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### **Purpose of the report:**

The report sets the context for a scrutiny select committee review of fishing and fisheries. It discusses the impact of the UK leaving the EU in terms of the Common Fisheries Policy and European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. It sets out the pledges made by the incoming administration and some key question around the theme of fishing that panel members may wish to consider.

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### **Corporate Plan**

The Chair has indicated his intention to call on representatives of Fishermen and the Fishing industry to give evidence to the review. This will support our value of being democratic by ensuring people have a say about what is important to them. It will assist us to develop an offer we can be proud of which grows our reputation nationally and internationally.

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### **Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land**

The review will call on representatives of the fishing industry to give evidence; there may be financial implications in terms of reasonable expenses incurred in attending. Members may wish to conduct site visits, at Sutton Harbour and other locations within the City.

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### **Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management:**

The report does touch on the issue of maritime safety, e.g. the administrations pledge in relation to the lifejacket scheme; however any change to the scheme would require a separate report.

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### **Equality and Diversity**

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? No - as no decision is being taken on which to base one.

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**Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:**

Members of the panel are asked to note the report and suggested scope of the review and to resolve to seek the approval of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for a Select Committee review to be scheduled later in the year.

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**Alternative options considered and rejected:**

None.

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**Published work / information:**

Minutes of Council 26<sup>th</sup> March 2018.

**Background papers:**

Title	Part I	Part II	Exemption Paragraph Number						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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**Sign off: Not required as no decision is being taken.**

Fin		Leg		Mon Off		HR		Assets		IT		Strat Proc	
Originating SMT Member N/A													
Has the Cabinet Member(s) agreed the contents of the report? The view of the Leader has been sought in his capacity as the relevant Portfolio holder.													

## **INTRODUCTION**

Following the local elections in May the new administration has established a Brexit, Infrastructure and Legislation Scrutiny Committee. As a topic fishing cuts across all three of these areas:-

- The industry is currently regulated by the Common Fisheries Policy of the European Union.
- The success of the fishing industry is reliant a great deal upon the capacity, quality and suitability of the supporting infrastructure.
- The Government proposes to introduce a Fisheries Bill in the current parliamentary session.

At full Council on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2018, members overwhelmingly endorsed a Motion on Notice, which committed Plymouth City Council to supporting the British Fishing Industry and in particular the fishing industry here in Plymouth. At the last election both main parties made a commitment to the industry for the long term. This topic therefore lends itself to constructive scrutiny which could add value to our understanding of industry needs.

The new administration has made several pledges that are of direct relevance.

- To work with Plymouth's fishing industry to launch a Plan for Sustainable Fishing to secure the industry's future in the city.
- To review the proposals for improved facilities for the fishing sector. These proposals have come from the local fishing industry, and include better infrastructure at the east of Sutton Harbour and a fishing-related building development.
- To continue to support the life-saving lifejacket scheme.

These may provide some ready terms of reference for the committee to consider.

## **CONTEXT**

Following the motion passed at full council in March the Chief Executive was instructed to write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We have since received a reply from the Minister for Agriculture, Fishing and Food setting out the Government's position.

In relation to fisheries subsidies after we leave the EU the Minister advises that all European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) projects approved before the UK leaves the EU will be fully funded under a Treasury guarantee, even when these projects have not been completed by the UK exit date. The UK will continue to participate in all EU programmes financed by the Multiannual Financial Framework (2014-2020) until their closure. It is expected, therefore, that the EMFF will continue to be open for new projects until 2020. Work to consider the longer-term future of all programmes that are currently EU funded is underway.

The minister also set out the Government's position on the Common Fisheries Policy. Current fisheries rules will continue to apply during the implementation period. These arrangements, however, will only apply to negotiations in 2019. By December 2020, the UK will be negotiating fishing opportunities for 2021 as a third country and independent coastal state completely outside the Common Fisheries Policy.

Finally he sets out that after 2020 we will be in fully control of access to British waters. The Government has given notice to withdraw from the London Fisheries Convention which will take effect in July 2019. There will therefore be a clear and open basis on which to start negotiations on future fisheries agreements. Leaving the EU will also provide an opportunity to secure a fairer share of fish in our waters and to safeguard the long-term profitability of the industry.

## **PLYMOUTH'S FISHING INDUSTRY**

The UK Sea Fisheries Annual Statistics Report 2016. MMO, published 28<sup>th</sup> September 2017 noted that:-

- Plymouth is the administration port with the largest number of fishermen in the UK, and second largest in terms of vessel numbers.
- Plymouth ranks consistently in the top 3 fishing ports in the country for both volume (11,000 tonnes) and value of landings (£15m).
- Recent estimates from the MMO suggest that Plymouth landed £15.65m last year.
- In the first year of operation the current fish quay and market turned over £2.1m, with the market going from strength to strength with a 2017 turnover of £18.8m.
- November 2017 saw the fish market record with £1m of sales in one week.

Sutton Harbour is of national significance for landing and exporting fish. The fishing industry adds over £15m in Gross Value Added (GVA) to our local economy each year landing around 13% of England's total fish catch each year.

Despite its growing importance nationally, and as a hub for marketing fish from across the south west peninsula, the last major investment in the city's fishing port facilities was 1992. A major upgrade is needed to improve productivity, regulatory compliance and to remain competitive. The fish quay is centrally located in Sutton Harbour and redevelopment would have wider regeneration benefits. Recent research commissioned by Plymouth City Council and carried out by R B Anderson & Associates revealed consistent messages about Plymouth's fishing port. Whilst the fishing port was positively described as:

- A vibrant business area
- High degree of beneficial interdependency between businesses operating there
- High value attached to the market and quay
- Source of local employment

There were complaints of:

- Lack of space for: storage, parking, loading/unloading, repairs and maintenance, maneuvering and berthing of boats.
- Apparent deficiencies in facilities: toilets, showers, fuel, water, ice, food hygiene, waste and recycling
- Perceptions of excessive charges: rents, fuel, parking and mooring fees
- Health and safety concerns regarding proposed public access
- Fears of the quay being lost to the industry or its use seriously compromised by redevelopment.

## **FUTURE NEEDS & POSSIBLE ACTIONS**

The physical needs are various and include:

- efficient landing facilities and safe berths for vessels
- fish processing capacity and cold storage
- good freshwater supply
- marketing infrastructure
- accommodation for the associated services
- good vehicular and other transport links

With these physical needs of a fishing port in mind, the current issues with the facilities in Sutton Harbour operating beyond capacity are more problematic. It is felt that there is a of lack of adequate storage space, vehicular movements, berthing vessels, and these problems have only been

exacerbated by the success of the fish market and the increased volume of fishermen and vessels using the port, in addition to increased competition for space from leisure boats.

As such, the principle risk to the fishing industry in Plymouth is inaction and continued uncertainty about the future of the fish quay and the fish market.

It has been suggested that regenerating the empty work units would solve the issues, further improve services and help foster new businesses and jobs. There were also claims that a 'fishing quarter' could be established to become part of Plymouth's tourism offer and help build stronger links between the local fishing industry and the wider community.

As with everything Brexit is a major issue and creates another layer of uncertainty with the outcome for fisheries remaining unclear. However, evidence appears to suggest that leaving the Common Fisheries Policy will allow the UK to devise smarter and more responsive policies. Reconfiguring the allocation of fish stocks in line with international practice, a system called zonal attachment, would create a substantial net gain for the UK.

## **ROLE OF THE COUNCIL**

The City Council has already taken steps to support the industry and have proven themselves as '*energetic in providing strategic and practical support to the industry*'. The research by R B Anderson & Associates outlines 2 primary roles of the council in pursuit of their objectives:

- Continuing to protect and assist the industry as far as possible through its statutory powers
- Act as a catalyst, facilitator and enabler

Specifically, the council can utilise their planning and consenting processes to maximise the proportion of benefits that are locally derived from the port and its facilities. Respondents to the survey also made clear that they would welcome further intervention from the council in terms of the competing interests at the fish quay and market and the possibility of redevelopment.

It was recommended that the council could assist in organising and facilitating a long term strategy led by the fishing industry. In addition to this, it was suggested that the council could facilitate discussions between the 4 main fishing institutes in Plymouth (the Marine Institute, the University of Plymouth, Plymouth Marine Laboratory, Sir Alister Hardy Foundation for Ocean Science and the Marine Biological Association, and the local fishing industry) to establish areas of mutual benefit.

Overall, it is recommended that the council continues to work in partnership across the whole of the fishing industry, look across all programmes, with a marine or maritime element and explore scope for closer connections, raise the profile of the fishing industry and strengthen the connections between Plymouth residents (e.g. part of the potentially remodelled complex of the fish quay could include an education centre) and give better prominence to the industry in council literature.

## **QUESTIONS SCRUTINY MAY WISH TO CONSIDER**

### **What would we like to see in the Fisheries Bill?**

There is potential for coastal communities such as Plymouth, and the wider UK, to benefit from the UK leaving the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). It is widely believed in the UK that our fishing industry is short changed by the CFP quota system. Zonal attachment, an economic link between ports and fishing zones to maximise regional economic development might be an alternative. However as we don't eat a lot of fish a great deal of what we catch is sold in European markets. Fish do not respect international maritime boundaries and the French, Spanish and Dutch are likely to argue for a greater share for their own industries.

Whilst we know that we will continue to be subject to the CFP throughout the implementation period we do not know what approach the Government proposes to take in the longer term. Some level of pan European cooperation is necessary to avoid the risk that one country overfishes to the

detriment of all the others. The worst possible outcome for the industry would be an unregulated free for all which would rapidly exhaust fish stocks generating a short term boom at the expense of long term sustainability.

### **What should the balance be between environmental protection and food production?**

Our new administration has committed to supporting the idea of Plymouth Sound becoming the UK's first Marine Park, signalling a seriousness of intent around protecting biodiversity in our waters. The Government has committed to leaving the CFP however the industry is concerned that we will leave the CFP only to impose a very similar UK regime. There are many small communities dotted around the UK for whom Fishing is a vital industry. We need to recognise that the industry will struggle to flourish if the regulatory environment is not conducive.

Locally there is significant interest from Cornish and Devon MP's. Recently a City MP asked a question about the implementation in the UK of EU rules about 'discard'. These rules, which are anticipated in 2019 will require Fisherman to 'land' their catch even when the fish caught are too small to be sold. Whilst this practice has many critics it is worth noting the experience of Norway. The Norwegians introduced this practice some years ago and this led to the industry adopting new techniques that caught fewer under sized fish.

### **How should we support the fishing industry towards sustainable growth?**

Whilst the key determinant of the potential for growth in the Fishing Industry will be the post Brexit regulatory environment it is worth noting that even under the CFP the industry has enjoyed significant growth in recent years as fish stocks have been recovering. The study discusses options for the future of Sutton Harbour, broadly it concludes that we have a choice about whether to sustain the local industry as it is or push for further growth.

If we want the industry to grow we would need to develop and modernise Sutton Harbour. There is potential for Plymouth to serve as an administrative centre for the Fishing industry working in partnership with Newlyn and Brixham Harbours, potentially picking up some of the responsibilities currently within the remit of the EU. If we do decide to push for growth and a Plymouth based fisheries administration then we will need to lobby to ensure resources are available to modernise port infrastructure. If environmental protection is seen as more of a priority the industry might need to invest in new equipment to support lower impact fishing practices either way some replacement for the EMFF will be required.