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Call for protection of Scotland's historical fishing rights

A press release by Scottish National Party MEP Ian Hudghton

PARLIAMENT VOTE MUST NOT JEOPORDISE SCOTTISH WATERS

SNP President **Ian Hudghton** MEP has today (Thursday) called for Scotland's coastal communities to unite in an effort to protect their historical fishing rights. The call came after a vote in the European Parliament opened the way for a review of the principle whereby fishing access is allocated to countries on the basis of their traditional practices.

The vote came as part of the European Parliament's response to the European Commission's review of the Common Fisheries Policy. It is anticipated that a new European policy on fisheries management will come into force in 2013.

The SNP is campaigning for the protection of historical rights and a return of fisheries powers to Europe's fishing nations.

Speaking after the vote in Brussels, Mr Hudghton commented:

"There seems to be a consensus emerging across Europe that the CFP has failed and that the over-centralised system must be abandoned. Nevertheless, serious concerns must remain as to what will be put in its place.

"It is clear that rule by diktat from Brussels has not worked and that powers must be returned to Europe's fishing nations, co-operating with each other on a regional basis. This effectively entails enshrining each countries existing historical rights - and allowing decisions to be taken closer to where it matters.

"The European Parliament voted today however to end the principle of access rights based on historical practices. This is a dangerous move which may well threaten livelihoods around Scotland.

"The UK government has already this week lobbied MEPs urging them to abandon those historical rights. Unfortunately enough seem to have followed that call.

"It is absolutely vital that Scotland's waters are not opened up for a free-for-all. The CFP must not be replaced by a system where those remaining traditional rights are scrapped forever.

"Scotland's coastal communities must be alert to this danger. The SNP will work tirelessly with them in the coming months and years to ensure that we secure a strong and vibrant future for our fishing industry."

Notes for editors:

- The European Parliament today voted on a report on the Green Paper on the CFP.
- The final text contained the clause: "access rights should be based on updated criteria and no longer solely on the criterion of historical catches".
- At present access rights are based on the principle of relative stability, ensuring quotas are distributed to countries on the basis of historical rights.
- Ahead of the vote the UK government briefed all UK MEPs to the effect that relative stability should be scrapped. They said: "Fishing opportunities are based on historic practices which stifles innovative business and the ability to adapt to climate change."

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Ian Hudghton

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