

PRESS RELEASE

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HUDGHTON CALLS FOR SUPPORT TO “SURVIVAL AMENDMENTS”

SNP MEP Ian Hudghton has called on the European Parliament Fisheries Committee to support his amendments in a crucial vote scheduled to take place today in Brussels. Commenting in advance of the vote, Mr Hudghton said:

“The Fisheries Committee is voting on the principal proposal on the Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy for a Regulation on the Conservation and Sustainable Exploitation of Fisheries Resources, which includes key proposals relating to access, the 6-12 mile coastal zones, the Shetland Box and regional management.

“Whilst the Committee rapporteur has attempted to impose strict time limits on the restrictions to access, I have tabled a number of counter amendments to foil the attempts to liberalise fisheries and give carte blanche to fleets with no historical interest in fishing grounds; grounds where stocks are already severely depleted and whose very future is in question. To put it frankly, these are “survival amendments” for the North Sea fishing grounds.

“The Commission proposal itself calls for free access to the North Sea from the end of 2002, and the Iberian authored draft report starts from this premise and goes precariously further, calling for the 6-12 miles zones to expire permanently after five years, and for the prior authorisation procedure in the Shetland Box to be brought to an end in 2004.

“That is why I have gone even further than the Commission proposal, calling for the restrictions in access to the North Sea to be maintained indefinitely, emphasising that there is a lack of knowledge about non-quota species in the North Sea and an acknowledged risk that fishing non-quota species would almost certainly incur by-catches of species subject to quotas. Accordingly, and above all in light of the poor state of stocks in the North Sea and in the face of the threat of drastic closures, the existing access restrictions to the North Sea must be maintained. I have also called for the permanent retention of the 6-12 mile zones and a rejection of the rapporteur’s views on the Shetland Box.

“Lastly, an attempt to water down proposals for Regional Advisory Committees, calling for them to be set up as private law entities with no obligation for consultation, will hopefully be thwarted. I have tabled amendments which not only oppose such a

view, but strengthen the contribution of fishermen in the decision-making process through the real involvement in Regional Management Councils.

“I am counting on the support of fellow Scottish and other MEPs to ensure that these views are upheld and my amendments are taken on board.”

- Ends.