

## PRESS RELEASE

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Attn: News desks & Fish correspondents

### **NO FLOODGATES TO FREE ACCESS**

Speaking in Brussels, SNP-Euro MP Ian Hudghton has demanded that Franz Fischler, EU Fisheries Commissioner, provide reassurances that any delays in the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy will not result in the floodgates of free access being opened.

The European Commission had originally scheduled the publication of its CFP Reform proposals for the beginning of 2002, eight months after it brought out its Green Paper. However, the process has been slower than expected, and Commissioner Fischler has now delayed the launch of the next stage of the CFP reform to the end of April. After a debate in European Parliament Fisheries Committee with Commissioner Fischler, Mr Hudghton said:

“It is imperative that the Commission gets its act together and announces its reform proposals on the Common Fisheries Policy so that there can be adequate time for consultation and debate. The Commission has taken since the end of September 2001, when the deadline for consultative submissions on the CFP Green Paper expired, to draw up its follow-up proposals.

“The Commission must provide reassurances that this delay will not result in a legal void at the end of 2002. If there is no regime in place, the 6-12 mile coastal zones and the restrictions on access to the North Sea could automatically expire. This could open the floodgates to free access and would be catastrophic for the Scottish fishing industry.

“I pushed Commissioner Fischler for a response on this issue yesterday and was disappointed at his lack of concern. I have now written to him demanding an assurance that the possibility of a free for all in the North Sea be definitively stamped out and the 6-12 mile coastal zones be retained as a permanent feature of the CFP before they expire.”

- Ends.