

The Charter for Fishers, Coastal Communities & the Islands

This charter is the work of numerous consultations with fishers, NGOs and coastal communities.

It contains Sinn Féin's proposals and pledges for safeguarding and promoting our fishing sector, coastal communities, islands and marine biodiversity.

For decades our coastal communities have been ignored by consecutive governments.

However, as we approach the renegotiation of the Common Fisheries Policy and several other agreements there is an opportunity for positive, progressive change.

We in Sinn Féin are determined to deliver that change at both national and European level.

This Charter will form the bedrock of our proposals in those negotiations and will outline our guiding principles for all issues regarding our coast; principles that every party can and should sign up to.

1. Empower Irish coastal communities

Safeguard, acknowledge and promote the important role played by the hundreds of Irish fishers, their family dependents and the coastal and island communities of Ireland;

2. Fair Fish Quotas and Quotas that benefit coastal and island communities

Allocate quotas fairly and proportionately. Allocation of fish quotas should be free from political cronyism and corruption. There should be fair access to quotas for inshore and island fleets as referenced under Article 17 of the Common Fisheries Policy.

3. Simplify bureaucracy and end the criminalisation of fishers

Simplify rules for funding and lessening the bureaucratic burdens for applicants, especially for Fisheries Local Development Action Groups. Favour the introduction of a more proportionate approach to the inspection for Irish fishing vessels;

4. Combat illegal and destructive fishing by outside sources

Prevent foreign flagged fishing vessels that have previously conducted illegal, unreported or unregulated fishing from fishing activities in delicate or protected areas and are harshly penalised in order to protect marine ecosystems and local fish stocks for commercial use. Prevent the mass displacement of EU and non-EU fishing vessels into Irish waters in the event of a no deal Brexit scenario;

5. Stop Supertrawlers

Support an outright ban on supertrawlers and until that can be achieved call for the strictest monitoring by the SPPA of super-trawlers operating in Irish waters;

6. Use the European Parliament to challenge the European Commission and protect Irish fishers

Commit our MEPs towards working for major reform of the Common Fisheries Policy which has been deeply unpopular with Irish coastal communities and fishers.

7. Better EU funding

Work within the European Parliament to propose and support the simplification and expansion of the European Maritime & Fisheries Fund so it better protects and promotes small-scale fishers, coastal communities and a healthy and sustainable marine environment;

8. Support the people and organisations that save lives

Increase measures to support our coastguard, naval and search and rescue services as well as volunteers, voluntary organisations and families who have lost loved ones at sea;

9. Community focused approach

Encourage and support marine stewardship and co-management within local communities as a means of ensuring the protection of the marine environment;

10. Building alliances for ordinary fishers

Assist small scale inshore and offshore fishers in exerting political influence and building alliances at European, regional and national levels; To promote fisheries policies that work for all Irish fishing interests, not just the powerful; The full and equal involvement of fishers in the future development and implementation of fisheries policy at national and international level;

11. Scientists & Fishers Working Together to Protect Coastal Communities & our Environment

Develop a sustainable fisheries policy that is balanced between environmental, economic and social objectives with collaboration between scientists and fishers to ensure commercially and environmentally sustainable fish stocks. Safeguard local fish stocks - The seasonal closures of fisheries spawning grounds, and in unforeseen periods where there are large quantities of juvenile fish in the area.

12. Government Priority

Establish a Department for Fisheries, Marine and Marine Communities with a designated Minister

13. Power to our Islands

Island proof all legislation that passes through other Departments in order to ensure that legislation does not have an unfair or discriminatory effect on island communities; Legislate for an Islands Bill and the creation of a national islands plan to promote heritage, wellness and tourism and formulate a long-term blue socio-economic and marine development plan;

14. Value our stakeholders

Support the positive roles played by Údarás na Gaeltachta, Fisheries Local Development Action Groups, Lost at Sea Tragedies, Irish Island Marine Resource Organisation, the Irish South & West Fish Producers Organisation, Irish South & East Fish Producers Organisation, Bórd Iascaigh Mhara, Killybegs Fishers Organisation, Irish Fish Producers Organisation, Irish Fish Processing & Exporters Association, Marine National Inshore Fisheries Forum, Regional Inshore Fisheries Forums, Anglo-North Irish Fish Producers Organisation, Northern Ireland Fish Producers Organisation, Europeche, Low Impact Fishers of Europe, affiliated & non-affiliated parties and all other stakeholders;

15. A Post-Brexit Fishing Deal that works

Negotiate a future fisheries agreement between Britain and Ireland after Brexit that benefits all the fishermen of Ireland which should be modeled on the trilateral agreement between Denmark, Sweden and Norway covering the waters of Skagerrak & Kattegat. This could also resolve the Voisinage Agreement impasse. The Irish Government must adequately prepare for all Brexit eventualities.

16. Zero tolerance approach to illegal fishing by industrial vessels

Demand stricter monitoring and control of the fishing operations of foreign fishing vessels, particularly those with a history of non-compliance, especially factory vessels or super-trawlers;

17. Secure A Bluefin Tuna Quota

Call on the Irish government, International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT), European Commission and European Council to secure and grant Irish fishers a commercial quota for Bluefin Tuna, which would also enable recreational fishing for the species;

18. Invest in our Fishing Ports

Invest in improving port facilities and developing transport infrastructure for important fishing ports which are mostly located in peripheral areas;

19. Clean our Rivers, build their Fish stocks and Punish Polluters

Require swifter environmental clean-ups and restocking of fish in waterways where pollution has negatively impacted the ecosystems; Consider the pollution of waterways to be acts of gross and criminal negligence that warrant harsher penalties for those responsible, particularly when this pollution causes moderate to severe temporary or permanent environmental damage to affected ecosystems and waterways, which often results in mass kills of fish and other species kills, lack of access to clean water and disruption to human activities;

20. Looking out for small scale fisheries and provision of aid for Fishers

Support aid for small-scale fishers of a Member State who are directly affected by an unforeseen closure of a fishery they conduct fishing activities in that lies within the Economic Exclusive Zone of their Member State; Legislate to enable access to compensation, aid or funding for operators of fishing vessels less than 12 metres, particularly those who use static gears; Seek preferential access for small scale, inshore, artisanal or coastal fishers between the baseline and 12 miles out.

21. Compensate our Eel Fishers

Legislate for a new European Maritime & Fisheries Fund to allow easier access and broaden the scope for funding, especially for compensation and a support scheme for eel fishers;

22. Community Led & Centred Approach to Aquaculture

Foster an environmentally sustainable, indigenous and community-led aquaculture sector with a robust, transparent and democratic licencing system;

23. Value and Nurture Ireland's Maritime Heritage

Represent and work with small scale fisheries and coastal communities and encourage young people and women to participate in maritime work and fisheries

24. Stop the Privatisation of Community-Owned Seaweed and Kelp

Promote and support community led and owned sustainable seaweed harvesting operations;



Sinn Féin