

**Mid Channel Conference**  
**Cherbourg, Tuesday the 5<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday the 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2011**

***Concerns regarding the "MCZ" projects in the Channel***  
***Presented by the UK Joint Nature Conservation Committee***  
***(Balanced seas, Finding Sanctuary)***

The professional maritime fishing organisations, who met in Cherbourg on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2011 at the Mid Channel Conference, held each year on the topic of cohabitation agreements in the sector of Les Casquets and south of Lizard Point,

*"South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen"*  
*"South West Fish Producers Organisation" and "Brixham trawlers"*  
*"Rederscentrale", Ostende*  
*"Comité Régional des Pêches Maritimes de Bretagne" (Brittany Regional Committee of Maritime Fishing)*  
*"Comité Régional des Pêches Maritimes de Basse-Normandie" (Basse-Normandie Regional Committee of Maritime Fishing)*  
*"Organisation de Producteurs de Basse-Normandie OPBN" (Basse-Normandie Producers Organisation)*  
*"Jersey fishermen Association"*

Solemnly declare their most grave concerns in relation to the hasty accelerated implementation of designation projects for Marine Conservation Zones in British territorial waters presented by the JNCC, UK Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

They asked André Le Berre, President of the RAC NWW, and Daniel Lefèvre, President of the Channel Workgroup, to bring these concerns to the explicit attention of the Executive Council, which meets in Bilbao on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011, by insisting on the following points:

- o The consultation process is not satisfactory in that the representation of maritime fishery professionals is marginalised to the benefit of a large number of associations, of which some are NGOs of an ideological nature, who are in direct or indirect contact with the sea without this being vital for them. These "stakeholders" have everything to gain and nothing to lose. Commercial fishing is the only loser.
- o If British fishing feels under-represented, what can one say of French, Belgian and Dutch fishermen who thus see their historical rights being brought into question, without any consideration of legal issues.
- o Zones appear to be designated in the most arbitrary manner, without any real scientific basis in most cases, with a type of draught board layout that changes every week without it being possible to seriously carry out even the most basic socio-economic study, worthy of its name.

- o The implementation calendar, like the multiplication and eternal waltzing of boxes, reveals a sort of technocratic distraction that is incompatible with the acquisition of relevant scientific data and criteria for assessing the economic impact.
- o The principle of “reference zones” completely frozen to fishing, drawn in an office using geometric shapes with minimum dimensions of 5 miles by 5 miles, is particularly arbitrary.
- o Fishermen are very aware of the issue of nature conservation being undermined by an ever increasing number of new users (wind farms, aggregate extraction, dumping of dredged materials, pollution from land). Only fishing is pointed out.
- o We have the impression that fishing is the subject of passionate, unjust, unreasonable public condemnation, and that it has to serve as a human sacrifice to satisfy the wrath of the gods.
- o The issue of nature conservation is far too important an issue to be treated in such a manner and it merits another approach other than a sham consultation, hastily driven to the detriment of any scientific, socio-economic and legal foundation.

On behalf of the professional organisations  
of the Mid Channel Conference

Daniel Lefèvre  
President of the Basse-Normandie Regional Committee of Maritime Fishing (Comité Régional des  
Pêches Maritimes de Basse-Normandie)