

UK and French fishermen join forces in mid-Channel protest against industrial fishing

Fishermen from France and the UK have put aside historic disputes to join forces in a mid-Channel protest against destructive industrial fishing, which is threatening livelihoods and destroying the marine environment. They were joined by campaigners from Greenpeace, Bloom and Pleine Mer.

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9:39 am

Fishing boats from the UK and France met in the Bassurelle Sandbank marine protected area, (MPA) halfway between France and the UK. The fishermen held a discussion at sea to share their experiences of how industrial fishing has ruined fishing livelihoods and coastal communities on both sides of the Channel.

The boats displayed banners showing mutual solidarity and exchanged gifts to symbolise the new partnership between small-scale French and UK fishermen.

Industrial fishing vessels such as supertrawlers and fly-shooters continue to harm the long term health of fish stocks and damage sensitive marine areas. Both are still permitted to operate in MPAs. Fishermen on both sides of the Channel, along with campaigners, are calling for these destructive industrial vessels to be banned to save jobs and protect the marine environment.

Fiona Nicholls, a Greenpeace UK oceans campaigner, said:

“It’s been so heartening to see fishermen from France and the UK come together with campaigners and find that we all have so much more in common than we thought. On both sides of the Channel, fishing jobs are disappearing and politicians continue to ignore coastal communities. Instead, they’re listening to the big businesses operating destructive industrial fishing boats and continuing to allow the most harmful forms of fishing at the expense of small-scale fishing fleets.

“These fleets provide the vast majority of fishing jobs, but they’re slowly disappearing as industrial fishing continues to harm the health of our oceans and destroys coastal communities. The UK government must end destructive industrial fishing in all of the UK’s protected areas, and it has the perfect chance to do so at the end of this year, when the fishing licenses for all vessels come under review.”

A Bloom spokesperson said:

“Fly shooting embodies the technological hyper-efficiency of industrial fishing and the destruction it brings. On top of devastating marine ecosystems, fly shooting dismantles the social tissue around coasts, eradicates artisanal know-how and kills the sustainable alternative that is small-scale fishing. The death of the fish cooperative in Dunkirk, completely ignored by politicians, was the direct consequence of electric fishing. We can’t afford to let that happen again.”

Protests were also held in Boulogne-sur-mer in solidarity with the fishermen. Greenpeace local groups also showed their solidarity with the fishermen by displaying banners in their hometowns. Boats joined the protest from Dover, Rye, Newhaven and Boulogne-sur-mer.

The fishermen, Greenpeace, Bloom and Pleine Mer all have signed a joint Declaration of Emergency, launched by Greenpeace in 2021, calling for fly-shooters and supertrawlers to be banned from large swathes of UK and French waters. The full declaration text, along with a list of signatories, [is available here](#).

Last month, the UK government banned bottom trawling in 4 UK protected areas. This welcome step in the right direction shows there is political appetite for change, but the government must show more ambition, and take action to protect fishing jobs and our oceans before it’s too late.
