

Scallop Fishing: Bay of Seine

Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health and Social Care Committee, Chair, Liaison Committee (Commons)

UK vessels have no access to scallops anywhere within French waters inside the 12-mile limit, which is very much in contrast to the position of French vessels that have access to waters within the six to 12-mile limit in the UK. Will the Minister reiterate that there has been some misunderstanding about this—that our vessels were fishing absolutely legally at the time of these disgraceful attacks? I welcome his assurance and talks with his opposite number, as well as his offer of assistance, but Brixham fishermen would like further reassurance that, when they fish in those waters, perfectly legally, measures will be in place to ensure their safety.

George Eustice The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

I entirely agree with and understand my hon. Friend's point. Much of the scallop fishing industry is based in Brixham in her constituency. She is right to say that the contested grounds are outside the 12-nautical mile limit—they are approximately 20 miles off the French coast and therefore not in French territorial waters. She is also right to say that in some areas the French fishing industry is able to fish in the UK's six to 12-mile zone. She will be aware that the Government have already given notice, under the terms of the London fisheries convention, to withdraw from that agreement and negotiate access arrangements afresh.

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