



## EU Committee Reports: EU Fisheries Landing Obligation Debate on 23 January 2020

On 23 January 2020, the Lord Teverson (Liberal Democrat) is due to move that this House take note of “the reports from the EU Committee *Fisheries: implementation and enforcement of the EU landing obligation* and *The EU fisheries landing obligation: six months on*”.

### Summary

- In 2013, EU Member States agreed to introduce the fisheries landing obligation. This was intended to reduce and ultimately eliminate the discard of fish and other marine animals by the sea fishing industry. Discards happen either because the animals caught are not wanted or because fishers have reached their quota for a particular species. The practice has been criticised by marine conservationists as having a damaging impact on marine ecology.
- The fisheries landing obligation requires fishers to return to land with their catch and not discard unwanted fish into the sea. It was introduced gradually from 2015 and came fully into force in January 2019. Some fish are exempt, including those with high survival rates.
- During the 2017–19 session, the EU Energy and Environment Sub-Committee held an inquiry into the implementation of the landing obligation. [Its report, published in February 2019](#), concluded that the landing obligation showed little sign of having its intended effect. It found neither the UK Government nor the devolved administrations had put in place mechanisms to monitor compliance with the obligation. It also identified the issue referred to as “choke”: where the exhaustion of the quota of one type of fish prevents fishers catching their quota of other types of fish.
- [The then Government responded to the sub-committee’s report](#) in April 2019, stating it would call on the EU to review the operation of the landing obligation. It also said the UK would continue to combat the discard of fish once the UK had left the EU.
- The sub-committee decided to hold a follow-up inquiry to consider the impact of the landing obligation six months on. It [concluded in its second report](#) the landing obligation was having little effect and there were still not systems in place to effectively monitor compliance. [The then Government responded](#) that, while some progress had been made, more needed to be done to: enforce the landing obligation; collect data on discards; and combat chokes in mixed fisheries.
- The landing obligation was raised during [a debate on Common Fisheries Policy \(Amendment etc.\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019](#) in the Lords. However, this will be the first opportunity to debate both of the two sub-committee reports on the landing obligation.

Edward Scott | 15 January 2020

---

A full list of Lords Library briefings is available on the research briefings page on the internet. The Library publishes briefings for all major items of business debated in the House of Lords. The Library also publishes briefings on the House of Lords itself and other subjects that may be of interest to Members. Library briefings are compiled for the benefit of Members of the House of Lords and their personal staff, to provide impartial, authoritative, politically balanced briefing on subjects likely to be of interest to Members of the Lords. Authors are available to discuss the contents of the briefings with the Members and their staff but cannot advise members of the general public.

**Any comments on Library briefings should be sent to the Head of Research Services, House of Lords Library, London SW1A 0PW or emailed to [purvism@parliament.uk](mailto:purvism@parliament.uk).**

## Further Information

- House of Lords European Union Committee, [Fisheries: Implementation and Enforcement of the EU Landing Obligation](#), HL Paper 276 of session 2017–19, 8 February 2019, pp 2–3, 7–9 and 40–4; and [Government Response](#), 4 April 2019

*First report by the Committee—published after the landing obligation came into force—and the Government’s response.*

- House of Lords European Union Committee, [The EU Fisheries Landing Obligation: Six Months On](#), HL Paper 395 of session 2017–19, 16 July 2019, pp 2 and 19–21; and [Government Response](#), 2 October 2019

*Follow-up report by the Committee, six months on from the landing obligation coming into force, and the Government’s response.*

- Marine Management Organisation, [Landing Obligation General Requirements 2019](#), 2 December 2019; and [UK Sea Fisheries Statistics 2018](#), 26 September 2019, pp 1–8

*Summary of the current requirements for fishing vessels and statistical overview of the UK sea-fishing industry.*

- All Party Parliamentary Group on Fisheries, [‘What is the Landing Obligation?’](#), 13 September 2019

*Blog post providing an overview of the impact of the landing obligation, the views of the fishing industry and the finding of the House of Lords European Union Committee’s two reports.*

- National Federation of Fishermen’s Organisations, [‘Landing Obligation Forum’](#), 14 June 2019; and [‘Brussels Takes Stock of Landing Obligation’](#), 18 June 2019

*Information on discussions between the UK sea fishing industry and the Government on the landing obligation and summary of a seminar, hosted by the European Commission in 2019, on the implementation of the landing obligation.*

- Marine Stewardship Council, [MSC Landing Obligation Seminar](#), 2019, pp 1–4

*Summary of a seminar hosted by the Marine Stewardship Council, including participants from the sea fishing industry, marine science organisations and others.*

## Parliamentary Debate, Statements and Questions

- [Debate on 'Common Fisheries Policy \(Amendment etc.\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019'](#): HL *Hansard*, 30 October 2019, cols 65–78GC
- A selection of written question from both Houses: [291398](#) (7 October 2019); [226177](#) (4 March 2019); [HL9300](#) (17 July 2018); [155351](#) (22 June 2018); [140169](#) (4 May 2018)

## Press Articles and Comment

- Fiona Harvey, '[UK Trawlers Ignoring Ban on Discarding Edible Fish at Sea](#)', *Guardian*, 8 February 2019
- Kevin Keane, '[Fishermen "Still Illegally Discarding Dead Fish" says Report](#)', BBC News, 16 July 2019
- Phoebe Weston, '[Thousands of Tonnes of Dead Fish Illegally Thrown into UK Seas Every Year, Investigation Finds](#)', *Independent*, 25 October 2019