



**Briefing for the Fisheries Debate in the House of Commons
Tuesday November 15th 2011**

The Angling Trust is the new united organisation for all anglers in England. Our membership comprises nearly 1,500 angling clubs, fisheries and riparian owners with a collective membership of more than 350,000 anglers.

Recreational angling contributes in excess of £5 billion to the UK economy each year, with more than £1 billion of this coming from recreational sea angling. The 3 million people who go fishing each year support over 37,000 jobs in England and Wales alone.

The Angling Trades Association represents angling manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, publishers and distributors. Its function is to promote, represent and protect the trade. In so doing it aims to achieve not only long-term stability for the sport but, more importantly, growth and development.

For many anglers, fishing is far more than a sport – it is a central part of who they are. Their passion depends on healthy fish stocks, and most fish stocks are in dramatic decline – if current trends continue. Their passion also relies on access to these fish stocks which are, after all, commonly-owned resources and described in the United Nations' Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries as, "one of society's natural heritage".

Sea anglers fear their sport is under threat from the commercial fishing lobby who seek to identify recreational sea angling as a contributing factor in the demise of 'commercial' fish stocks. Article 55 of the EU Common Fishery Policies Control Regulations seek to address the impact recreational fishing has on 'commercially' valuable stocks, such as Cod and sharks, which are under recovery plans.

A Defra funded project being carried out by Cefas, Sea Angling 2012, will begin in 2012 to assess the impact recreational angling has on commercially important stocks in England. The failure of successive Governments to do anything positive to support sea angling means there is a high degree of suspicion from within the sea angling sector that the data collected from this project will be used to restrict and control sea angling unfairly, rather than use the data (provided it is accurate and reliable) to develop and enhance the sport.

The recent summary of responses to the Government's consultation on domestic fisheries management reform in England illustrates the view that fish stocks are seen to be property of the commercial catching sector and not a publicly-owned natural resource;

"There were a number of responses that mentioned recreational angling and that this activity should be subject to stricter controls. Currently, in many places there are no limitations placed on recreational angling. This is seen to be unfair and, in some cases, those recreational anglers are believed to have significant impacts on commercially valuable species such as bass, cod and haddock."

The suggestion that recreational angling is having a significant impact on these stocks is strongly refuted and is not addressing how and why these stocks have been brought to historically low levels in the first place. The decline in stocks, and therefore quota available to the commercial catching sector, has been caused by decades of scientific advice being ignored in favour of short term political gain under pressure from the commercial fishing lobby, resulting in unsustainable levels of fishing. This has in turn had a devastating impact on the sea angling sector which, perversely, is now being accused of contributing to the problem.

The Angling Trust will fight vociferously to ensure that a healthy and sustainable sport such as sea angling is not made a scapegoat for the failings of previous Governments to manage properly one of our most valuable publicly-owned resources.

Many countries recognise the value of recreational fisheries as the best use of fish stocks to society and have taken measures to support and develop their recreational angling sectors.

It is worth considering that in 2009 the first sale value in England and Wales of commercial landings of species also targeted by anglers was £30.3m. Five years earlier the annual spend of recreational sea anglers in the UK targeting the same species was estimated to be at least £1 billion annually according to a report, Net Benefits, produced in 2004 by the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit which also concluded:

"fisheries management policy should recognise that sea angling may, in some circumstances, provide a better return on the use of some resources than commercial exploitation."

However, despite this recommendation, and the clear value of sea angling to society, no action has ever been taken to support this.

The Angling Trust is issuing this briefing in advance of the annual Fisheries Debate with an appeal to Ministers and the Members of Parliament who represent this huge constituency. We call on our representatives to focus this year's debate on how Britain can lead the way in Europe in calling for the sustainable management of fish stocks for the benefit to society as a whole, and with decisions based on sound scientific evidence.

We need:

- The social, cultural and economic contribution of recreational sea angling to be recognised if fish stocks are to be managed for the good of society as a whole;
- an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management including multi-stock management plans;
- emergency measures to allow member states to take conservation measures that apply to vessels flying flags of all member states within the 12 nautical mile zone;
- measures to reduce discards through the application of technical measures such as adapted gear types and closed areas to reduce the overall mortality of under size, overquota and 'unwanted' species;
- an end to the political horse trading and lobbying at the December Council negotiations which results in quotas regularly exceeding scientific advice;
- improved compliance and enforcement preventing all forms of illegal commercial fishing.

There is an opportunity to save our fish stocks in the next two years through fundamental reform of the Common Fisheries Policy and we recognise the Government's efforts to reform the CFP. However, we call on politicians of all parties to resist the lobbying by the commercial fishing sector and put aside the short-term political decision making that has contributed to scientific advice being routinely ignored and many of our fish stocks being exploited at unsustainable levels.

Millions of anglers and thousands of businesses that supply and service the UK's sea angling sector throughout the country demand that their elected representatives go to Europe and fight for what is right; fisheries management based on restoring and maintaining fish stocks for future generations so that we can all enjoy a sustainable harvest of the oceans' fish resources.

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