



## A Manifesto for Angling

October 2019

### Introduction

The Angling Trust is the representative body for all game, coarse and sea anglers in England and the national governing body for angling. The Trust is urging all the major political parties to support angling in the next Parliament and to acknowledge the economic, environmental and social benefits that the country's most popular pursuit offers to the British people.

**Angling engages over 2 million people in Britain**, making it one of the most popular outdoor pastimes. It also delivers significant economic and social benefits with around **35,000 jobs** and an estimated contribution to the UK economy in excess of **£3 billion a year**.

Angling provides huge benefits for health, education and well-being to people of all ages, and it is often the only outdoor activity easily available to urban communities suffering deprivation.

Anglers also invest millions of hours of volunteer time into the maintenance and improvement of water environments by clearing litter, restoring habitats and monitoring pollution.

According to Defra's own Sea Angling 2012 report there are around 800,000 sea anglers in England who directly pump **£1.23 billion** p.a. into the economy and upon which 10,400 full time jobs are dependent. The VAT alone which is collected from sea anglers **dwarfs the entire value of all commercial fish landings in England**.

Through the Angling Trust, freshwater anglers are represented on the Blueprint for Water Coalition and on Wildlife and Countryside Link. The Angling Trust has major long term partnerships with the Rivers Trusts and WWF-UK, and through the Missing Salmon Alliance. **It**

is united in a collaborative relationship with Fish Legal, a membership association which takes legal action to protect the water environment and hold polluters to account. The Angling Trust works with a wide range of wildlife groups and environmental organisations who share our desire to create a better environment.

The realisation of the important benefits of angling to both society and the environment requires the Government and its agencies to assist in protecting the rights of anglers, improving the health of our fisheries and continuing support for increasing participation.

Marine and freshwater environments face many severe challenges, in Europe only seven per cent of marine species and nine per cent of marine habitats have favourable conservation status<sup>1</sup>. Marine fish stocks and habitats have been destroyed on an industrial scale. For freshwater species the picture is alarming. **Between 1970 and 2012 freshwater megafauna (including fish) declined by 88 per cent<sup>2</sup>**. Restoring our precious rivers, lakes, ponds and coastal waters to good health would have massive benefits for society and would provide opportunities for millions of people to experience the joy of fishing.

### **Over the next Parliament, Britain's anglers are looking for Government and parliamentary support for the following:**

#### **A better deal for fish and fishing once the UK has left the EU**

- Improve the freshwater and marine environment for fish and anglers by retaining in full the commitment to deliver the Water Framework Directive, Habitats Directive and Marine Framework Strategy Directive and transferring all current EU environmental protections that benefit fish stocks and the aquatic environment to the UK.
- Reform the farm subsidy system to ensure that £3 billion of taxpayers' money is focused on action to address flooding, pollution and habitat damage from the farmed environment. That farmers are supported to protect the water environment and pay the full cost of any pollution they cause.
- The UK needs to commit to a long-term investment to restore sustainable marine fish stocks in order to maximise the long-term benefits which are in the UK's national interest. This means ending political short-termism in fisheries management decision-making and working towards a strategic long-term vision.
- Recreational sea anglers must be a fully legitimised user stakeholder group in any new UK fisheries policy.
- Set clear targets and timeframes for rebuilding marine stocks recognising that many are shared with other EU Member States.
- A recognition that restoring marine stocks to their maximum potential productivity requires reducing, limiting or capping fishing mortality via a quota system or spatial and temporal closures rather than producer-driven 'effort-based systems', such as *Days At Sea*, which have been shown to be disastrous both environmentally and economically. Management of our fish stocks should be based upon the maximum sustainable yield and an ecosystem-based approach.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ipbes.net/news/media-release-updated-biodiversity-nature's-contributions-continue-dangerous-decline-scientists>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/08/190808115117.htm>

## Responsible management of water

- Reform as a matter of urgency the outdated abstraction regime to allow the Environment Agency to manage water resources more sustainably.
- Use farm subsidies to drive a dramatic change in the management of soil to increase aquifer recharge and reduce run-off of water, which causes pollution and flooding.
- Require all new housing and business developments to adopt the latest technology for efficient use of water and disposal of wastewater to avoid adding to the strain on an already stressed system.
- Introduce national compulsory water metering and better storage facilities to avoid damaging abstractions during drought periods.
- New duties on the water regulator OFWAT to take account of environmental impacts when planning future investment by water companies.
- Action to address the 57 per cent reduction since 2010 in the Environment Agency's budget to ensure it is able to properly expedite its duties in monitoring the quality of our freshwater environment and take effective enforcement action where needed.

## Recognition, Promotion and Access to Angling

- Recognise the benefits of angling for the environment, the economy, individuals and communities
- Provide support for our national teams and international angling competitions
- Support *Angling for Good – The National Strategy for Angling, 2019 – 2024*, including the provision of funding for its delivery.
- Assist in the development of further programmes to increase angling participation as part of the national sport and wellbeing strategies
- Encourage Local Authorities and other public bodies to open waters under their control to angling
- Ensure that government departments and agencies recognise and support angling in their policy decisions
- Continue to ring-fence rod licence income for angling and fisheries work
- Protect the rights of all anglers to fish without fear of harassment and disruption
- Recognise that voluntary access agreements are the only way to manage the increase in water-based recreation such as canoeing on inland waters and avoid conflict between different user groups.
- Recognise recreational sea anglers as equal stakeholders in decisions about marine fisheries management due to their greater socio-economic importance when compared to the commercial fishing sector.

## Environment fit for fish and wildlife

- Remove and ease barriers to fish migration in rivers and stop others being built
- Strengthen the powers of the new Office of Environmental Protection making it more accountable to Parliament, its Chairman and Board to be appointed independently with the ability to issue sanctions, similar to those currently available to the European Court, in the form of fines and other actions.

- Take concerted action to address the decline in salmon stocks throughout the UK including investigating the dramatic reduction in sea survival and improving the ability of fisheries managers to control predators.
- Tackle diffuse agricultural pollution through a combination of enforcement by regulators and expert advice from charities outside the regulatory system.
- Develop action plans and research programmes to tackle invasive non-native species such as signal crayfish, floating pennywort, giant hogweed, Himalayan balsam and mink.
- Work in partnership with the Rivers Trusts and other stakeholders to deliver community engagement and best value in habitat improvement and catchment management programmes
- Reverse the decline in vulnerable marine fish stocks such as bass and develop a recovery plan for a sustainable marine fishery with designated nursery areas, commercial catch limits based on science and better protection for estuaries and inshore waters
- Recognise the damage caused to inland fisheries by predators such as cormorants, goosanders, mink and otters and support fishery managers' efforts to protect their waters and businesses from unsustainable predation
- Give active consideration to the case for including cormorants on the General Licence.

## STATEMENT OF INTENT

*This document has been sent to all the main parties representing English constituencies in the House of Commons ahead of the General Election and we are encouraging our members to send a copy to candidates in their own areas to seek from them pledges of support for angling in the next Parliament.*

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