



Angling Trust
Eastwood House
6 Rainbow Street
Leominster
Herefordshire HR6 8DQ
t: 0844 770 0616
e: admin@anglingtrust.net
w: www.anglingtrust.net

**To: George Eustice MP - Minister of State DEFRA and
Lesley Griffiths AM - Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs**

By e-mail

Reg Address: Angling Trust Ltd
Eastwood House
6 Rainbow Street Leominster
Herefordshire HR6 8DQ
Reg No: 05320350
VAT No: 948411215

Monday, January 09, 2017

Dear George and Lesley,

Bass Measures 2017

I'm writing to ask that you publicly correct the misleading statements put out by both the UK and Welsh Governments following last month's Fishing Opportunities meeting in Brussels which appear to claim that a netting allocation had been agreed for bass in 2017. Now that Article 9 of the TAC and Quota regulations for 2017 has been drafted by the Commission, it is clear that targeted bass netting will actually be illegal and that the only provision made was for "**unavoidable by-catches of sea bass not exceeding 250 kilograms per month.**"

As I said in my earlier letter to George, we were very surprised to hear from DEFRA officials prior to Christmas that the UK Government was saying there is a "provision" for fixed netters that includes, but is not restricted to, by-catch and so is effectively a monthly vessel catch limit and not a by-catch allowance. This was compounded by the Government's response to our petition which incorrectly stated:

"Bass measures agreed at December Council included:

- *The limit tightened for bass catches by fixed gill nets from 1.3 tonnes to 250kg per vessel per month, with a closed season of February-March, representing an 80% cut from this year's provision, and for all forms of netting at UK level an estimated 88% cut from the former 2011-2013 baseline annual average;*
- *No provision for other forms of netting than fixed gill net;"*

There is no reference here to the 250kg being for "unavoidable by catches" only and the clear implication is that this is effectively an allowance and that targeted netting for bass within this limit is still permissible when it is not.

Fortunately, this position has now been clarified for us by Defra, who wrote to us following the drafting of Article 9 saying:

"But note that the term 'unavoidable by-catches' is specifically applied to the fixed gillnetting 250kg, which means that we cannot refer to it as a catch provision including 'unavoidable by-catches'..."

Turning to the press notice issued by the Welsh Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs on 14.12.16 it incorrectly states:

*Commercial Sea Bass Fishery - **The retention of the use of selective netting within the seabass fishery.** This was a significant challenge as stock remains in a recovering state. However, working within the overall sustainable envelope, a modest increase in netting was secured. Initial proposals would have seen no provision at all for netting in 2017.*

Again this is simply incorrect. There is no provision for selective bass netting whatsoever and we understand the MMO are already looking to draw up enforcement protocols to clamp down on attempts to target bass deliberately with gill nets.

We remain very concerned that the UK and Welsh Governments are still publicly seen to be interpreting the provision for gillnets, clearly stated to be for unavoidable by-catches only, as a targeted monthly catch limit when both the Commission and your officials have made it clear that this is not the case. Unless you publicly clarify your positions by amending the HMG response to the petition and correcting the WG press notice, it is very likely that there will be continuing targeted fishing of bass by gill nets rather than limited incidental and unavoidable by-catches, which was the position agreed at the Fishing Opportunities meeting in December.

We intend to make representations to the Commission on this matter but would like to give you the opportunity to correct your statements now that Article 9 has been drafted, and all possible ambiguity has been removed.

I look forward to hearing from you both as a matter of urgency please.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mark Lloyd". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Mark Lloyd
Chief Executive