



Fisheries White Paper – 2018

Angling Trust Second Submission

Background

The Angling Trust initially submitted a ‘*Fishing Lines*’ briefing to the White Paper consultation entitled *Ensuring a Recreational Fishing Future in UK Fisheries Policy*. In it we argued that it was vital that public access to recreational fishing, and the social and economic contribution that it makes to both coastal communities and our national life, is acknowledged and supported in any forthcoming proposals.

The Recreational Sea Angling (RSA) community was therefore alarmed to read leaked documents of the forthcoming White Paper which contained not a word in support of our sector other than offering up the prospect of greater regulation: “*A greater degree of regulation in certain cases may be required where there is evidence that angling has had a significant impact on stocks.*”

This was in marked contrast to the pre-election promise made by both ministers Conservative Central Office to the Angling Trust which stated:

The Conservative Party recognises the huge enjoyment that angling brings to millions of people across the country and the fact that it is one of our most accessible sports.... We are committed to being the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it and we will work with the angling community, harnessing its expertise and passion, to achieve this. The Conservative Party will continue to support angling and the numerous benefits – economic, environmental, social and health – it brings to communities and individuals alike.

<http://www.anglingtrust.net/news.asp?section=29&itemid=3795>

The Angling Trust welcomes the invitation from officials at DEFRA to provide further details as to how RSA can be supported and developed in the forthcoming Fisheries Bill. In particular we are calling for the inclusion of management objectives and specific fishery development goals for recreational fishing in the new bill would allow the UK to maximise the potential of its fishery resources. In addition, it would demonstrate the UK taking advantage of the opportunities exiting the EU has presented and which have thus far been constrained by being subject to the Common Fisheries Policy.

We believe it is in the UK's long-term national interest to take an approach to managing our publicly-owned fishery resources which enshrines sustainable public access at the same time as recognising the immense economic and employment impacts recreational fishing has the potential to generate. We hope this will be taken into account in the White Paper and as the Bill develops.

Objectives and Opportunities

There is no doubt that the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) has been entirely commercially focussed from inception and that its biggest flaw has been prioritising short term earning opportunities rather than long term environmental responsibilities. The CFP does not even officially recognise recreational fishing as a valuable, valid and legitimate use of public fishery resources that is practiced by millions of EU citizens.

EU fisheries management has a long history of failure or at best occasional mediocrity. Departure from the CFP provides an opportunity for greater ambition with the goal of excellence.

We hope that the White Paper will look to draw upon best practice from around the world which recognises recreational fishing and public access to fishing opportunities as legitimate stakeholders in the 'catching sector'. Perhaps the best example of which is the USA's Magnuson-Stevens Conservation and Management Act which sets statutory targets for the rebuilding of threatened over fished stocks.

Sustainability, whilst essential in the long term must be preceded by restoration and a determination to rebuild fishery resources that are currently seriously depleted.

Leaving the CFP provides the UK with an opportunity to embrace recreational fishing for its positive economic and employment impacts as well as its ongoing contribution towards stock conservation.

Economic and social value of Recreational Sea Angling

Approximately one million members of the British public go fishing at sea every year for recreation and to catch fish for their own consumption. That's approximately 2 per cent of the entire UK adult population.

Sea angling brings with it many social, health and wellbeing benefits. For many children and young people it is often their first experience of interacting with the natural world.

Sea Angling 2012, the study of Recreational Sea Angling carried out by CEFAS for Defra shows that total resident sea angler spending in 2012 was estimated to be £1.23bn, equivalent to £831million direct spend excluding imports and taxes. This directly supported 10,400 FTE jobs and almost £360 million of gross value added (GVA). The total economic impact was £2.1bn of spending, supporting 23,600 FTE jobs and almost £980 million of GVA once indirect and induced effects were accounted for. Coastal communities benefit when good fishing attracts anglers. Research suggest between 1,000 and 4,000 angling trips can generate one FTE job per year in those locations.

To put this into context, the first sale value of fin fish species caught commercially but which are also targeted by members of the public fishing recreationally is only £33m. Even with generous downstream, multipliers applied it is clear that public access to recreational fishing opportunities generates vastly more economic activity than commercial fishing.

In Europe

On a European level a recent report produced for the European Parliament stated that marine recreational fisheries were worth €10.5bn supporting an estimated 100,000 jobs and that To put this figure into context, it is equivalent to 7 per cent of the annual EU budget of 145 billion euro or 0.07 per cent of the EU economy. It is roughly equivalent to the cost of the London 2012 Olympic Games (SMSI, 2013) and is similar to the contribution from golf (€15 bn). The 100,000 FTEs supported is almost four times the staff of the EU Commission. If this was a single company, it would be in the top 10 in Europe, in terms of number of employees, and the top 100 in the world.

The report went onto propose that these figures should lead to the implementation of marine recreational fisheries as a sector that is targeted for development alongside commercial fisheries and aquaculture in Europe.

Two examples of where this has been implemented include the USA where the recreational striped bass fishery is estimated to be valued at \$6.5bn supporting an estimated 63,000 jobs and the republic of Ireland where the recreational sea bass fishery is estimated to be worth €52m.

There is clearly huge potential for the UK to benefit from enhancing and developing recreational sea fishing in the new post-Brexit fisheries bill. Given the overwhelming potential for development of recreational fishing in the UK isn't it time specific and ambitious management objectives to develop and support it are included the UK's new fisheries bill?

Public access to a public resource

It can be quite easy, when describing the 'recreational sea angling sector' to forget that these one million plus individuals are simply a cross section of the UK's general population. They may be bankers or builders living London or Leicester but they share a common interest in their sovereign right to fish. This right belongs to all British people and is a public asset similar to any other piece of public property.

What this means is that the British public, and in particular those members of the public with a direct interest in exercising their right to fish, should be fully involved and considered in policy which determines the management of public sea fishery resources and access to their sovereign right to fish.

It is fundamentally important that the UK's future fishing policy balances the needs of the public and well as direct and indirect stakeholders of the UK's sea fishery resources. This must be done fairly and in a way which benefits the long term national interests of the United Kingdom.

The Angling Trust believes this can be achieved by applying the objective of optimal utilisation of the UK's sea fishery resources. Optimal utilisation should be based on environmental, social and economic considerations using the best available evidence to inform policy.

If optimal utilisation derives from public access to recreational fishing opportunities the government must accept the public's sovereign right to fish as the largest and most valuable component of the catching sector for these stocks and implement fishery development goals that support and develop the exploitation of these stocks as recreational assets – such as localised abundance, naturally occurring age structures and pursuing large stock strategies for high value recreational stocks

It is quite possible in the new Bill to establish a proper model setting out which Crown body owns the fishing rights and giving them the power to licence quota, days at sea and other access rights and putting those on clear written terms (as is the case for the allocation of commercial rights in every other sector). But whatever is in the Bill it needs to be on the basis that you can properly justify it to people in Birmingham, Stirling, Builth Wells or Armagh. It is after all as much their fishery as it is anyone else's.

[See Appendix 1 – Whose fish are they anyway?]

Lack of recognition of Recreational Sea Angling in the CFP

Since its inception the EU's industry-centric Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) has never recognised public access to recreational fishing opportunities, or the multi billion Euro industry servicing it, as a legitimate component of the catching sector or fishing industry.

The EU has always considered 'recreational fishing' (in all its forms) as the competence of individual member states. That is, however, unless recreational fishing for particular stocks is deemed to be having a significant enough impact on stocks to require controlling through management measures. This has been carried out through the EU Control Regulation and the EU Data Collection Framework. Despite being subject to control measures recreational fisheries have never been considered for the social and economic contribution it makes to Member States.

Recreational angling has been represented on the CFP's Advisory Councils since the 2002 CFP reform. However, the Advisory Councils have largely proven to be dysfunctional and unfit for purpose in providing timely and balanced advice to the Commission. In addition, the recreational angling sector, representing many millions of EU citizens across multiple Member States have been forced to accept being included in the Other Interest Group (formerly known as NGO Group) despite clearly being an integral and important component of the catching sector for many stocks.

The recent decline in European sea bass, and the best available evidence, has put unprecedented pressure on the EU to control recreational fishing for sea bass. With a CFP positively discriminating in favour of small-scale (commercial) fishing, and with a cultural mindset within the EU and Member States that sees commercial fishing as an important industry but recreational fishing as just a hobby, the public's right to retain sea bass for personal consumption has been extinguished in 2018 whilst the commercial catching sector, despite having a greater impact on the stock but much less significant economic impact for society, has been granted fishing opportunities in 2018.

Both the Angling Trust and those members of the UK public who choose to fish recreationally are hoping that the new UK Fisheries Bill will offer them a fairer and more just future.

Lack of clarity in roles of IFCA's, MMO and Defra

The Inshore Fishery and Conservation Authorities were set up in 2010 with a national vision to lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries, by successfully securing the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry."

There were high hopes from the recreational angling sector after the industry-focused Sea Fishery Committees which had failed to take virtually any account of recreational fishing at all.

In practice the IFCA's have been unwilling to manage stocks of mobile and migratory species many of which are valuable to members of the public fishing recreationally. The reluctance to do this has been based on the rationale that A) No significant conservation benefit would be accrued by a single IFCA applying its own conservation measures and B) The economic impact of taking any such measures on local fleets would be disproportionate to the conservation benefits accrued. The responsibility for taking such measures has been directed to Defra at national level. Yet, Defra has often then deferred responsibility for

management to the EU as stocks not only cross IFCA boundaries between Member States. However, when the EU Commission has been approached the response has often been that matters to do with recreational fishing are the competence of Member States!

As a result, despite the IFCA's managing the 0-6 mile limit, where the vast majority of recreational fishing takes place, very few measures have been taken to manage stocks of mobile finfish at UK or IFCA level and there has been confusion over who should be responsible for managing fisheries.

To illustrate this, in 2017 the Eastern IFCA rejected a proposed bylaw to protect spawning aggregations of bass off the coast of Essex and Suffolk. The bylaw was put forward by members of the recreational angling community concerned with the conservation of this high value recreational stock in the Southern North Sea. Despite protection of spawning bass being an objective of the EU management measures the bylaw was rejected on the ground that the impact on the local commercial fishing sector would be disproportionately high compared to the conservation benefits accrued by a single regional IFCA implementing management measures for a mobile stock which would be subject to fishing pressure beyond the boundaries of the Authority.

In conclusion members of the public have been denied inclusion in the management of stocks where regional and national government have deferred to the EU yet the EU has taken no responsibility for recreational fishing determining it to be the competence of Member States.

Having ten regional IFCA's around England incurs the possibility that proposed conservation measures by one IFCA may be opposed on the grounds that any benefits may accrue to fishers in an adjacent IFCA district. Such an approach risks conservation values being set at the lowest common denominator. IFCA's must work together and coordinate their policies where appropriate.

Lack of resources and RSA representation

IFCA's are funded largely by Councils who are struggling to provide adequate funds for many essential societal services resulting in reduced resources for IFCA's. It is time to consider additional 'user pays' funding from all who exploit public fishery resources in IFCA District waters since it is those who fish that will be main beneficiaries of well managed waters.

Sectoral representation on Sea Fisheries Committees (predecessors to IFCA's) was skewed towards commercial fishing (ref: Josh Eagle report) and it was hoped that IFCA's would be significantly better balanced especially in terms of public representation. To date, many IFCA's remain 'industry centric'.

Extracts from Prof. Josh Eagle's report (Prof. Eagle teaches natural resource law in USA)

Here, the independent expert opinion of Josh Eagle is that: "In the context of Sea Fisheries Committees, Parliament has given one group of stakeholders - fishing industry - elevated status." (p15)

In addition to the dominance of commercial fishing interests within the Defra appointees, quite a few councillors reported that they were formerly or currently involved in fishing businesses! (p17)

Councillors, on average, scored commercial fishermen as their most important constituency - very few said that the national public, [after all, they just the owners of fishery resources!] or anglers are their most important constituents. (p18)

Need for rigorous enforcement

Transparency and Communication

We recommend the MMO and IFCA publish, at regular intervals, detailed information on their enforcement activities and the outcomes of those activities. This will enable sea anglers and commercial fishermen to more easily judge if the MMO and IFCA are providing effective enforcement. Rightly or wrongly, the current feeling of many anglers and commercial fishermen is that they are not.

England maintains a national register of infringements. This register should be publicly available.

Coordination between the MMO and IFCA

Client Earth suggested in September 2017 that IFCA cannot access and input data onto the national register of infringements. If correct, this needs to be fixed urgently.

Client Earth also reported that the MMO maintains a Monitoring Control and Surveillance System ("MCSS") which collects fisheries effort data nationally to inform management and enforcement actions. It is reportedly used daily to record all enforcement activity and according to the MMO is used by IFCA for reporting purposes. However, Client Earth were told by SIFCA and D&SIFCA that IFCA's access to MCSS was quite limited and found "in fact, the system is not available to IFCA to register prosecutions and IFCA are not obliged to enter their data into it". Any control and surveillance systems should be used jointly by both the MMO and IFCA.

Input into New Legislation

Enforcement staff must provide formal advice on the enforceability of proposed fisheries legislation. We must avoid situations like the current one where fixed netters cannot legally target bass, but the MMO and IFCA are not attempting to enforce this legislation but they believe it is unenforceable. Unenforceable legislation undermines the credibility of fisheries management.

Resourcing

Enforcing fisheries legislation is expensive and the MMO's budget has been cut dramatically in recent years. UK commercial fishermen have free access to a publicly-owned resource and are currently operating at profit levels of around 25%. They should

now be required to contribute towards the cost of enforcement and reduce the pressure on the public purse.

Best practice from Overseas

There are many examples of excellent fishery management practice that could inform a new post Brexit UK Fisheries Bill. Perhaps those found in the USA, Australia and New Zealand should be examined first.

In particular the New Zealand Fisheries Act (1996) and the US Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation & Management Act (1976) along with the creation of the recreational fishing havens in New South Wales.

Both these acts contain important provisions that make sure recreational fishing and public access to public fishery-resources are enshrined in law. The Magnuson-Stevens Act also contains the important concept of 'optimal utilisation' of fishery resources.

The Fisheries Act 1996 governs fisheries management throughout New Zealand's territorial sea and EEZ. The purpose of the Act is "to provide for the utilisation of fisheries resources while ensuring sustainability". There are three main categories of fishing activity which are managed under the legislation – commercial, customary - non-commercial and recreational.

Further details here:

<http://www.environmentguide.org.nz/activities/fishing/im:1857/fisheries-act-1996/>

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act

This groundbreaking piece of fisheries legislation is the legal provision for promoting optimal exploitation of U.S. coastal fisheries. Enacted in 1976, it has since been amended in line with sustainability policy.

Regional councils of the [National Marine Fisheries Service](#) (NMFS) determine when a stock is overfished, and apply both regional and individual catch limits. The NMFS has implemented the Fish Stock Sustainability Index (FSSI), which measures key stocks according to their overfishing status and biomass levels.

The Act was enacted to promote the U.S. fishing industry's optimal exploitation of coastal fisheries by "consolidating control over territorial waters" and establishing eight regional councils to manage fish stocks. The act has been amended several times in response to continued overfishing of major stocks. The most recent version, authorized in 2007, includes seven purposes:

1. Acting to conserve fishery resources
2. Supporting enforcement of international fishing agreements
3. Promoting fishing in line with conservation principles

4. Providing for the implementation of fishery management plans (FMPs) which achieve optimal yield
5. Establishing Regional Fishery Management Councils to steward fishery resources through the preparation, monitoring, and revising of plans which (A) enable stake holders to participate in the administration of fisheries and (B) consider social and economic needs of states.
6. Developing underutilized fisheries
7. Protecting essential fish habitats

Additionally, the law calls for reducing bycatch and establishing fishery information monitoring systems

The Act has seen 40 separate over exploited fish stocks successfully rebuilt. The USA is ending over fishing in its federal waters, actively rebuilding stocks, and providing fishing opportunities for both recreational and commercial fishing and the communities which they support.

Dollar Talks

In the USA the socio-economic impacts of recreational sea angling have historically been better researched and appreciated than in the EU. As a consequence, recreational sea angling representation plays a full and equitable role in the process of determining management policies and measures.

	Recreational Fisheries			Commercial Fisheries			Commercial Impacts are X% of Recreational Impacts
U.S.	Sales Impacts	Income	Jobs	Sales Impacts	Salaries	Jobs	
U.S.	\$34,633,867,338	\$13,569,529,752	359,813	\$9,883,630,575	\$6,015,492,003	126,477	28.54%

(Extract from research carried out for the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership)

Resource sharing

In the United States annual harvest levels for each species are scientifically determined with far less political interference than in the EU. Scientifically approved harvest levels are allocated between the recreational and commercial fishing. In the case of those of particularly high importance to recreational exploitation, a larger proportion of the total harvest is utilised for recreational angling. Recent recreational allocations in terms of percentage by weight of total harvests are:

Striped bass 75%; Black Drum 80%; Black Sea Bass 59%
 Bluefish 60%; Red Drum 90%; Spotted Sea Trout 83%
 Tautog 90%

(source: ASMFC)

In England the £2.1 billion recreational sea angling industry (Defra SA 2012) is reliant on species that account for only 20% (£34 million) of the £170 million worth of all commercial landings in England. Recreational sea angling has no direct interest in species that make up £136 million (80%) of commercial landings. Management of those species (20% by value) upon which both sectors have a direct interest is entirely possible and must take account of the specific requirements of both sectors.

As long ago as 2004 the Prime Minister's Cabinet Strategy Office conducted two years of research (headed by Professor John Beddington) into the UK fishing industry and the report recommended that Defra should examine the proposition for designating some species recreational as this may generate the best return to UK plc. Further evidence of greater benefits from utilising some species for recreational exploitation is provided in a more recent report commissioned by Blue Marine and carried out by MRAG. The research focussed on the sea bass fisheries in Sussex and concluded that sea bass caught recreationally are at least forty times more valuable to the economy than if caught commercially. Both the Republic of Ireland and the Isle of Man now manage sea bass stocks exclusively for recreational exploitation.

Prime candidates for recreational management would be:

Mullet; Wrasse; Tope; Smoothound; Bass and Flounder

Striped Bass in the USA

A number of States in the USA choose to utilise the public striped bass resource for wholly recreational exploitation including New Jersey, Connecticut and Maine. Others such as New York and Massachusetts elect to utilise the resource primarily for recreational exploitation alongside a strictly managed commercial fishery.

Massachusetts as an example.

Recreational regulations:

Recreational Fishing Permit required - \$10 for residents & visitors aged 15+.

Free for aged 60+.

1 fish daily bag limit of minimum length 28 inches [average 10lbs]

Season all year

Rod & line only

Estimated expenditure related to recreational striped bass fishing in Massachusetts \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion

Commercial regulations:

Commercial permit required for vessel
Annual quota [385 tonnes for 2018] Landing value circa \$4m.
Season starts June 25th 2018 and ends when quota is exhausted.
Rod & line only
Fishing allowed only on Mondays and Thursdays
15 fish daily bag limit, minimum 34 inches [average 16.5 lbs]

As long ago as 1999, Tony Tolentino, the then Chairman of the Marine Fisheries Commission said: *“The impact of recreational fishing is astronomical and striped bass have by far the greatest economic value in the recreational sector, not the commercial sector. There’s no comparison”* He added emphatically. (Source ‘On Cape Business’ Banking/Investment magazine]

The political difficulties of designating a fishery resource wholly recreational are understood and whilst the Angling Trust do not rule out such an approach, the evidence is overwhelming for the recreational sector to be afforded a full and equitable role at the table when fishing policies and measures are being determined for species of interest to RSA and for allocating a ‘fair’ share of any scientifically approved harvest to the recreational fishery.

[See Appendix 2 - The Economic Value & Impact of The MA Recreational Wild Striped Bass Fishery]

A recreational fishing future for coastal communities?

South Cornwall coast 2028 - Swathes of new guest houses, hotels and restaurants have opened up to service the visiting anglers fishing for bluefin tuna in Falmouth Bay. The millions of pounds this has brought to the region have resulted in hundreds of full time equivalent jobs servicing anglers travelling from the UK and from overseas to take advantage of the world-class angling opportunities that Cornwall is once again offering.

Meanwhile, nearly a decade of management measures protecting the spawning bass stock in the Southern North Sea has turned Clacton-on-Sea from a town of no industry and deprivation into the go-to location for weekend Londoners now spending their money bass fishing and enjoying their catches cooked before them in one of Clacton’s many new seafood restaurants capitalising on the turnaround of the North Sea into one of the UK’s most productive fishing grounds.

It’s worth remembering that none of these dramatic developments would have been possible without the government’s brave and radical decision when the UK left the EU back in 2021 to ensure fish stocks were managed sustainably and to maximise the return to the UK of the sustainable use of fisheries resources and protection of the marine environment.

The policy was controversial at the time but the bold and ambitious move has paid off in ways even the most ardent supporter of such a policy couldn't have expected at the time. The result of the UK having become a world-leader in how to manage fish stocks sustainably whilst at the same time delivering the biggest benefits to society as a whole.

EU policy makers are now planning to follow suit in the next reform of the Common Fisheries Policy which, like the reforms before it, from 2002 to the last one in 2022 failed to live up to their promises.

No one was prepared to acknowledge that tourism and public access to a natural resource like fishing could have become such a successful growth area before the UK left the EU. Now many coastal towns right around the UK have reinvented themselves as 'angling friendly' towns competing with each other for the incoming trade not only from city dwellers across the UK but overseas tourists whose quality of fishing at home no longer competes with what is being offered now here in the UK.

What radical reform could deliver

Our vision is very simple: UK fisheries managed sustainably to deliver the greatest benefits to UK society.

It is not a novel concept – it was set out in a 2004 Government paper: “Net Benefits, A sustainable and profitable future for UK fishing”. It recommended: “The overarching aim of fisheries management should be ‘to maximise the return to the UK of the sustainable use of fisheries resources and protection of the marine environment’”.

However, this represents a sea-change from current fisheries management in the EU which:

- sub-optimally protects short-term fishing opportunities for the commercial fishing sector;
- fails to prioritise the greater long-term benefits of regenerating stocks quickly; and
- fails to recognise that in many cases commercial fishing does not represent the best use of a resource.

Delivering this vision

It is critical that this concept of delivering the greatest benefits to UK society is enshrined in UK legislation. Without this, fisheries managers will continue to make sub-optimal decisions secure in the knowledge that they cannot be challenged.

The legal obligations of IFCA's under section 153 of the provisions of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 provide only that IFCA's must “seek to balance the different needs of persons engaged in the exploitation of sea fisheries resources in the district”. Provided an

IFCA has attempted to balance different needs, it has satisfied its legal requirements, even though it may have failed to deliver the best result for UK society.

A dramatic example of this type of failure occurred in 2017, when Eastern IFCA failed to introduce measure to protect spawning aggregations of sea bass in its District despite the stock being in dire trouble. EIFCA undertook a flawed 'cost versus benefit' analysis that looked only at the short-term impact on the local fishing industry and ignored the long-term benefits for all stakeholders of protecting this local spawning stock.

This new legislative requirement will require fisheries managers to develop new tools to enable them to objectively and transparently assess how they can deliver the greatest benefits to UK society.

Sea Angling

In some cases, the greatest benefit for UK society is likely to be achieved by allocating a species primarily for exploitation by sea anglers. In these cases, fishery managers will need to pursue goals specific to sea angling, for example:

- Targeting a more natural age/size stock distribution so that anglers have more chance of catching prized, large fish.
- Targeting stock abundance rather than Maximum Sustainable Yield.
- Increasing public participation in sea angling.

In other cases where the public fishing recreationally, or for their own consumption, delivers optimal utilisation in combination with one or more sectors policy should be developed which takes account of their relative importance and blends management objectives and fishery development goals to deliver the optimal utilisation from each sector, or gear type, wherever possible.

In delivering this vision the UK will make itself a world-leader in sea fisheries management and an exemplar for other nations to follow.

Angling Trust
23rd April 2018

Further information:

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Appendices

1) Whose Fish are they anyway?

Briefing By Dr Thomas Appleby, Legal Advisor to the Blue Marine Foundation

The Fisheries Bill has the potential to be the first major domestic reform to UK fisheries since the 1880s. Even then UK waters extended to just three nautical miles and beyond that was the 'common pond' of the high seas, which gave access rights to all nations. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, after the UK joined the EU in 1973, international law changed and recognised the potential for countries to declare "sovereign rights over marine biological resources" up to 200 nautical miles. But the EU maintained the prior policy of common access among its members.. So this is the first time the UK has had control over the totality of the waters adjacent to the UK.

It is therefore an unprecedented chance to establish a modern fisheries management regime.

However, rights don't come without responsibilities – and sovereign rights granted to the UK under Law of the Sea Convention come with specific duties. In particular there are duties to preserve the marine environment, restore fish stocks, only fish at sustainable levels and agree levels of fishing with neighbour states (as fish have a habit of not respecting national boundaries). There are also obligations to create marine protected areas, manage the fisheries as part of the whole ecosystem, adopt the precautionary approach and other specific policies which need to be adhered to under international environmental law. These duties will need to be incorporated into UK law – and much of the operation of the CFP to date has been the implementation of international law to EU fisheries – and recently (prompted usually by the British both at EU and international level) undeniably the CFP is less awful than it was and in some cases fish stocks are improving.

But complying with international law will only take you so far.

And it is not just about fish stocks.

To be honest, most of the international legal principles are so blindingly obvious that you have to pinch yourself to wonder why they were not happening in the first place.

That may stem from the point that the CFP was so busy trying to micromanage the fleet from the top down that UK regulators never really got to grips with looking at the fishery from a British perspective, from the quayside or from the perspective of someone in Birmingham.

That was a big mistake and now is the time to rectify it.

This happens by asking the simple question: "whose fishing rights are they?"

'Sovereign rights' means the fishing rights (not the fish – which are ownerless) *should* belong to the British people (and possibly do but the legal arguments here would bore you to death). The rights to fish in the sea are a public asset similar to the UK oil reserves, properties owned by the Crown Estate, radio bandwidth or more or less any other public piece of property.

This means, in practice of course you have to manage the stock in the long term (ie distribute the interest and not the capital) – which is the essence of the international legal obligations.

But it also means you cannot give fishing opportunities away and thus defraud the Brummies of their fishing rights. You have to balance the needs of those who directly benefit (the commercial fishery) with the needs of those who indirectly benefit (recreational anglers, tackle shops, dive shops, B&Bs etc.), other marine users (ports, the aggregates industry, the subsea cable industry, windfarmers, oil industry etc.) and those who want admire it for its own sake or for wildlife (romantics, conservationists etc). Even within the commercial fishing community – access to rights needs to be managed for what surveyors would call ‘tenant mix’ (do we want four billionaires having exclusive commercial rights to the whole thing and a risk of a dominant position in the market? Or a legion of smaller businesses with an increased cost of government to manage but perhaps a more equitable distribution of wealth and individually weaker positions?). These are important strategic questions which we need to be able to think through and manage.

It is quite possible in the new Bill to establish a proper model setting out which Crown body owns the fishing rights and giving them the power to licence quota, days at sea and other access rights and putting those on clear written terms (as is the case for the allocation of commercial rights in every other sector). You could also set up a regulatory model which took a more complicated round the houses way of achieving the same thing.

But whatever is in the Bill it needs to be on the basis that you can properly justify it to people in Birmingham, Stirling, Bulth Wells or Armagh.

It is after all as much their fishery as it is anyone else’s.

Just to put this in perspective, you are talking about the primary harvesting rights over an area of the earth’s surface three times the size of the UK.

12 October 2017

2) The Economic Value & Impact of The MA Recreational Wild Striped Bass Fishery

April 24, 2016 ·

The attached analysis, based on published data from I\IOAA, shows that the recreational fishery for wild striped bass (WSB) is one of the most economically valuable in the state, rivaling the MA scallop fishery in its economic impact on the economy of the Commonwealth of MA.

1. In its annual direct spending effects, the MA recreational WSB fishery is on average worth 130 times the dollar value of annual commercial WSB fishery landings in MA.
2. In its annual direct spending effects, the MA recreational WSB fishery totals, on average over the most recent ten years from 2006 to 2015, fully 77 percent (ranging from 70% to 120%) of the worth of commercial landings for the entire MA seafood industry.

3. In its full economic impact, the MA recreational WSB fishery amounts to an annual average of 36 percent (ranging from 27 to 44 percent) of the full economic impact of the entire MA seafood industry during the 10 year period from 2006 to 2011

The analysis shows that the MA recreational WSB fishery, rather than being just a playground for the idle rich (as it is too often portrayed), is one of the most important marine fisheries in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in its spending and economic impact on the MA state economy. Even in its current state of depletion, this fishery rivals the MA scallop fishery in its economic contributions. Were the MA recreational WSB fishery managed for recreational abundance as a game species, rather than being commercially overexploited for a minimum value, the economic significance of this fishery would increase in impact by as much as – if not more than – \$1.7 billion per year on the MA economy (based on applying angling expenditures per trip in 2015 to the peak year’s number of angling trips in 2007).

The results suggest that the MA recreational WSB fishery ought to be managed for its maximum economic contribution and value as an exclusively recreational fishery by declaring striped bass a game species in Massachusetts coastal waters. This strategic shift would allow this important fishery to be managed for conservation and abundance, assuring us of a healthy recreational sport fishery in MA for many years to come. Massachusetts could once again become known as “the place to go” for great saltwater fishing as a worldwide tourist angling destination.

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