



Fisheries Bill Briefing

House of Commons | Second reading

September 1st, 2020

Inclusion of recreational sea angling in the Bill's objectives

The Fisheries Bill is intended to replace the provisions set out in the EU's Common Fisheries Policy concerning the management of fish stock in UK waters. One of the biggest weaknesses of the CFP was its failure to recognise the important role recreational sea angling played in the management of fish stocks, the promotion of conservation, and the economic contribution recreational angling made to coastal communities.

We welcome the inclusion of recreational sea angling within this Bill and in the future management of the common resource that is our fish stocks. Clause one of the Bill defines the UK's fisheries objectives. The explanatory notes to this Bill state, "The objectives are the subject of the Joint Fisheries Statement which is provided for in clause 2. In this clause, as in the rest of the Bill, fishing includes recreational as well as commercial fishing unless otherwise specified."

We would welcome any re-enforcement of intention to include recreational angling as a key stakeholder in the management of our fish stocks during the second reading debate.

For more information on the social, economic and conservation benefits of recreational sea angling see appendix one, below.

Your help needed to ensure the recreational fisheries sector receives equitable financial assistance.

Through this Bill recreational fishing will, for the first time, qualify for funding for the 'promotion and development' of recreational fishing through the powers of the Secretary of State (and devolved administrations) to provide financial assistance (Clause 35(1)(i), and Schedule 6).

However, it appears that recreational fishing has been excluded from other qualifying funding opportunities within clause 35(1) and Schedule 6 by dint of them specifically referring to “commercial fish or aquaculture activities”. This includes sub-clauses:

- (c) the reorganisation of businesses involved in commercial fish or aquaculture activities;
- (d) contributing to the expenses of persons involved in commercial fish or aquaculture activities;
- (e) maintaining or improving the health and safety of individuals who are involved in commercial fish or aquaculture activities;
- (f) the training of individuals who are, were or intend to become involved in commercial fish or aquaculture activities, or are family members of such individuals;
- (g) the economic development or social improvement of areas in which commercial fish or aquaculture activities are carried out;
- (h) improving the arrangements for the use of catch quotas or effort quotas;

There is no reason why businesses involved in servicing the recreational angling sector should not also qualify for funding under sub clauses c-h above. Recreational fishing is a multi-billion-pound industry. In some coastal communities the value of businesses servicing recreational fishing outstrips both commercial fishing and aquaculture.

A report by the New Economics Foundation in 2018 found that the total economic output of the charter fishing fleet in Poole was greater than both commercial fishing and aquaculture at £5,729,790.

	Gross Output	Indirect Output	Total Economic Activity
Aquaculture in Poole Harbour	£1,590,000	£1,025,250	£2,615,250
Commercial fisheries (top 11 species)	£2,000,271	£2,177,620	£4,177,891
Charter boat fleet (estimated for 33 vessels)	£3,129,687	£2,600,103	£5,729,790
Total for all three sectors combined	£6,719,958	£5,802,973	£12,522,931

A Tale of Three Fisheries, NEF (2018)

The report goes on to say:

“For the charter fleet, an opportunity exists for the council and tourist board to develop a charter angling strategy and a best-practice code of conduct that involves local operators and regulators. However, since angling is not taken account of in planning policy (although it is clearly an economic driver), there is a risk that this local asset may not be encouraged and developed in a coordinated and sustainable manner.

“Charter boats and tackle shops do not provide the only turnover related to recreational angling. Owners of hotels, B&Bs, food and drink, fuel and transport businesses, as well as those involved in boat manufacture and maintenance, will also benefit from sea-angling tourism; even parking fees collected by the borough council can be significant. Charter skippers’ expenditure includes moorings, insurance, maintenance, licences, and so on.”

It is therefore perverse and illogical for recreational fishing to not qualify for funding, as commercial fishing and aquaculture will, in the following areas:

- the reorganisation of businesses involved in recreational fishing activities.
- contributing to the expenses of persons involved in recreational activities.
- maintaining or improving the health and safety of individuals who are involved in recreational activities.
- the training of individuals who are, were or intend to become involved in recreational activities, or are family members of such individuals.
- the economic development or social improvement of areas in which recreational fishing activities are carried out.

What can you do?

Please considering raising this on the floor of the House of Commons by asking the following question –

“Can the secretary of State explain the rationale for excluding recreational fish activities from financial assistance for areas such as the reorganisation of businesses, health and safety, training, and social improvement in clause 35(1) of the bill detailing the powers of the Secretary of State to grant financial assistance?”

“Evidence shows that in parts of the country, such as Poole, recreational fishing is the most financially significant part of the fisheries sector. It makes no sense to exclude it from opportunities for financial assistance granted to commercial fishing or aquaculture”.

For any queries please contact:

David Mitchell | Head of Marine | 07946263131 | david.mitchell@anglingtrust.net

Stuart Singleton-White | Head of Campaigns | 07487526913 | stuart.singleton-white@anglingtrust.net

Angling Trust
August 2020

Appendix one

Angling – Our national pastime

Approximately one million people across the UK fish at sea recreationally at least once every year with approximately 400,000 fishing regularly. They are direct user stakeholders of UK fish stocks and may well be the largest and most valuable stakeholder for a number of stocks. “In some circumstances the economic and social benefits of sea angling for specific species may provide a greater contribution to society than if they are commercially caught. This is the case in parts of many other fishing nations such as New Zealand, Australia and the USA, where recreational sea angling has been aggressively promoted.” ([Net Benefits](#), 2004).

Net Benefits went on to state, “Fisheries departments should review the evidence supporting arguments for re-designating commercially caught species for wholly recreational sea angling, beginning with bass by the end of 2004.”

However, this recommendation, and evidence about the size and value of the recreational fishing sector stemming from subsequent reports including the [Drew Associates Report](#), [Invest in Fish South West](#), and [Securing The Benefits](#) have never been acted on.

A Multi-Billion Pound Industry

Marine recreational fisheries comprise a very significant component of the UK’s hugely important leisure and tourism industry. Defra’s own research in [Sea Angling 2012](#) assessed recreational sea anglers in England alone to spend £1.2bn annually on their activity. This figure rises to a total economic contribution of £2.1bn in England alone.

A [report](#) produced for the European Parliament concluded that the total economic impact of marine recreational fisheries was estimated to be €10.5 billion creating almost 100,000 jobs and is significant at a European scale. 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.

Overseas angling tourism has enormous potential to rejuvenate coastal communities and provided very significant economic and employment benefits. The Republic of Ireland’s sea angling opportunities attract visiting anglers from all over the world. A report, ‘[A Socio-Economic Study of Recreational Angling in Ireland – Tourism Development International, 2013](#)’ states, “All recreational anglers, and particularly those from overseas markets, play an important role in supporting the Irish economy through their expenditure.” The report goes on to identify that an estimated **113,000** overseas visitors participated in recreational angling in Ireland in 2013. The total direct expenditure by overseas anglers in 2012 is estimated to be between **€97 million to €116 million**.

Clearly, recreational activities are not ‘hobbies’ but immensely valuable components of the UK economy with over 11,000 jobs directly reliant on sea angling in England alone and a similar number supported by the multiplier and induced impacts. The value of the angling industry as a direct-user stakeholder was made by companies such as Daiwa, Pure Fishing, The Angling Trades Association, Fishing Megastore, The Professional Boatmen’s Association, and many more, in their responses to the Fisheries Bill White Paper consultation.

A Public Resource

Members of the public fishing recreationally catch fish (a publicly-owned resource, as confirmed in section 2.3 of the Fisheries Bill White Paper) for their own personal consumption as well as for sport and recreation. Research estimates approximately one million members of the public have fished recreationally at least once in the last 12 months. It is worth bearing in mind that 100 per cent of fish caught and kept recreationally is eaten by UK citizens compared to the estimated 75 to 85 per cent of commercial landings that are exported to the EU and rest of the world). The right of the public to fish at sea for their own consumption and for recreation (within fair and sustainable limits) must be enshrined in the new Fisheries Bill.

Direct-User Stakeholders

Recreational anglers are, therefore, **direct-user stakeholders** of UK sea fishery resources. If recreational fishing was not a direct-user there would, we assume, be no need for recreational catches and fishing mortality to have been subject to the EU's Data Collection Regulation and the EU Control Regulation which have resulted in recreational anglers being deemed to have a 'significant' impact on the sea bass stock and the implementation of a bag limit and closed period.

As far back as 2010 we received confirmation from the then Fisheries Minister, Richard Benyon, that the recreational fishing public were direct-user stakeholders. There is therefore no shadow of a doubt that, for stocks of interest to the recreational sector, recreational fishing is indeed a direct-user stakeholder in UK fisheries as well as a hugely significant component of the UK's coastal leisure and tourism sector; A sector which, according to [Visit Britain](#), has been the fastest growing industry in employment terms in the UK and is forecast to be worth over £257 billion by 2025. And which now faces enormous challenges in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Optimal Utilisation

If optimal utilisation derives from public access to recreational fishing opportunities the government must accept recreational fishing 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. The management objective of maximum sustainable 'yield' on its own is not a suitable objective for managing stocks of high recreational value.

This was an objective detailed in the Government's policy paper, "[Fisheries 2027](#) – a long term future for sustainable fisheries", published in 2011. It stated, "*We now recognise the economic and social value of recreational fishing*". It went on to say, "*Fish and shellfish are a valuable resource shared between communities, regions and nations: we all have a role in making sure that they are used sustainably. Government's role is to manage this asset on behalf of society and to get the most benefits for today's citizens and future generations*". One of the Vision Statements in Fisheries 2027

was that economic returns are optimised. *“In most cases fish stocks and access to use them, either commercially or recreationally, are managed to maximise the long-term economic return to society.”*

There is therefore immense potential to increase the economic and employment benefits of recreational angling by setting clear development goals which would result in increased recreational angling activity and the associated economic and employment impact this would generate for the UK.

In order to manage stocks effectively the impact of all fishing activities should be assessed. This includes recreational fishing as part of a system of fully-documented fisheries in line with the UK’s desire to be a world-leader in fisheries management.

The European Parliament [report](#) went on to say, *“that the economic contribution of marine recreational fisheries (MRF) within the European sea regions is high enough to consider implementing common and stable economic data collection for MRF. Given these estimates, MRF in Europe should be considered a discrete sector for development alongside commercial fisheries and aquaculture under the CFP”*.

The government must accept that the ambition to turn the UK into a world leader in fisheries management includes properly recognising fisheries resources being a publicly-owned assets which should be managed for and on behalf of the public. Leading nations in fisheries management recognise, value and have integrated recreational fisheries development goals into policy and now enjoy the benefits of world-class recreational fishing with consequential positive economic and employment impacts.

Recognition of Recreational Fishing In The Fisheries Bill

The Angling Trust provided oral and written evidence to both the Fisheries Bill and EFRA Committees in the previous Parliament. On asking the Minister whether he would accept amendments to the Bill to greater recognise the role of recreational fishing, he explained to the EFRA Committee that given that the Bill has been introduced to ensure a functioning legal framework following EU exit, “specific reference to the recreational sea fishing sector as a stakeholder is unnecessary”. He did, however, make assurances that recreational sea fishing as a sector would be recognised in the forthcoming fisheries statement.

THE EFRA Committee report went on to state and formally recommend, *“We regard the Bill as an opportunity to acknowledge the recreational fishing sector as a stakeholder in UK sea fisheries and recognise the advantages of more joined up thinking between the recreational and commercial sectors. We recommend that Clause 2(2)(h) be expanded to make explicit reference to recreational fishing. (Paragraph 94)”*.

Fisheries Bill Committee

In responding to Luke Pollard MP, the Minister George Eustice made the following statement in the House of Commons, *“ I undertake to the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport, that I will consider whether we can tweak clause 2 on Report to include among the socioeconomic purposes for coastal communities, to be set out in the Secretary of State fisheries statement, a specific reference to recreational fishing and the potential economics of it. I think that that is the right way to address the issue, because the SSFS sets out our overall approach to the*

socioeconomics of fishing. Just as clause 2 is the right place to determine issues such as fishing opportunities for the inshore fleet, it might also serve the hon. Gentleman's purpose if we make a tweak that refers specifically to recreational angling."

Grants & Funding

The Angling Trust welcomed the government's commitment to delivering financial support for the first time to recreational sea angling through its proposed replacement to the EMFF once the U.K. leaves the EU and the Common Fisheries Policy.

In the freshwater fishery the Angling Trust operates as a delivery partner to the Environment Agency administering the distribution of capital funding to angling clubs and fisheries through the Angling Improvement Fund.

<https://www.anglingtrust.net/landing.asp?section=1094§ionTitle=Angling+Improvement+Fund>

The Angling Trust also receives revenue funding from the EA to deliver specific services including angling promotion, integration of migrant anglers, invasive species work and the acclaimed voluntary bailiff schemes.

<https://www.anglingtrust.net/page.asp?section=1466§ionTitle=Voluntary+Bailiff+Service>

Funding for the development of sea angling will ensure that the social, economic and environmental benefits of recreational sea angling are able to be delivered through the new National Angling Strategy.

Next Steps

The Angling Trust will be working with MPs across the House to ensure that the multi-billion-pound angling sector, and the millions of UK citizens who participate in angling and support this sector, are a key part of the UK becoming a world-leader in marine recreational angling tourism by supporting recreational fishing's inclusion as a direct user stakeholder in UK fish stocks and its funding for development and promotion.

David Mitchell | Head of Marine | David.mitchell@anglingtrust.net

Stuart Singleton-White | Head of Campaigns | stuart.singleton-white@anglingtrust.net

Angling Trust
August 2020