



## **No need for Covid Restrictions on socially distanced outdoor sports like angling**

Dear Minister

The Angling Trust understands that the government may be about to impose a new national lockdown in an effort to bring down the COVID-19 infection rate. As a responsible National Governing Body we will do everything possible to assist in the collective endeavour to get this pandemic under control, to save lives and to protect our NHS. We did so last time around and will do so again.

However, we now know that socially distanced outdoor sports like angling, golf, cycling etc are not in any way part of the problem. In fact, they contribute multiple benefits not only in terms of health and mental wellbeing during these difficult times but in reducing pressure on parks, footpaths and other open spaces where people would otherwise gather if prohibited from pursuing their chosen pastimes.

Our purpose in writing to you is to urge you not to place wholly unnecessary restrictions on angling and the £4bn angling trade which supports up to 40,000 jobs in the UK. Recreational fishing has been practised safely and responsibly in England since May 13th in accordance with the approved COVID compliant guidelines produced by the Angling Trust.

In April of this year the Angling Trust, along with a number of other national governing bodies representing outdoor sports, made successful representations to government to permit the resumption of safe, socially distanced activities such as fishing, tennis and golf to be carried out in accordance with COVID compliant guidelines.

In our *When We Fish Again* Report we proposed a safe resumption of angling in three phases starting with individual fishing and moving on to match fishing and charter boat fishing as government restrictions allowed.

<https://joinanglingtrust.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/When-We-Fish-Again-Report-14.pdf>

We now have approved guidelines in place covering all aspects on angling including: individuals, clubs and fisheries, coaches and guides, charter boats and competitions. These COVID compliant guidelines have been widely accepted across angling and to the best of our knowledge there have been no known examples where angling activity has contributed to the spread of the virus. We feel it's important to encourage people to take

their essential recreation in a safe, socially distanced outdoor environment as opposed to a crowded indoor situation.

On May 10th the Prime Minister announced the resumption of socially distanced outdoor sports subject to guidance which was drawn up in consultation with Sport England and through them with the appropriate national governing bodies like ourselves. The Angling Trust helped develop comprehensive guidelines for all branches of our sport based on the original proposals in our *When We Fish Again* report.

The report itself was endorsed by the Angling Trades Association, Salmon & Trout Conservation, Canal & Rivers Trust and the Institute of Fisheries Management. It recommended a phased resumption in line with the government's own criteria and identified a number of other reasons why angling should be an early candidate for consideration including:

- \* being a largely solitary sport where social distancing occurs naturally
- \* proven benefits for mental health and physical well-being
- \* angling appeals to people of all ages and backgrounds and engages able-bodied and disabled participants alike
- \* the majority of the population live within 5 miles of a waterway minimising the need for significant travel.
- \* evidence that non-contact outdoor activities will not increase infection rates
- \* a reduction in pressure on other public open spaces

The Angling Trust do not believe it is the intention of ministers to unnecessarily restrict healthy activities like angling which are demonstrably beneficial for our health and well being at this critical time. We ask you to be vigilant to ensure that any new regulation does not accidentally do so. We contend that largely solitary, socially distanced, activities like angling, golf, etc should not to be restricted under any new lockdown provisions beyond that which was authorised on May 10th.

In these difficult and demoralising times we believe it is important to public confidence in your measures, and ultimately vital to the wellbeing of the nation, that where they can safely do so, people should be free to pursue their passions with the joy and comfort of continuing some part of their normal lives.

The approved Angling Trust guidelines have sufficient safeguards and levels of compliance and ought to satisfy any concerns as we enter this new phase. We are of course happy to discuss these matters in more detail if it would be helpful.

We look forward to hearing from you

Martin Salter  
Head of Policy  
Angling Trust

31st October 2020