



Otter Predation: Progress and Ambitions

- 1. An increase in the funding made available from the Environment Agency for fencing of still waters, and for it to be made available to club and syndicate waters. Previously it was limited to those selling day tickets.**

Progress: Achieved.

Helping fisheries tackle predation continues to be a theme of Angling Improvement Fund grant rounds, and many of these grants help fisheries fund otter fencing projects. Since being launched in January 2015, each year that the AIF has been operating subsequently has seen the amount of funding available dramatically increase and nearly £500,000 has now been given out to fisheries to invest in predation-control measures such as otter fencing. Furthermore, the AIF is now available to club and syndicate waters that do not sell day tickets. Additional details about the AIF are available [here](#) and further funding is available for predation projects in 2019.

- 2. Regulated trapping and removal of otters trapped within fenced fisheries**

Progress: Achieved

After two years of collaborative work with the UK Wild Otter Trust and Natural England, in 2016 the Angling Trust helped to secure the first ongoing initiative 'class licence' to humanely trap the European Otter in England under very specific circumstances (within well-fenced fisheries). Some major improvements were made to this licence as of January 2019. You can find out more information [here](#).

The Angling Trust has two Fishery Management Advisors (FMA) who are legally qualified to trap live otters trapped within well fenced fisheries and transport them outside of the fence. If you have a problem with an otter trapped within a fenced fishery, please contact them. The contact details of the FMAs can be found [here](#).

- 3. An end to the unregulated release of rehabilitated otters.**

Progress: In February 2018, the Angling Trust met with the Chief Executive of Natural England to press them to bring an end to the unregulated release of otters that have been 'rehabilitated' after sustaining injuries from cars or fighting between themselves. These animals are currently released

back into the environment without any consultation or consideration of their impacts on nearby fisheries.

We will continue to lobby Natural England for regulation of this practice, and in the interim we will push for a requirement for rehabilitation centres to consult properly with local EA Fisheries Officers, EA Biodiversity Teams and nearby fisheries when a release of a rehabilitated animal is planned.

4. Collating expert knowledge on otters and the impacts of otter predation to develop practical solutions on small rivers and on still waters that cannot be fenced.

Progress: The Angling Trust organised a workshop in June 2018 to bring together fishery managers, fishery scientists, experienced anglers and conservationists to discuss pragmatic solutions to mitigate the impacts of otter predation on both small rivers and still waters. The outputs from this workshop are now being taken forwards and a summary is available [here](#).

5. The restoration of river ecosystems which can support healthy populations of fish that can withstand predation. Nearly 75% of rivers are failing to reach good ecological status and many of these are failing because of poor fish populations.

Progress: Our two Judicial Reviews of government on the Water Framework Directive, our many legal actions by Fish Legal, our many campaigns on abstraction, pollution and loss of habitat, our support for catchment fishery plans, and our input to detailed action plans such as the [Blueprint for Water](#) all contribute to achieving this objective.

6. Investment in research into methods for deterring otters from still water fisheries where fencing is not feasible. Current methods are not effective.

Progress: We sought funding from the EA and others for this, but unfortunately we were knocked back. We would like to find funding to support research in this area, for those fisheries that can't be fenced and for rivers which are suffering a particular problem in areas where specimen fish are threatened. Ideas welcome for funding sources!

7. Recognition by government agencies that reintroductions of otters were misguided and mismanaged, and that lessons must be learned for any future release programmes for other species.

Progress: We have repeatedly made this point to government and its agencies but the EA has never been involved in the release of otters. However, in 2017 a statement by the UK Wild Otter Trust stated that initial releases of otters, for which there was no consultation with stakeholders such as angling clubs, were indeed a mistake.

- 8. Acceptance from the government that ecosystems should be restored from the bottom up, rather than the top down. This means restoring river flows, tackling pollution and re-creating healthy habitat, rather than introducing top level predators and/or building otter holts to encourage them to live in a particular site.**

Progress: We have made this point repeatedly to government and its agencies. For example, we challenged the Canal and Rivers Trust not to invest in otter holts on the canal network and not to use otters for their public fundraising as it would be perceived by anglers as a means of destroying their sport.

- 9. Defra and the Environment Agency to accept that there is a serious problem from otter predation on many still-waters and some rivers and that the recovery of otters has now been successful. Defra and the Environment Agency to stop referring to otter numbers as evidence of successful restoration of river systems when the majority of rivers are failing to reach good ecological status and many fish populations are severely depleted.**

Progress: We believe that EA fisheries has now accepted that this is a problem; hence their willingness to release rod licence funds to support tackling otter predation even on waters not allowing day tickets. However, the EA is a big organisation and press officers are not always aware of the importance of this issue to anglers.

**Angling Trust
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