

# Lockdown Guidelines and FAQs

## Updated: January 11, 2021



These guidelines have been produced by the Angling Trust in our capacity as the recognised national governing body for all forms of recreational fishing in England. They have been drawn up following extensive dialogue with relevant Government departments and our colleagues in the Environment Agency to help anglers, fishery owners and managers to better understand what is permissible under the current lockdown regulations that are in place.

The government has confirmed that local fishing will be permitted during the third national lockdown in England under the exercise provisions. It must take place locally, in a socially distanced manner and only once a day.

*“Fishing is allowed as exercise so long as participants adhere to the rules on staying local, gathering limits, social distancing and limiting the time spent outdoors.”*

*[DCMS - 6th January 2021]*

We have worked extremely hard to reach this position and as anglers we all have a duty to abide by the strict and limited conditions under which fishing is once again permitted. With infection rates and death tolls rising we must stick to the Government’s rules and ensure that angling remains part of the solution and does not cause problems.

**This is a strictly limited resumption of local fishing** and very different to how we have been allowed to operate since May 2020. We are in the middle of a public health emergency and the National Lockdown must be respected. The law requires a ‘reasonable excuse’ to leave your home or penalties will apply.

We have set out a series of answers to the most frequently asked questions to ensure that every angler is able to adhere to the rules.

**Please Stay Safe and Stay Local**

# FAQs

## Can we still go fishing?

Yes, but once a day, locally and only with one other person from outside your household or support bubble. [Sport England confirmation here](#)

## Can we go sea fishing?

Yes, but once a day, locally and only with one other person from outside your household or support bubble.

## Can we go fishing from our boats?

Yes, DEFRA have confirmed that fishing in the sea or in freshwater from private boats (along with other water sports) can be considered exercise and is permitted.

## Why can't we night fish?

Because exercise is limited to once a day so no overnight fishing whatsoever. This does not stop you fishing for an hour or so after dusk but fishing through the night is no longer permissible.

## Can we fish matches?

No. Organised sporting gatherings are prohibited so there is no match fishing.

## How far can we travel to go fishing?

Only local travel is permitted for the purpose of daily exercise as set out in the [Government's travel guidance here](#)

This specifies the 'local area' – *ie. town, village or part of the city in which you live*. However, there is a recognition that there will be a need to travel for outdoor exercise. *This should be done locally wherever possible, but you can travel a short distance within your area to do so if necessary (for example, to access an open space).*

Anglers will need to apply commonsense and judgement in defining their local area rather than fixating on parish boundaries. A lake or river in a neighbouring parish may well be closer than one on the other side of the same town. In short, you should be fishing your nearest available waters.

If you have no local fishing available then you will have to take your daily exercise in other ways.

## Can my fishery stay open?

Fisheries **are not** on the list of businesses required to close under the regulations. Camping, chalet accommodation, club houses or social facilities of any kind cannot open though onsite toilets with appropriate hand sanitising can remain in place.

The regulation requires the closure of “*outdoor sports grounds or facilities*”; if you are concerned that this might apply to your fishery you should seek specific advice.

You are allowed to leave home to exercise (which includes fishing) outdoors, but you can only meet with another person in ‘*public outdoor places*’ which include *parks, beaches, countryside accessible to the public, forests, public gardens (whether or not you pay to enter them)*. This will apply to most fisheries either commercially managed or operated by clubs that are open to members of the public.

## Can tackle shops still trade?

Tackle shops are classed as non-essential businesses and must close but they can still offer a ‘click/call and collect’ service.

## Can we still carry out work parties on our waters?

Yes, there are a range of activities for which travel is both required and lawful including “*for work, or providing voluntary or charitable services, where it is unreasonable to do so from home*”.

However, numbers should be kept manageable and Covid compliant procedures must be followed. [Please see our Guidelines on Bailiffing and Fisheries Management](#)

## Is bait collection still allowed?

Yes. Anglers can undertake bait collection as their single act of daily exercise provided it is in their ‘*local area*’. Bait collectors would be running a risk travelling to any spot that is not the closest one to their home that they are legally allowed to dig or collect bait from. Anglers can also undertake bait collection and sea fishing combined as part of their ‘local’ exercise. If an angler or bait digger has a private arrangement with a private landowner to dig for bait we recommend contacting the landowner before digging.

## Can I still Coach, Guide or Ghillie?

Yes, but once a day, locally and only with one other person. Sessions must take place in a public outdoor space and social distancing maintained. Any coaches or guides undertaking sessions should ensure they’re complying with relevant national governing body safeguarding policies and procedures and conduct a thorough risk assessment before engaging in any sessions. This should include particular consideration for under-18s and vulnerable adults.

## Is there still organised fishing for disabled anglers?

Under the new Government guidance, anglers with a disability can continue to go fishing and access organised disability sport. 'Organised sport' refers to sport which is formally organised by a national governing body, club, public body, qualified instructor, company or charity, and which follows the relevant sport's national governing body guidance. Please see FAQs provided by [Sport England](#).

## What powers do the police have?

The Government have chosen not to define a 'local area' in legislation which presents difficulties. Whilst anglers must apply their own commonsense and judgement there is a considerable level of discretion afforded to individual police constables and PCSOs. Each Police Area has a high degree of autonomy. The principle offence is to leave or be outside of your home except where you have a 'reasonable excuse'. The police can take action against you if you leave home without a 'reasonable excuse' and issue you with a fine (Fixed Penalty Notice).

- Leaving your home to take your daily exercise in the form of fishing is a reasonable excuse.
- However, anglers may be challenged if they travel to go fishing in breach of the government's guidance. We strongly urge adherence to the Angling Trust travel guidelines above to only fish your local waters.
- The National Policing College guidance to all forces is to:

Engage – Talk to the Individual

Explain – Explain why it is important to follow the guidance and why you think that person is in breach

Encourage – Encourage compliance with the law/ request of the officer

Enforce – If all the above fails – Enforcement action

- You can be given a Fixed Penalty Notice of £200 for the first offence, doubling for further offences up to a maximum of £6,400.
- Police officers and PCSOs also have the 'power of direction' to require you to pack up and go home and the power of arrest for failing to comply or to provide a name and address.

## What to do if challenged while fishing

- Be courteous and polite and make clear that you have lawfully left your home to take your daily exercise in the form of fishing. This is a 'reasonable excuse' recognised by Government as evidenced by these guidelines and the [Sport England FAQs here](#)
- Demonstrate that your travel to go fishing is in accordance with the Government's instruction to stay local and you are following the Angling Trust's travel guidelines above to only fish your local waters.

- Use the information here to demonstrate that you are acting responsibly and lawfully.
- This should resolve most situations. However, should the police officer decide to issue you with a direction order or fixed penalty notice you should accept it and pack up immediately and return home if so instructed.
- Fixed Penalty Notices can either be paid or contested in a magistrate court at a later date.
- Please avoid fishing in crowded places where social distancing could be difficult and might give rise to concerns over public health.
- Conduct yourself responsibly and fish safely. Please remember we are extremely fortunate to be able to fish at all and we must all act as ambassadors for our sport.