

SHARING WATERS, AVOIDING CONFLICT



We continue to support the need to share the space and benefits of being on or near water. This must be done in a lawful way, respecting our right to fish and to be allowed to pursue our lawful activities.



ANGLING TRUST
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Background

We all love our water environment. Our rivers, lakes, canals are often places of beauty, special places where we can relax and find peace. For us, it is fishing that gives us this pleasure, the chance to be at one with our natural environment and to unwind. For others, it might be boating, paddling, swimming, or walking. Whichever it is, by giving each other respect and space, we can, and in many cases do, get along just fine.

Unfortunately, there are a few who do not want to respect the rights of others. Who feel they have priority and do not have to play by the rules. This is where conflict can arise. Too often that conflict is between us anglers and canoeists who, urged on by their governing bodies, feel they can go where they want when they want.

In Britain, there are 4,700 miles of inland waters where navigation is allowed. Paddling on the canal network and rivers under the control of a navigation authority is, for example, permitted although it normally requires registration or a licence. Outside of these permitted waters, it is settled law that there is no general public right of navigation on non-tidal rivers in England and Wales. To do so, permission from the land and riparian owner is needed, just like it is for anglers to be able to fish. Such arrangements set out where people can paddle (or swim), when (the time of day, year, or river conditions) and for how long (between which times, during daylight hours) etc.

As more people see the value and beauty of our waters, and want to be in and around those waters, conflicts can arise, either through ignorance or through deliberate actions.

We continue to support the need to share the space and benefits of being on or near water. This must be done in a lawful way, respecting our right to fish and to be allowed to pursue our lawful activities.

Why it matters

On larger designated navigable rivers and canals there are few conflicts with angling. This is not the case on the smaller rivers and shallower streams where the unexpected arrival of even one or two canoes or swimmers sends the fish fleeing for cover and ruins any prospect of sport for paying anglers for several hours, if not the rest of the day. In smaller streams fishing is often carried out by wading and attempting to stalk the fish. Concealment and stealth are key skills as wild fish in clear water are extremely cautious creatures who will stop feeding or hide under banks for many hours if they are disturbed. Canoes coming along the river is not only a danger to wading anglers it can also render fishing impossible.

The angler will have paid up to £82 to the Environment Agency or Natural Resources Wales for a rod licence (12-month, salmon and sea trout) and in many cases a considerable sum to the riparian owner via a day ticket or club membership in order to secure permission to fish that stretch of river. By contrast, many canoeists pay nothing and increasingly expect to be able to paddle wherever they like and when they like without regard for the rights and enjoyment of other river users or the water environment.

Such unfettered and unmanaged access could dramatically reduce the economic value of the affected fisheries and the many jobs that they support. Many stretches of river are owned by angling clubs who take out loans to buy them based on future income from members. This money is invested in the upkeep and improvement of the water environment for the benefit of wildlife and people's enjoyment of nature.

Many clubs have enjoyed peaceful fishing for hundreds of years and are now feeling threatened by the invasion of canoeists, who can be aggressive when told that they are trespassing.

What is the Angling Trust doing?

Working alongside Fish Legal, both organisations offer a series of advice and information on the law regarding the public right to navigation. We explode many of the myths and misinformation put out by other groups and organisations who are seeking to question the clarity and settled law regarding navigation on non-tidal rivers.

We understand the value of our waters and the role they can play in the health and wellbeing of us all. We are happy to share our rivers and to show people the passion we have for these precious and sensitive environments. In doing so, we fully support the government's stated position that such sharing arrangements are best achieved through voluntary agreements between angling clubs and other river users.

We continue to seek to work with the governing body for canoeing. We continue to call on them to remove the misinformation they publish around access to and navigation on rivers that flow through private land and have no public right to navigation. We continue to press the case for local voluntary agreements based upon co-operation and respect for the rule of law.

How can you help?

To support us in this work, please join the Angling Trust. Clubs and fisheries should also join the Angling Trust and Fish Legal.

If you are fishing, you know there is no public right to navigation, and you encounter a canoeist (or other people in or on the river) then report the incident to the club or riparian owner, including any identifying information such as place, date and time.

Do not challenge the canoeist/swimmer/paddle boarder, etc. If pointing out that they are trespassing and you wish them to leave, do not become abusive or aggressive and do not get into an argument or discussion over who is right or wrong.

Thank You!

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ASSOCIATE PARTNERS
FOR SUPPORTING THE
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IF YOU ARE A MEMBER OF THE ANGLING TRADE AND WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT OUR WORK, FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED BY EMAILING JOHN.CHEYNE@ANGLINGTRUST.NET



ANGLING TRUST

We are a not-for-profit organisation representing anglers, fighting for fish, fishing and the environment. We are recognised by the Government as the National Governing Body for angling in England and partner with Visit Wales and Natural Resources Wales to promote Fishing in Wales. We are a member-based organisation made up of anglers of all disciplines providing a united front to represent, grow and protect our sport. By becoming a member of the Angling Trust you are helping to protect the waterways you fish in and the fish which live within them, ensuring their health and protection for future generations.

[Click here for more information about how to join the Angling Trust](#)

Angling Trust Limited is a company limited by guarantee, company number 05320350.

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