



VOTE FOR
ANGLING TRUST
A FISHING FUTURE



**ANGLING
TRUST 2024
GENERAL
ELECTION
MANIFESTO**

Top 10 Policy Asks to Protect, Promote and Develop Angling for All

1. Reform the water industry to stop pollution of our rivers and seas.
2. Abolish OFWAT and replace it with a single water regulator, accountable to the public, who puts the protection of the environment as its first priority.
3. Beef up the EA, the MMO and local IFCAs to ensure they have the resources, expertise and power to properly enforce the law and protect angling.
4. Ensure taxpayers' money given to farmers is used to improve the water environment and does not support actions that damage it.
5. Ensure government, include devolved and local government, support policies that protect and promote angling and maximise the economic, social and environmental benefits it delivers.
6. Support actions aimed at supporting broad and diverse participation in angling through schools, community centres, youth clubs, and social prescribing.
7. Support the rights of all anglers to fish without fear of harassment and disruption.
8. Recognise recreationally important species in sea fisheries management and the socio-economic benefits sea angling brings to coastal communities.
9. Take concerted action to reverse the decline in salmon stocks throughout the UK.
10. Address the damage caused to inland fisheries by invasive species and support fishery managers' efforts to protect their waters and businesses from unsustainable predation.

INTRODUCTION

Angling engages over two million people in Britain, making it one of the most popular outdoor pastimes and one of the nation's largest participation sports. We are calling on all the major political parties to give a public commitment to support angling in the next Parliament and to acknowledge the economic, environmental and social benefits that this popular and healthy pursuit offers to the British people.

WHO ARE WE?

The Angling Trust campaigns to fight for fish, fishing, and the environment. We are the representative body for all game, coarse and sea anglers in England and are formally recognised as the national governing body. As well as promoting angling, organising competitions and encouraging participation in the sport at all levels, we are front and centre in the campaigns to clean up our rivers and waterways, to end the scandal of sewage and agricultural pollution, and to protect our marine environment. Through our collaborative partnership with Fish Legal we ensure that legal action is taken on behalf of our 2,000-plus clubs and fisheries to protect their waters and hold polluters to account.

BENEFITS OF ANGLING

Angling delivers significant economic and social benefits with around 35,000 jobs and an estimated contribution to the UK economy in excess of £3 billion a year.

Angling provides huge benefits for health, education, and wellbeing to people of all ages. It is often the only outdoor activity easily available to urban communities suffering deprivation.

Anglers invest millions of hours of volunteer time into the maintenance and improvement of water environments by clearing litter, restoring habitats, and monitoring pollution.

According to Defra's own Sea Angling report there are around 800,000 sea anglers in England who directly inject £1.23 billion p.a. into the economy and upon which 10,400 full-time jobs are dependent. The sea angling contribution to the local economy is particularly important to disadvantaged coastal communities with recreational angling estimated to contribute double the economic value of the commercial fishing sector.

The mental health and wellbeing benefits of angling are well documented, particularly in those harder to reach communities and groups. Angling now has a recognised role in supporting veterans and in NHS social prescribing. Charities such as Tackling Minds aim to use angling to support people experiencing mental health issues, social deprivation and isolation, addiction and recovery, disabilities, and people with long-term health issues.

Research conducted by the Angling Trust reveals that 86% of anglers say fishing has helped improve symptoms of stress or anxiety, and 95% would recommend fishing to help manage mental health or stress levels. The research, which surveyed British anglers, found that over half (52%) say that since fishing, they have found it easier to talk about their mental health or stress levels and 79% say the sport relaxes them.

FIGHTING FOR FISH AND THE ENVIRONMENT ON WHICH THEY DEPEND

A healthy environment with clean and plentiful water is crucial for sustaining our fisheries and for the future of angling. But a 57% reduction, since 2010, in the Environment Agency's budget and poorly funded Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authorities (IFCA) have severely impacted the ability to protect the environment and we are seeing deterioration at an alarming rate:

- Only 14% of UK water bodies are now in good ecological condition.
- In 2023, a total of 579,581 sewage spills were recorded from storm overflows in England and Wales for a total duration of 4,608,495 hours.
- There has been an 88% global decline in freshwater species, including fish, since 1970.
- The Atlantic salmon is now officially classified as an endangered species in the UK.
- In Europe only 9% of marine habitats have favourable conservation status.
- Just 5% of our seas are protected from damaging bottom trawling.
- A quarter of fish stocks are in a critical condition, only 45% are fished sustainably.

The Angling Trust works with a wide range of wildlife groups and environmental organisations who share our desire to create a better environment. We are members of Blueprint for Water, Missing Salmon Alliance, End Sewage Pollution coalition and the Chalk Stream Restoration Strategy Group.

In 2022, in response to record levels of sewage discharges and the continued failure of the Environment Agency to properly monitor the threats to our rivers, we established a national Water Quality Monitoring Network of citizen volunteers to collect and analyse water samples in their areas. It has now engaged 785 anglers from 278 clubs operating on 213 rivers across 68 catchments collecting around 5,600 individual samples. The results are alarming with 44% of samples exceeding recommended phosphate and nitrate levels, 200 incidents of algae blooms and 300 pollution incidents observed.

In the marine environment, anglers are at the forefront of collecting vital data in studies to better understand the behaviour of key marine species and how that is changing due to issues such as overfishing and climate change. The Angling Trust works with universities and citizen science sea anglers on research covering shark behaviour and welfare, bluefin tuna, black bream, skates and rays, pollack and juvenile fish habitats.

Anglers are in the front line of protecting our water environment and are looking to the next government to join them in fighting for fish, fishing, and the environment.

THREATS TO FISH AND FISHING

While there are many threats to fish and fishing, including climate change, water quality, loss of habitat, and predation, threats to our fishing future are not just environmental. Fisheries are being lost to angling through development encroachment and access restrictions. Some far-sighted local councils have sought to address these problems by making specific provision for angler parking alongside urban fisheries. However, in many cases angling opportunities are being reduced and very little consideration is given to opening up angling access in local plans. Increased use of our rivers and waterways by the public is to be welcomed

but it is important that consideration is given to other water users and that the legal rights of anglers are respected.

TOP 10 POLICY ASKS TO PROTECT, PROMOTE AND DEVELOP ANGLING FOR ALL

1. Reform the water industry and put an end to sewage dumping in our rivers, seas and waterways
2. OFWAT is shown to be not fit for purpose. It should be abolished in favour of a publicly accountable single water regulator and a complete reform of the management and rebuilding of the UK's water resources to deliver clean and plentiful water and wastewater infrastructure fit to meet the challenges of climate change and a growing population, without further damaging the environment.
3. Beef up the Environment Agency so that it has the resources to become a rigorous and effective regulator. Place new duties on the MMO and IFCA's to promote sea angling, crack down on illegal fishing, and allocate sufficient funding to support enforcement of our fisheries and seas.
4. Tackle agricultural pollution by ensuring that taxpayers' money given to farmers is focused on action to address flooding, pollution and habitat damage from the farmed environment. Good farmers should be supported to protect the water environment and those that don't must pay the full cost of any pollution they cause.
5. Recognise the social, environmental and economic benefits of having a vibrant recreational angling sector by ensuring government departments and agencies recognise and support angling in their policy decisions, and that

local authorities and other public bodies open waters under their control to angling where possible. Provide more direct investment in sea angling and sea angling infrastructure to maximise the social and economic benefits to coastal communities.

6. Support programmes aimed at introducing broad and diverse participation in angling through schools, community centres, youth clubs and social prescribing.
7. Support the rights of all anglers to fish without fear of harassment and disruption, and promote voluntary access agreements as the only effective way to manage the increase in pressure from water-based recreation and avoid conflict between different user groups.
8. Recognise recreationally important species in fisheries decision-making and the socio-economic benefits they generate for recreational angling. Prioritise sustainable fisheries management by introducing ecosystem-based fisheries management, tackling bycatch, reforming discards and setting catch limits at sustainable limits to revive UK fisheries.
9. Take concerted action to reverse the decline in salmon stocks throughout the UK including investigating the dramatic reduction in sea survival and improving the ability of fisheries managers to control predators.
10. Address the damage caused to inland fisheries by invasive species such as signal crayfish and predators such as cormorants, goosanders, seals, mink and otters and support fishery managers' efforts to protect their waters and businesses from unsustainable predation.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

This document has been sent to all the main parties representing English constituencies in the House of Commons ahead of the General Election in order to establish whether or not they intend to take action to give Britain's 2 million anglers a fishing future.

We are encouraging our members to send a copy to candidates in their own areas to seek from them pledges of support for angling in the next Parliament.

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