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## Submission to the APPG on Fisheries: Call for Evidence on an Action Plan for a Thriving and Sustainable UK Fishing Industry

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### About this Submission

The Angling Trust is the National Governing Body for recreational angling in England. This submission addresses the marine recreational fishing sector, focusing on recreational sea angling, including shore anglers, small boat and kayak anglers, charter boat businesses, competition anglers, clubs, and the marine tackle and bait trade - and is offered as a substantive contribution to an Action Plan for a thriving and sustainable UK fishing industry.

We work alongside Defra, the Marine Management Organisation, Cefas, Natural England and the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs), and we represent a constituency of over 700,000 sea anglers and the more than 400 charter boat operators around the English coast whose businesses depend on access to productive waters and functioning harbour infrastructure.

**Recreational sea fishing is part of the UK fishing industry.** The Joint Fisheries Statement defines the industry as the economic activity concerned with catching fish *“for food or for sport.”* Charter boat operators are seafaring businesses in their own right - commercial enterprises providing livelihoods for skippers and crew, anchoring coastal tourism economies, generating visitor spending across accommodation, hospitality and the tackle trade, and introducing thousands of people to the marine environment each year. The Action Plan is an opportunity to correct that.

This submission therefore approaches the recreational sector on three terms simultaneously: as a distinct sector with its own characteristics, as a complementary partner to the commercial fleet in shared interests, and as a legitimate component of the UK fishing industry whose social, environmental and economic sustainability must be explicitly planned for.

### Executive Summary

- **Recreational sea fishing is a substantial part of the UK fishing industry.** Recreational fishing in England supports an estimated £1.5 billion of direct economic activity, around 15,000 jobs and over 700,000 participants each year. This activity is concentrated in the same ports, harbours and coastal communities that host the commercial fleet.
- **Charter boats are seafaring businesses and must be recognised as such.** Charter operators are commercial enterprises that provide livelihoods, retain maritime skills, and sustain working

harbours. Many skippers are former commercial fishermen or hold current commercial licences. They need functioning pontoons, safe harbour access, customer parking, fleet modernisation funding and decarbonisation support - on equal terms with the small-scale commercial fleet.

- **The sector has distinct needs and shared interests.** Recreational fishing is characterised by distributed participation, high catch-and-release rates, and a value proposition rooted in social, wellbeing and economic activity ashore. Where management measures are needed, they should be proportionate to those characteristics - not imported by default from commercial frameworks. Equally, the sector shares deep common cause with the inshore commercial fleet on healthy stocks, working harbours, clean water and coastal employment.
- **Social, environmental and economic sustainability are inseparable.** A credible Action Plan must deliver against all three: healthy stocks and clean coastal water (environmental); secure livelihoods for charter operators and the businesses that serve the sector (economic); and the wellbeing, participation and community resilience benefits that recreational fishing uniquely provides (social).
- **The spatial squeeze affects the recreational sector too.** Charter boats are displaced by wind farm exclusion zones; shore marks are lost to coastal development; MPA designations restrict rod-and-line fishing without sufficient evidence. The proposed Sea Use Framework must recognise recreational fishing as a legitimate, named use of marine space.
- **Shore-based infrastructure has been overlooked.** Piers, sea walls, breakwaters, slipways, trailer parking and basic amenities at popular fishing venues are deteriorating or being lost. A fund that supports working harbours but ignores the infrastructure used by hundreds of thousands of shore anglers is not delivering for the whole community.
- **Recreational fishing builds the workforce of the wider industry.** Many of today's commercial fishermen, charter skippers and guides started as recreational anglers. Youth fishing programmes are one of the few remaining routes by which young people in coastal communities form a first connection with the sea. Investment in recreational participation has a direct downstream benefit for the commercial workforce pipeline.
- **Trust must be reset across the whole fishing community.** The trust deficit between government and fishing communities extends well beyond the commercial fleet. Recreational anglers have their own grievances - disproportionate regulation, weak consultation, and invisibility in funding. The Action Plan should be the moment that changes.
- **Recreational sea fishing is a major and overlooked driver of coastal tourism.** Sea anglers travel to fish, sustain charter trips, accommodation, hospitality and tackle businesses, and extend the coastal tourism season well beyond the summer months. The Action Plan should recognise sea angling tourism as part of the national visitor economy and a core pillar of coastal economic sustainability.

# 1. Sustainable Management and Access

## Challenges

- **Stocks of significant value to both sectors remain in poor or uncertain condition**, including mackerel, cod, pollack, flounder, mullet, certain rays and skates, and several shark species. Recent pollack restrictions have affected recreational and small-scale commercial activity in the south west, with unquantified socio-economic impacts on livelihoods. Stock recovery and fisher-led long-term data collection are shared interests.
- **Inshore productivity matters to both sectors.** Practices that affect spawning aggregations, juvenile habitat and inshore productivity reduce yields available to recreational and small-scale commercial users alike. Effective inshore management and enforcement are in the interests of both.
- **Spatial squeeze is a shared and accelerating pressure.** Offshore wind expansion, MPA designations, port and marina developments and other competing marine uses reduce the space available for fishing of all kinds. The recreational sector experiences this acutely: charter boats displaced by wind farm exclusion zones and cable routes; small boat anglers finding inshore grounds boxed in from all sides; favourite rock marks closed off because of coastal development; piers shut down with no plan to reopen them.
- **MPAs and HPAs require a proportionate, evidence-based approach.** Rod-and-line fishing is one of the lowest-impact forms of fishing. Blanket restrictions that treat it the same as industrial methods are neither fair nor evidence-based. Where the science supports recreational and low-impact commercial access, it should be permitted; where restrictions are imposed, they should be commensurate with demonstrable impact.
- **Climate-driven distributional change** is shifting the species available across both sectors and creating new management questions - bluefin tuna, anchovy, octopus blooms affecting shellfish populations, and the northward expansion of warm-water species, such as black and gilthead bream.
- **Enforcement gaps undermine confidence.** The Marine Management Organisation's decision to stop routinely publishing inspection and enforcement data undermines public confidence in the rules that recreational anglers are asked to follow, such as those for bass and bluefin tuna. Every angler who sticks to bag limits, respects minimum sizes or obtains a recreational bluefin tuna permit deserves to know that the rules are being enforced fairly across all sectors.

Recreational fishing has its own distinct management considerations alongside these shared challenges. The sector is characterised by distributed participation across many thousands of individuals rather than concentrated commercial effort; by high release rates and a strong catch-and-release culture for many species; and by a value proposition rooted in social, wellbeing and economic activity ashore rather than landed value. Where management measures specific to recreational fishing are needed, they should be designed for those characteristics - appropriate and proportionate - not imported from commercial frameworks.

## Opportunities

- **The FMP programme has laid the groundwork for recreational integration into fisheries management.** Continued investment in this pathway, with co-designed measures and properly funded recreational data collection, can deliver more rounded outcomes for stocks and users.
- **Inshore protection.** A genuine 12nm framework, supported by stronger protections within 3nm, would benefit recovering stocks and inshore fishing of all kinds.
- **Co-management** within IFCA districts and at an FMP level is showing what can be done where the architecture is right and representation is supported.
- **Allocation approaches** that recognise the full economic and social contribution of a stock - commercial landings and recreational economic activity together - would deliver fairer outcomes, with bass the clearest example. We strongly support the development and implementation of the Seabass Catch Allocation Tool, as agreed with the EU via the Specialised Committee on Fisheries.

## Priority Actions

- Reaffirm and strengthen the 6 and 12-nautical-mile inshore frameworks.
- Include recreational sea fishing as a named, legitimate use of marine space within the proposed Sea Use Framework, with equal standing to commercial fishing, energy generation and conservation - covering shore marks, inshore grounds, launch sites and charter boat operating areas.
- Apply a proportionate, evidence-led approach to MPA and HPMA management measures that distinguishes rod-and-line fishing from industrial methods.
- Require the MMO to publish inspection rates and enforcement outcomes in its annual reports and retrospectively release three years of historical data.
- Build on the FMP programme as the pathway for proportionate recreational integration into management to deliver economic, social and environmental sustainability.

## 2. Charter Boats as Seafaring Businesses, Fleet Modernisation and Recreational Infrastructure

Charter boat operators are commercial fishing-adjacent businesses with a distinct profile that the Action Plan must recognise explicitly. They are seafaring enterprises operating coded vessels under Maritime and Coastguard Agency regulation, employing skippers and crew, paying harbour dues, buying fuel and bait locally, and bringing visiting anglers into coastal towns. There are over 400 such operators around the English coast, supporting local economies from Whitby to Penzance and acting as anchor tourism businesses for many coastal communities - drawing visiting anglers who book accommodation, eat in local restaurants, refuel locally and return year after year.

## Challenges

- **Working harbour viability.** Charter operators and commercial fishermen rely on the same berths, slipways, fuel facilities, ice supply and shore-side amenities. Sustaining working harbours is a shared interest, and the loss of any one user group weakens the whole.
- **Regulatory ambiguity.** Charter vessels operate under coding regimes (typically Small Commercial Vessel codes) that were not designed with charter fishing in mind and can create disproportionate compliance costs.
- **Decarbonisation pathways for small craft.** Charter and small-scale commercial vessels face similar decarbonisation challenges, often with the same engine types, fuels and design constraints - but charter operators have been excluded from public funding instruments that address these costs for the commercial fleet.
- **Wind farm and cable route displacement.** Charter boats are losing access to traditional grounds as offshore developments expand. Mitigation arrangements have not been put in place on terms equivalent to those negotiated with commercial fleets.
- **Shore infrastructure for recreational fishing access** is patchy and frequently lost rather than gained. Piers, breakwaters and sea walls where people fish are deteriorating. Safe access to coastal paths and rock marks is being lost to development or neglect. Basic amenities at popular shore venues - railings, lighting, parking, public toilets - are disappearing. These are not luxuries; they are the things that make the difference between a fishable mark and one quietly abandoned.
- **Slipway access for small boat anglers is under sustained pressure.** Thousands of recreational anglers around the coast launch from public slipways. Many of these are in poor repair. Trailer parking is being reduced or priced out of reach. Launching fees continue to rise. Every angler who launches a boat spends money locally on fuel, bait, tackle, food and accommodation - yet none of these feature in current investment priorities.

## Opportunities

- **Charter fishing retains coastal skills, vessels and heritage.** Many charter skippers are former commercial fishermen or hold current commercial licences, with charter fishing offering vital diversification to support their businesses. The sector keeps experienced seafarers working, boats in working harbours, and skills passed on across generations.
- **Joint investment cases** for harbour infrastructure, decarbonisation and coastal regeneration are stronger when made together. The recreational and commercial fleets share dependencies and should share access to investment.
- **Shared technology investment.** Onboard tools developed for the commercial fleet have clear application to charter vessels and can be scaled more cost-effectively with broader demand.
- **Shore infrastructure as an economic investment.** Investment in piers, sea walls, coastal access and slipways is a direct investment in coastal economic activity. Every shore angler and every launched

boat generates local spending; the maintenance of fishable infrastructure pays back in tourism, hospitality and tackle-trade revenue.

- **Charter fishing as an anchor for coastal tourism.** Charter operators draw repeat visitors and high-value bookings into coastal towns, often year-round. Investment in charter infrastructure is an investment in coastal tourism resilience as well as in maritime livelihoods.

### Priority Actions

- Recognise charter boat operators explicitly as seafaring businesses and as part of the UK fishing industry, with the same standing in policy, funding and consultation as the small-scale commercial fleet.
- Open the Fishing and Coastal Growth Fund and all fleet modernisation and decarbonisation funding to charter operators on equal terms with small-scale commercial vessels.
- Include shore-based fishing infrastructure - piers, sea walls, coastal access, amenities, accessible facilities for disabled anglers - within the priorities of the Fishing and Coastal Growth Fund from year two.
- Include slipway maintenance, trailer parking and small-boat launch infrastructure within Fund priorities, recognising small boat anglers as a distinct user group.
- Provide proportionate mitigation arrangements for charter operators displaced by offshore wind, cable routes and other marine developments.
- Review the application of Small Commercial Vessel coding to charter fishing to ensure proportionate, risk-based compliance costs.

## 3. Workforce, Labour and the Maritime Skills Pipeline

This is one of the strongest areas of complementarity between the recreational and commercial sectors, and one where the Plan can leverage recreational fishing to address industry-wide workforce challenges.

### Challenges

- The commercial fishing industry faces a well-documented workforce challenge - an ageing crew base, limited new entrants and weak pipelines of young people from coastal communities into maritime careers. The charter fishing sector faces the same pressures.
- Many young people in coastal communities now grow up with limited direct exposure to fishing of any kind. Without that early connection, fishing - commercial or recreational - does not become a familiar career option.
- Skipper qualifications, vessel costs and seasonal income volatility deter new entrants across small-scale commercial and charter fishing alike.

## Opportunities

- **Recreational fishing offers a national pipeline into maritime careers.** Many of today's commercial fishermen, charter skippers and guides started as recreational anglers. Youth fishing participation, school programmes and community coaching are some of the few routes by which young people in coastal communities form an early connection with fish, the sea and fishing as a career.
- **The Angling Trust's "Get Fishing", "Reel Education" and "Get Fishing for Wellbeing" programmes** offer scalable, co-designed models for engaging young people, veterans, people experiencing mental ill-health and disadvantaged coastal communities. These should be treated as part of the industry's long-term workforce pipeline.
- **Charter fishing and guiding offer viable coastal employment** that retains skills which would otherwise be lost from the commercial fleet.
- **Shared training infrastructure.** Skipper qualifications, safety training and marine engineering skills are common to small-scale commercial, charter and other working maritime sectors. Joint training pathways and shared investment in coastal maritime skills would benefit all.

## Priority Actions

- Embed recreational fishing participation in the Plan's workforce strategy as a recognised route into maritime and fishing careers.
- Develop joined-up coastal maritime training pathways covering commercial small-scale, charter and guiding entry, ideally with shared funding instruments.
- Treat "Get Fishing" and "Reel Education"-type delivery in coastal communities as part of the industry's long-term workforce pipeline, eligible for coastal regeneration, recruitment and Fishing and Coastal Growth Fund support.

## 4. Supply Chains, Local Economies and Domestic Consumption

The recreational sector's relationship with supply chains is distinct from - and complementary to - the commercial sector's. Recognising that contribution properly is fundamental to any honest assessment of how fishing sustains coastal communities.

- **Recreational fishing generates substantial supply chains** in tackle, bait, accommodation, transport, hospitality and charter services, underpinning demand for the working harbours and coastal towns where commercial fishing also operates. Sea Angling 2012 estimated that recreational anglers in England spent £1.5 billion directly, supporting wider economic activity of approximately £2 billion.
- **Recreationally caught fish is consumed locally** and is not commercially traded - complementing rather than competing with commercial supply, and supporting national food security and "eat local" objectives.

- **A meaningful share of fish caught recreationally is released alive.** Catch and release is an established conservation practice in much of UK recreational sea angling and represents a low-impact mode of fish-based recreation.
- **Recreational fishing drives substantial coastal tourism activity** that complements commercial supply chains and sustains the visitor economies on which coastal communities depend. The scale, seasonality and visitor-economy contribution of sea angling tourism are treated in detail in Section 5.

### Priority Actions

- Capture recreational economic activity within official fisheries economic statistics so the full coastal economic contribution of fishing is visible to government, Parliament and the public.
- Integrate recreational fishing into national coastal tourism and seafood-promotion strategy as a complement to commercial supply chain development.
- Require any future assessment of how fishing sustains coastal communities to cover both commercial and recreational activity, with comparable rigour applied to both.

## 5. Coastal Tourism and the Visitor Economy

Recreational sea fishing is one of the most significant and least recognised drivers of coastal tourism across the country. Sea anglers travel - often considerable distances and often repeatedly - specifically to fish. They book accommodation, charter trips, ferries and rail journeys; they buy fuel, bait, tackle, food and drink in coastal towns; and they sustain a network of small businesses for whom angling visitors are a core market. Treating recreational sea fishing as a tourism sector - alongside its role as a fishing sector - is essential to capturing its full contribution to coastal economic sustainability.

### Challenges

- **Sea angling tourism is invisible in national tourism data and strategy.** VisitBritain, DCMS and Local Visitor Economy Partnerships do not systematically capture angling visitor activity, and sea angling is rarely featured in destination marketing despite its scale and economic contribution.
- **Coastal tourism investment overlooks angling infrastructure.** Funding for piers, harbours, slipways and coastal access is rarely framed as tourism investment, even though these assets directly enable visitor spending.
- **Seasonal coastal economies depend on extending the tourism calendar.** Traditional seaside tourism falls away sharply outside the summer months, leaving many coastal communities with a long off-season. Sea angling fills part of that gap - but only where the infrastructure and welcome are in place.

- **Inbound angling tourism is underdeveloped.** UK sea angling has an international appeal – particularly with the resurgence of the bluefin tuna fishery - that is largely uncaptured because there is no coordinated national offer.
- **Accessibility constraints limit the visitor base.** Disabled anglers, older participants and families with young children are excluded from many shore venues by the absence of safe access, parking and facilities - narrowing the tourism market unnecessarily.

## Opportunities

- **Sea angling extends the coastal tourism season into autumn, winter and spring.** Cod, whiting, pollack, bass and winter shore fishing all peak outside the summer tourism window. Angling visitors arrive when other tourism revenue is at its lowest, providing year-round resilience to coastal economies.
- **Charter trips are experiential tourism with high local multipliers.** A single charter booking typically generates onward spending on accommodation, fuel, food, drink and tackle - often well in excess of the trip cost itself.
- **Angling festivals and competitions** in places like Whitby, Falmouth, Looe, Bridlington, Weymouth and elsewhere are anchor tourism events that draw visitors from across the UK and abroad, with measurable local economic impact.
- **Inbound angling tourism is an export-services opportunity.** A coordinated national offer - built around charter operators, guides, festivals and accessible information for overseas visitors - could materially grow international visitor spend in coastal communities.
- **Accessibility-led infrastructure investment** broadens the visitor base. Accessible piers, platforms and facilities open sea angling to disabled tourists, older anglers and families - a growing and underserved tourism segment.
- **Strategic linkage** with VisitBritain, DCMS, Local Visitor Economy Partnerships and the coastal tourism elements of the Fishing and Coastal Growth Fund would embed sea angling in the national tourism offer for the first time.

## Priority Actions

- Treat shore-based fishing infrastructure (piers, sea walls, coastal access, amenities) and charter port infrastructure as tourism assets eligible for coastal tourism investment, including under the Fishing and Coastal Growth Fund.
- Support angling festivals and competitions as anchor tourism events through the Fishing and Coastal Growth Fund and Local Visitor Economy Partnership funding.
- Embed accessibility as a tourism-investment criterion for all shore fishing infrastructure, opening the visitor base to disabled anglers, older participants and families.

## 6. Narrative, Social License and Public Trust

Recreational fishing can materially strengthen the public position of the broader fishing industry. Public understanding of fisheries is largely shaped by commercial imagery; recreational fishing's substantial scale and contribution are largely absent from public discourse, meaning a substantial constituency of sympathetic voices is not visible in support of fisheries policy.

Equally, the trust deficit between government and fishing communities - rightly highlighted by the EFRA Select Committee in its April 2026 report - extends beyond the commercial fleet. Recreational anglers have their own longstanding grievances: disproportionate regulations; a lack of meaningful consultation on bag limits and seasonal closures; the persistent sense that shore anglers are an invisible constituency whose access to marks can be removed without notice. Resetting the relationship with fishing communities means resetting it with all of them.

### Opportunities

- **Recreational anglers are credible, sympathetic public advocates for marine fisheries.** Hundreds of thousands of people who spend time on, near and in the sea are a substantial reservoir of public support that the wider industry can draw on.
- **Wellbeing, mental health and social inclusion outcomes** from recreational fishing provide a strong public-good narrative that lifts the wider sector's profile.
- **Shared advocacy** on coastal water quality, fish welfare and stock recovery strengthens both sectors' standing with the public and policymakers.

### Priority Actions

- Build recreational sea fishing into the Plan's narrative and social licence work as part of the broader industry story.
- Develop joint communications on shared interests - water quality, working harbours, stock recovery, coastal employment.
- Acknowledge in the Action Plan that resetting trust with fishing communities requires addressing the grievances of the recreational sector as well as the commercial fleet.

## 7. Policy, Governance and Representation

### Challenges

- **Marine recreational fisheries lack a clear institutional home.** Defra's marine and fisheries policy capability is structured around commercial fisheries. Marine recreational policy is fragmented across Defra, Cefas, the MMO and IFCAs, with no single function holding responsibility for the sector.

- **Representation gaps in management bodies.** Recreational sea fishing is under-represented or absent from many bodies where decisions affecting it are taken, despite the scale of the sector. The Regional Fisheries Management Forums proposed by the EFRA Select Committee must, if established, include guaranteed representation for shore anglers, boat anglers and charter boat operators - not be limited to “fishers, marine scientists and environmental organisations” in a way that excludes them by omission.
- **Defra in-port engagement should extend to the recreational sector.** The recommendation that Defra officials should undertake regular in-person port visits is welcome - but it should not assume that fisheries engagement means speaking only to commercial vessel operators. Officials should be visiting popular shore marks, attending sea angling festivals, speaking to tackle shop owners, and meeting charter skippers alongside commercial fleet visits.
- **Engagement asymmetry.** Recreational organisations, charter operators and individual sea anglers face the same engagement fatigue and capacity constraints as small-scale commercial operators, with even less institutional support.
- **Devolution.** The Action Plan is UK-focused, but many policy levers for recreational sea fishing sit at devolved level. Coherence across the four nations is important for migratory and mobile species and for sea anglers who fish across borders.

## Opportunities

- The Action Plan can establish recreational sea fishing as a routine consideration in fisheries policy rather than an afterthought.
- IFCA experience demonstrates that recreational representation can be made to work effectively at regional level.
- Marine spatial planning reform, the Sea Use Framework and FMP delivery all provide near-term moments to embed recreational considerations.

## Priority Actions

- Guarantee formal, named recreational sea angling representation - covering shore, boat and charter - in any Regional Fisheries Management Forums and in the development of the Sea Use Framework.
- Commission Defra, MMO and Cefas to produce a recreational fisheries strategy as a companion to the Action Plan.
- Require Defra officials to engage with the recreational sector as part of any port and community visit programme.

## 8. Science, Data and Knowledge

### Challenges

- **Recreational catch data is partial.** The Sea Angling Diary provides a foundation, but coverage of species, regions and effort is incomplete, and use of these data in stock assessment and management is inconsistent.
- **Charter operator data potential is untapped.** Skippers are out on the water regularly, log catches, and could contribute high-quality data with appropriate incentives and tools.
- **Social and economic data on recreational sea fishing are under-resourced.** The 2012 Sea Angling study remains a foundational reference more than a decade on; updating this baseline is overdue.
- **Citizen science capacity is significant but uncoordinated.** Sea anglers contribute to tagging programmes, water quality monitoring, invasive species reporting and habitat assessment, but national-scale coordination and recognition of this contribution is limited.

### Opportunities

- Properly resourced recreational fisheries data programmes would materially improve UK fisheries science at relatively low cost.
- Digital tools (apps, electronic logging, photo-based identification) are now mature enough to scale recreational data contribution.
- Sea anglers represent a distributed sensor network for inshore stocks and coastal water quality.

### Priority Actions

- Commission an updated recreational sea fishing economic and social valuation study, building on Sea Angling 2012.
- Establish a national framework for marine recreational citizen science contributions to fisheries science.
- Provide sustained, expanded funding for fisher-led, co-designed fisheries data collection to support the implementation of Fisheries Management Plans.

## 9. Funding, Investment and the Fishing and Coastal Growth Fund

The Fishing and Coastal Growth Fund is a £360 million programme that, as currently scoped, risks repeating the longstanding pattern of excluding the recreational sector from public fisheries investment. A fund for fishing communities that excludes the largest group of people who actually fish in this country cannot credibly claim to serve those communities. The Action Plan provides the moment to fix this.

## Challenges

- Public funding for fisheries (FaSS, UK Seafood Fund and predecessors) has been overwhelmingly directed at the commercial sector. Recreational sea fishing and its economic and social value is not reflected in funding allocations.
- Charter operators have limited access to fleet modernisation, decarbonisation and infrastructure funding.
- Shore-based recreational fishing infrastructure receives no dedicated public investment despite its role in sustaining coastal economies.
- Voluntary and club infrastructure that underpins much recreational sea fishing activity operates with very limited financial resilience, despite offering a vital social lifeline to many coastal communities.
- England's first-year FCGF allocation of £22.6 million is strikingly modest against the Fund's £304 million lifetime budget for England - coastal communities need investment now, not a slow drip over a decade.

## Opportunities

- **Co-investment in fisheries science, management and the workforce pipeline.** Targeted funding for recreational catch data, charter logbook schemes, citizen science and youth participation programmes) improves the evidence base for stock management and feeds directly into the recruitment pipeline for charter, commercial and wider maritime careers.
- **Dual-use coastal infrastructure with broad public benefit.** Investment in piers, harbours, slipways, pontoons and coastal access delivers across multiple users - charter operators, commercial fishermen, shore and boat anglers, and the wider coastal visitor economy - strengthening the cost-benefit case for fisheries and coastal funding.
- **Social licence, education and ocean literacy.** Hundreds of thousands of sea anglers are credible public advocates for the marine environment, and recreational fishing is one of the most effective routes to ocean literacy for young people in coastal communities. Funded participation strengthens the political and public foundation on which fisheries policy depends, and delivers against Defra and DfE priorities on environmental education.
- **Connection to blue spaces, wellbeing and coastal regeneration.** Sea angling is an established route to physical activity, mental health improvement and social connection - particularly for veterans, men experiencing poor mental health and disadvantaged young people. Funded participation contributes directly to DHSC, NHS, MHCLG and Plan for Neighbourhoods priorities on wellbeing, social prescribing and regeneration in coastal communities, which are consistently among the most deprived in England.

## Priority Actions

- Allocate a specific recreational sea fishing envelope within the Fishing and Coastal Growth Fund and other fisheries funding programmes
- Open fleet modernisation and decarbonisation funding to charter operators on equal terms with small-scale commercial businesses.
- Include shore fishing infrastructure (piers, sea walls, coastal access, amenities) and small-boat launch infrastructure (slipways, trailer parking) within FCGF priorities from year two.
- Publish year-by-year FCGF budget allocations and meaningfully front-load investment to where it is needed now.
- Align coastal water quality investment with marine recreational fisheries outcomes, with sea anglers and the Angling Trust as delivery partners.

## Our Asks: A Summary for the APPG

Drawing the threads together, the Angling Trust asks the APPG on Fisheries to ensure that the Action Plan for a thriving and sustainable UK fishing industry includes the following commitments:

1. **Recognise recreational sea fishing as part of the UK fishing industry**, in line with the Joint Fisheries Statement definition, with explicit treatment in policy, funding and consultation.
2. **Recognise charter boat operators as seafaring businesses** with the same standing in fleet modernisation, decarbonisation and infrastructure funding as small-scale commercial vessels.
3. **Guarantee formal recreational sea angling representation** in Regional Fisheries Management Forums, the Sea Use Framework, FMPs, IFCA's and other management bodies - covering shore anglers, boat anglers and charter operators.
4. **Open the Fishing and Coastal Growth Fund to the recreational sector**, including tailored funding for shore fishing infrastructure (piers, sea walls, coastal access, amenities), slipway maintenance and trailer parking for boat anglers, and charter boat eligibility - included in Fund priorities from year two.
5. **Capture and publish the economic contribution of recreational sea angling** within official fisheries economic statistics, so that any assessment of how fishing sustains coastal communities reflects the full picture.
6. **Include recreational fishing as a named, legitimate use of marine space** within the Sea Use Framework, with equal standing to commercial fishing - covering shore marks, inshore grounds, launch sites and charter operating areas.

7. **Apply a proportionate, evidence-based approach to MPA and HPMA management measures** that distinguishes rod-and-line fishing from industrial methods and does not impose blanket restrictions on one of the lowest-impact forms of fishing.
8. **Require Defra officials to engage with the recreational sector** as part of any port and community engagement programme, including visits to shore marks, angling events and charter skippers.
9. **Publish MMO enforcement data** so that recreational anglers can have confidence that rules are applied fairly across all sectors.
10. **Embed recreational fishing in the workforce and skills pipeline of the wider industry**, with recruitment programmes recognised as a long-term investment in coastal maritime careers.
11. **Address coastal water quality as a fisheries issue**, aligning water company investment cycles, storm overflow reduction and agricultural runoff measures with the recovery of inshore fisheries.
12. **Commission a recreational sea fishing strategy** led by Defra, MMO and Cefas, as a companion to the Action Plan, to give the sector the institutional home it currently lacks.

## Conclusion

The Angling Trust welcomes the APPG's initiative and the opportunity to contribute to the Action Plan. We urge the APPG to ensure the Plan reflects the full scope of the fishing industry as defined in the Joint Fisheries Statement - including the substantial, distinctive and currently under-recognised contribution of recreational sea fishing and the charter angling fleet.

A thriving and sustainable UK fishing industry cannot be built on a partial view of who fishes, where they fish, what they catch and what they contribute. It must include the shore angler on the pier, the boat angler at the slipway, the charter skipper in the harbour, and the youngster taking part in their first fishing session - alongside the commercial fleet. Done well, the Action Plan can put recreational fisheries on a fairer footing, strengthen charter boats as the seafaring businesses they are, deliver better outcomes for stocks and coastal communities, and strengthen the broader case for a thriving and sustainable UK fishing industry - socially, environmentally and economically.

We would welcome the opportunity to give oral evidence or to discuss any of the issues raised in this submission in greater depth.

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