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Dear Minister

4<sup>th</sup> May 2020

First of all, it has been remiss of me not to thank you for your positive contribution in obtaining for Sea Anglers what we talked about in our meeting prior to December Council last year with regards to Recreational Sea Anglers and Bass retention for 2020. I must apologise for this oversight.

You may know that as well as being Chair of the Welsh Federation of Sea Anglers and sitting on your Welsh Marine Fisheries Advisory group, I am also Chair of Angling Cymru, which is the umbrella body representing recreational angling in Wales, and is the only recreational angling body recognised and supported by Sport Wales and the Welsh Government.

Angling is important to Wales as around 150,000 people living in Wales go fishing, plus thousands of visitors each year. Angling brings in an estimated £250million to support local economies while aligning very well with the Welsh Government's aims for more sustainable living where wellbeing, including good mental and physical health, are vital components. Anglers are also widely recognised as excellent guardians of the natural environment.

Angling Cymru has already advised anglers to follow Welsh Government regulations during the Coronavirus outbreak as this is the law and the best way to save lives and to support our National Health Service. For recreational angling and during the current lockdown, this means that no one should be fishing at all. This includes coarse, game or sea fishing and boat or kayak fishing of any kind. This remains the Welsh Government's policy position and we will not advise our members otherwise but will continue to monitor the UK and Welsh Government's instructions and advice on the outbreak. With very few exceptions anglers have recognised that current restrictions are sensible and as the peak of the outbreak passes, and they have complied.

Angling Cymru would like to propose a process whereby recreational angling can be, safely, phased back into anglers' lives. We believe that this can be done within the Governments Framework to Lead Wales out of the Coronavirus Pandemic and would have a significant impact on the health and mental well-being of anglers and positive economic benefits within the angling trade in Wales.



Angling Cymru proposes that when Welsh Government decides the time is right to ease restrictions on public movement, that recreational angling is an allowable activity subject to the following conditions: -

- Freshwater fishing where fisheries can support social distancing measures for anglers, including arrival to the venue, set pegs for fishing, shared pegs only for anglers from the same household, departure from the venue, online payments only and adequate supervision of these measures during it's opening hours.
- Coarse angling on rivers is currently in its closed season until 16<sup>th</sup> June, after which the above social distancing measures will apply.
- Game angling on rivers are advised to maintain social distancing measures including fishing only as a group with their own household members, otherwise maintaining a suitable distance from any other angler on the venue.
- Sea fishing from the shore only, where anglers are advised to maintain social distancing measures including fishing only as a group with their own household members, otherwise maintaining a suitable distance from any other angler on the venue.
- Local fishing only – anglers MUST follow current Welsh Government guidance on travel for the benefit of recreational activity.
- Anglers should take adequate supplies of food and drink for the duration of their fishing to avoid any unnecessary stops and contact to obtain these supplies on route.
- Anglers should carry hand sanitiser for use before and after navigating gates, stiles, fences and any other objects they may come into contact with whilst walking to the fishing venue.

In addition to these conditions we propose clear instructions to fisheries, clubs and anglers at this stage: -

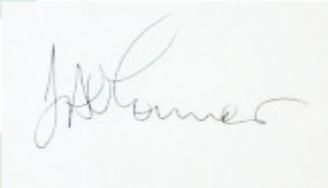
- No angler experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or sharing a household with a person experiencing symptoms should go fishing. They should continue to follow Welsh Governments advice on isolation
- No competition fishing
- No boat or kayak fishing of any kind
- No keepnets to be used
- No onsite shared facilities to be re-opened (e.g. cafes or clubhouses)

The Welsh Government's document 'Leading Wales out of the coronavirus pandemic' says that options for relaxing lockdown restrictions are to be tested against several principles. Angling Cymru has reviewed Pillar Two of this document and considers that recreational angling satisfies these tests. Our proposals are just the initial phase of reintroducing angling to our communities and we hope with a slow and safe approach these measures can be gradually eased to include competitions, boat and kayak fishing under stringent guidelines.



Our equivalent organisation in England - Angling Trust has recently published its Guidance to UK Ministers on permitting angling as a safe activity for mental and physical wellbeing during the COVID-19 crisis (<https://joinanglingtrust.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/FULL-REPORT-TO-GOVERNMENT-MINISTERS-FINAL-1.pdf>). In this excellent guidance and in the letter to the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP that accompanies it, Angling Trust note that UK Government scientists have concluded that lifting restrictions on some outdoor activities including angling would not result in a rise in the infection rate above the all-important R1 figure. This conclusion is unsurprising as many European countries decided that, as angling is a naturally self-isolating pastime, it as a low risk outdoor activity that they could allow during the peak of the infection without increasing the transmission of the virus. Looking back, the rates of infection in these countries are relatively lower that the UK infection rate.

Yours respectfully



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Written in conjunction with & supported by:-

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