

AS-POL-001/20

National Game Angling Centre
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Jeane Freeman OBE
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport
The Scottish Government
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
EDINBURGH
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30th April 2020

Dear Ms Freeman

I am writing as Chairman of Angling Scotland Ltd, which is the representative body for all recreational Angling in Scotland and comprises the three discipline Governing Bodies; Scottish Anglers National Association (SANA), Scottish Federation for Coarse Angling (SFCA) and the Scottish Federation of Sea Anglers (SFSA).

Following the First Minister's announcement in last Thursday's COVID briefing about wishing to commence a conversation with the wider Scottish public about the way ahead, we felt the time was right to engage with you and our colleagues and offer our support with what will undoubtedly be a very challenging process to manage some form of return to a 'new normal'. This document seeks to facilitate that process and to support your decision-making by ensuring that you have all of the relevant information relating to angling readily to hand.

Throughout the current pandemic we have fully supported the government's position and guidance, and actively promoted the clear message that anglers should stay at home, stay safe and protect our NHS. We understand however that the UK Government's scientists have recently advised that the easing of restrictions on certain non-contact, outdoor activities such as angling would not result in a rise of the infection rate above the all-important R1 figure, and might therefore feasibly be in the forefront of activities for which restrictions could be lifted in the context of overall lockdown-easing strategies.

Recreational angling is a naturally self-isolated outdoor sport which, even in busy commercial settings and team competition, complies with current government guidelines on social distancing due to the space requirements between participants. As a sport angling also transcends social and physical barriers. It is affordable, accessible and equally engages both able bodied participants and those with disabilities. There is a large amount of evidence of the benefits that angling can have on both physical and particularly mental health and wellbeing of participants. For this reason, finding a way to allow angling to recommence in some form will have a hugely beneficial impact on those who perhaps cannot run or cycle, and for whom fishing is their only form of exercise or outdoor activity. It is this very group who, during the current lockdown, are at the greatest risk of developing mental health issues through inactivity and isolation.

Our proposal is broadly in line with that being proposed by the Angling Trust in England and Wales but tailored to the needs of Scotland. It is considerably firmer than the regulations operating in

many other EU nations who have permitted angling to continue as a safe and beneficial activity throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

We firmly believe that Angling is a low risk outdoor activity that government could permit, in line with overarching restrictions on travel and social distancing, without risk of increasing transmission rates of COVID-19 and we therefore commend this proposal to you.

I am available on (tel number redacted) and would welcome the opportunity to discuss this proposal ahead of the next review of current measure which we believe is due to be announced on 7th May.

We look forward to hearing from you

Yours sincerely,

David Ogg
Independent Chair

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