



# Angling Scotland Limited



**OUR PROPOSAL FOR RE-OPENING RECREATIONAL  
ANGLING IN SCOTLAND**

# BACKGROUND INFORMATION



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## Background

The Scottish Government is planning for a managed transition away from current lockdown restrictions, seeking to very carefully open up parts of our economy and society in a way that enables the suppression of COVID-19 transmission to continue.

This note has been prepared by Angling Scotland Ltd, the representative body for Scotland's angling community, to put forward details of a progressive approach to easing restrictions so that angling can recommence across the country without prejudice to the overriding goal of safeguarding public health and protecting the NHS.

## Why reopen angling?

- Angling is a healthy and extremely popular outdoor activity which has been proven to be beneficial to both the mental and physical wellbeing of participants. For disabled anglers in particular, the act of going out fishing is an ideal way to combine gentle exercise and fresh air on a regular basis.
- Angling is economically significant within the Scottish economy. Commercial fisheries and other enterprises that provide or support angling facilities are virtually all small rural businesses. In almost every case they have suffered sudden and complete loss of income since the lockdown commenced. The impact on "upstream" businesses in manufacturing and retail is less conspicuous, but could be substantial in the long term.
- Angling carries a low inherent potential for COVID-19 transmission. Angling practices are conducive to maintaining physical separation between participants, and can readily be adapted to accommodate specific social distancing measures imposed or recommended by the authorities.
- Angling helps protect our waterways and the surrounding countryside. The presence of anglers can deter others who mistreat the outdoor environment - sad to say, we are seeing a rise in reports of illegal fish removals, vandalism, and fly-tipping at what would normally be popular fishing spots – and provides an "early warning" mechanism for identifying incidents of pollution or fish disease.



We should make clear at the outset that the steps we are putting forward are subject to any overriding conditions in present and/or future Scottish Government legislation/guidance. So, for instance, references to social distancing are based on the current provisions forbidding any assembly of more than two persons, and for people to remain a minimum of two metres apart. Equally, any relaxation enabling people to participate in angling could *not* apply to those required to self-isolate because of current or recent symptoms of COVID-19.

We envisage a phased approach, with a basic minimum set of measures being introduced immediately and hopefully - expanded by stages relatively soon in the light of experience and emerging best practice. However, the "package" is inherently flexible and can allow for individual measures to be withdrawn or reeled back if necessary without requiring to be abandoned as a whole. For example, our proposal sees competitive angling returning in the second phase subject to detailed Codes of Practice being developed by the Scottish Governing Bodies.

Initial work in this area suggests that competition angling, with minor adjustments to the organisation of certain aspects, could be facilitated whilst maintaining current social distancing measures and could thus recommence when Scottish Ministers feel the time is right to reduce restrictions on the assembly of more than two persons.

Critical to our proposals, however, is a reconsideration by the Scottish Government of what constitutes "essential travel" and the establishment of clear parameters for the radius within which it is permissible to travel (perhaps only by bicycle, motorcycle or private car) for undertaking angling and other forms of outdoor activity and exercise.

The reason for this is the demographic. Most people live in urban areas, chiefly in the Central Belt, whereas most places to fish are on the coast or in rural areas. Denying people the option of using motorised transport to go fishing would mean that only a small fraction of the population could benefit from the relaxation. Furthermore, setting the "radius" parameters too low might be counterproductive, putting unsustainable pressure on fisheries within the relevant range of major population centres and creating congestion that could compromise social distancing standards. There is as yet no firm evidence on which to judge the optimum balance on this issue, but we understand that most anglers in Scotland tend to travel for a minimum of something between forty minutes and an hour to pursue their sport. This would indicate a radius of between thirty and fifty miles, and we, therefore, suggest that a figure of forty miles is set as a starting point.





The list below summarises, in bullet point form, our proposals for particular restrictions on angling practices during the emergence from lockdown, and the phases in which we think they might be introduced. To assist Ministers we have also prepared a detailed risk matrix which is appended.

1. Angling in the sea and in freshwater will be permissible;
  - a. from the shore/bank (including piers and jetties)
  - b. from a boat, inflatable, RIB, kayak or float tube carrying one person only
2. Anglers travelling to go fishing must follow current Scottish Government guidance on the distance permitted to travel for recreational activity.
3. Anglers travelling in motor vehicles should do so alone, unless being accompanied by a member of the same household.
4. Fisheries and angling clubs should seek to make permits, season tickets and club memberships available by post or online. Wherever possible payments should be processed by contactless card facilities or electronic channels
5. Anglers must observe minimum social distancing standards (currently two metres) at all times. In this context:
  - a. Cars should be parked so as to provide for appropriate separation;
  - b. Anglers should not assemble in groups of more than two;
  - c. Anglers should normally not share fishing positions/swims, except with members of the same household;
  - d. Anglers must not share fishing tackle or any other items, except with members of the same household.
6. Fishing tackle shops, including those onsite at fisheries, should be allowed to reopen, subject to social distancing requirements applicable to other retailers. Wherever possible payments should be processed by contactless card facilities or electronic channels.
7. Cafes and clubhouses at fisheries should remain closed, as long as such restrictions apply to similar facilities elsewhere. They should however be permitted to sell takeaway sandwiches etc on the same basis as takeaway food businesses in the outside world.
8. Fisheries or angling clubs repeatedly found to be disregarding or tolerating breaches of these guidelines or general COVID-19 restrictions may be ordered to close their facilities.



### FUTURE PHASES

*Subsequent phase(s) (subject to ongoing developments in government guidance)*

1. Angling competitions will be permitted, subject to detailed Codes of Practice currently under development by the Scottish Governing Bodies
2. Impact of travel restrictions will be kept under review (in dialogue with the Scottish Government) with a view to extending the permissible "radius" to facilitate angling in a wider range of locations where possible.
3. Shared and guided boat fishing will be allowed to resume in the sea and freshwater, subject to adherence with social distancing guidelines. Boats containing two or more people would require to be of an appropriate size (suggest 3.6m for two people and 4.5m for three, with skippers of charter vessels or larger private boats required to show relevant distancing on a case-by-case basis).
4. Catering / clubhouse facilities at fisheries will be allowed to reopen as and when emerging Scottish Government guidelines on similar types of facility allow.

#### **Next steps**

We hope that the proposals in this document will be given full consideration in forthcoming discussions between Ministers and Sportscotland, and subsequently in Ministers' deliberations over the next stage of Scotland's reaction to the COVID-19 emergency. We would be happy to elaborate on any of the information concerned, or to discuss relevant matters with interested parties.

Chairman, Angling Scotland

# RISK MATRIX



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| GETTING ANGLING IN SCOTLAND BACK ON LINE – Risk Matrix |   |  |   |                       |                                 |   |
|--|---|--|---|-----------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Phase 1  | Proposed Measures   | Rationale  | Risk Mitigation Measures  | Ease of communication | Likelihood of public compliance | Impact of Human Rights/legal considerations |
| General Principle                                      | All proposals are subject to any overriding conditions in Scottish Government legislation/guidance. Eg references to social distancing are based on the current provisions forbidding any assembly of more than two persons, and for people to remain a minimum of two metres apart. Equally, any relaxation enabling people to participate in angling could <i>not</i> apply to those required to self-isolate because of current or recent symptoms of COVID-19.                    | Following general guidance is essential to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in whatever circumstances. It also reduces the risk of conflict between different sections of the public, makes communication, understanding and enforcement easier.  | Regular reminders of rules and appropriate practices on website, social media and other platforms   | 1                     | High                            | Low   |
| PHASE 1  | Angling in the sea and in freshwater will be permissible: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>from the shore/bank (including piers and jetties); or</li> <li>from a boat, inflatable, RIB, kayak or float tube <u>carrying one person only</u></li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Angling benefits the participants' mental and physical wellbeing</li> <li>Angling is economically significant for Scotland</li> <li>Angling carries a low potential for COVID-19 transmission.</li> <li>Angling helps protect our waterways and the countryside.</li> </ul>   | Regular reminders of rules and appropriate practices on website, social media and other platforms   | 1                     | High                            | Low   |
|  | Anglers travelling to go fishing must follow current Scottish Government guidance on the distance permitted to travel for recreational activity.<br><br>(This invites the Scottish Government to reconsider what constitutes "essential travel", and establish clear parameters for the radius within which it is permissible to travel (perhaps only by bicycle, motorcycle or private car) for the purpose of undertaking angling and other forms of outdoor activity and exercise) | Most people live in urban areas, but most places to fish are on the coast or in rural areas. Forbidding the use of motorised transport would mean only a small fraction of the population could go fishing. And setting the "radius" parameters too low might put undue pressure on fisheries near major population centres, thus creating congestion that could compromise social distancing standards. Most anglers in Scotland tend to travel for a minimum of something between forty minutes and an hour to pursue their sport. This would indicate a radius of between thirty and fifty miles, and we therefore suggest that a figure of – forty miles – is set as a starting point. | Implementation/recommendation of certain control measures around travel to/from venues for recreational activity.<br><br>We will develop an angling code of conduct on this subject for publication on our website/social media. It may include matters such as : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A requirement for individuals to travel direct to/from the venue without stopping for fuel/snacks/drinks outside their home area.</li> <li>Minimising unnecessary contact with surfaces, gates, fences etc on arrival at venue.</li> </ul> | 1                     | High                            | Low   |
|  | Anglers travelling in motor vehicles should do so alone, unless being accompanied by a member of the same household.  | Consistent with general Scottish Government guidance to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19.   | Regular reminders of rules and appropriate practices on website, social media and other platforms   | 1                     | High                            | Low   |
|  | Fisheries and angling clubs should seek to make permits, season tickets and club memberships available by post or online. Wherever possible payments should be processed by contactless card facilities or electronic channels.   | Consistent with general Scottish Government guidance to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19.   | Regular reminders of appropriate practices on website, social media and other platforms   | 1                     | High                            | Low   |
|  | Anglers must observe minimum social distancing standards at all times: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Car parking should provide for appropriate separation;</li> <li>Anglers should not assemble in groups of more than two;</li> <li>Anglers should normally not share fishing positions / swims, except with members of the same household;</li> <li>Anglers must only share fishing tackle or other items, with members of the same household.</li> </ul>                 | Consistent with general Scottish Government guidance to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19.   | Regular reminders of rules and appropriate practices on website, social media and other platforms   | 1                     | High                            | Low   |
|  | Fishing tackle shops, including those onsite at fisheries, should be allowed to reopen, subject to social distancing requirements applicable to other retailers.  | Availability of tackle and bait is important if angling is to resume. Consistent treatment of fishing shops and other retailers reduces the risk of conflict between different sections of the public, makes communication, understanding and enforcement easier.  | Wherever possible payments should be processed by contactless card facilities or electronic channels.   | 1                     | High                            | Low   |
| PHASE 1  | Cafes and clubhouses at fisheries should remain closed, as long as such restrictions apply to similar facilities elsewhere. They should however be permitted to sell takeaway sandwiches etc on the same basis as takeaway food businesses in the outside world.  | The sale of takeaway food is an important element of commercial fisheries' business. Consistent treatment as between fisheries and other food outlets reduces the risk of conflict between different sections of the public, makes communication, understanding and enforcement easier.  | Wherever possible payments should be processed by contactless card facilities or electronic channels.   | 1                     | High                            | Low   |
|  | Fisheries or angling clubs repeatedly found to be disregarding or tolerating breaches of these guidelines or general COVID-19 restrictions may be ordered to close their facilities.  | Crucial backstop to ensure compliance, if all else fails, with general Scottish Government guidance to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19.  | Regular reminders of rules and appropriate practices on website, social media and other platforms.<br><br>Support in the form of advice etc to fisheries/clubs in danger of failing compliance tests.   | 1                     | High                            | Low   |

# RISK MATRIX



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| GETTING ANGLING IN SCOTLAND BACK ON LINE – Risk Matrix |   |  |  |                       |                                 |  |
|--|---|--|--|-----------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Phase 2  | Proposed Measures   | Rationale  | Risk Mitigation Measures   | Ease of communication | Likelihood of public compliance | Impact of Human Rights/ legal considerations |
| Phase 2  | Angling competitions will be permitted, subject to detailed Codes of Practice currently under development by the Scottish Governing Bodies  | Competitive angling is a popular element of all branches of the sport, but requires some modifications to existing practices to ensure compliance with general Scottish Government guidance to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19                         | We will develop detailed Codes of Practice to ensure compliance and publish on websites and social media platforms.<br>We will offer support and advice to fisheries, clubs or individuals seeking to organise competitions.       | 2                     | High                            | Low  |
|  | Impact of travel restrictions to be kept under review (in dialogue with Scottish Government) with a view to extending the permissible "radius" to a wider range of locations where possible.      | The wider the radius within which people are free to fish, the less will be the pressure on individual venues and the more opportunities will be open to anglers.  | We will review the angling code of conduct on this subject that we mentioned in the corresponding item at Phase 1, taking account of the evidence emerging from initial experience.  | 2                     | High                            | Low  |
|  | Shared and guided boat fishing will be allowed to resume in the sea and freshwater, subject to adherence with social distancing guidelines.   | There are various safety and other considerations which mean that much of the boat-based fishing in both sea and freshwater in Scotland can only take place from craft carrying two or more anglers.   | Code of conduct to be produced. Boats carrying two or more people need to be of appropriate size, with skippers of charter vessels or larger private boats required to show scope for relevant distancing on a case-by-case basis. | 2                     | High                            | Low  |
|  | Catering / clubhouse facilities at fisheries will be allowed to reopen as and when emerging Scottish Government guidelines on similar types of facility allow. See corresponding item in Phase 1. | The sale of food is important for commercial fisheries' business. Consistent treatment as between fisheries and other food outlets reduces the risk of conflict between different sections of the public, makes communication, understanding and enforcement easier. | General best practice guidance for the catering sector should be followed.   | 1                     | High                            | Low  |