

Angling bosses up pressure for phased return

David Ogg, chairman of Angling Scotland (AS), which represents game, coarse and sea fishermen north of the Border, has put forward 'a progressive approach' to Jeane Freeman, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport to ease restrictions on the sport.

He claims the initiative will not prejudice public health and the Kinross-based organisation believes angling is a healthy and extremely popular outdoor activity which has proved to be beneficial to the mental and physical well-being of participants.

For disabled anglers in particular, fishing is an ideal way to combine gentle exercise and fresh air on a regular basis.

The proposal added: "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."

He argued that angling carries a low inherent potential for COVID-19 transmission as the sport practices physical separation.

Ogg argued: "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."

Bosses envisage a phased approach with a basic minimum set of measures being introduced immediately and hopefully expanded by stages.

Angling Scotland want fishing in the sea and in freshwater from the shore/bank (including piers and jetties) or from a boat, inflatable, RIB, kayak or float tube carrying one person only.

Critical to the proposals a 40-miles radius for travel and anglers would have to make the journey alone unless they are accompanied by a member of the same household.

Fisheries and angling clubs should, under the plan, make permits, season tickets and club memberships available by post or online and payments should be processed by contactless card or electronic channels.

Anglers on-site must observe minimum social distancing standards and fishing tackle or any other items should not be shared.

Cafes and clubhouses at fisheries should remain closed under the plan but owners should be permitted to sell takeaway sandwiches on the same basis as takeaway food businesses.

And the proposal stressed: "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."

"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.”