

**Appendix 2 to Agenda  
item B4**

Dr William Wright,

Chief IFC Officer Kent & Essex IFCA,

Paragon House,

Ramsgate,

Kent,

CT11 9HD

Grovebury

Rattlesden Road

Drinkstone,

Bury St Edmunds,

Suffolk,

IP30 9TL

8<sup>th</sup> Aug 2014

Dear Dr Wright,

**Bass Conservation in Suffolk & Essex Estuaries**

I am writing to you following my recent correspondence with DEFRA. As you will see from my letter dated 20<sup>th</sup> June to George Eustice, Minister Responsible for Fisheries, that I am very concerned about the lack of action being taken at EU, national and a local level to protect rapidly declining and vulnerable UK bass stocks.

You will note from the last paragraph of the letter from DEFRA that they are aware of the concerns regarding the issue of commercial netting from boats in estuaries and the impact this has on recreational pursuits and the sustainability of fish stocks in the area. They have advised me to take forward the need for licensing arrangements around netting with your IFCA and the Eastern IFCA.

I am most concerned that bass conservation is not a priority for either the Kent and Essex or Eastern IFCAs given both the dire state of bass stocks and the level of netting in the Stour and Orwell estuaries by both commercial and unlicensed netsmen.

The recreational sea angling community is dismayed and angry at the failure of the 2 local IFCA's in this region to take steps to protect vulnerable bass stocks. As DEFRA acknowledge, immediate action is needed at EU, national and local level before bass stocks collapse. I urge you to make this matter an urgent priority for your organisation and ensure that my concerns are brought to the next meeting of K&E IFCA.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Holborn

The Rt. Hon. George Eustice MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary DEFRA  
House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

Grovebury  
Rattlesden Road  
Drinkstone  
Bury St Edmunds  
Suffolk IP30 9TL  
20<sup>th</sup> June 2014

Dear Minister,

I am writing to you in your position as Minister responsible for Fisheries to ask you to take immediate action to protect rapidly declining and vulnerable UK bass stocks. As you will be aware ICES figures show that bass stocks have crashed to their lowest level for 20 years. Last year's survey by CEFAS in the Solent bass fishery showed very low survival rates and the lowest numbers of 2-4 year old fish for 25 years.

There are 884,000 of us sea anglers in England; sea angling supports £2.1 billion spending and 23,600 jobs in England. It is estimated anglers catch between 380 and 690 tonnes of bass in England of which 230 to 440 tonnes are kept. This compares to commercial landings in 2012 of 897 tonnes. The first sale value of ALL commercial landings into England is only £164 million and that includes a wide range of species such as lobsters, cockles, monkfish, lemon sole, hake that are of no direct interest to recreational anglers. If from this list you include only the species of interest to both commercial fishing and anglers alike, you are left with commercial landings worth just £35 million at market in 2012. (All figures are taken from Sea Angling 2012 Report)

So those fishery resources upon which the recreational angling sector across England are dependent, and which drive £2 billion worth of expenditure, are ONLY WORTH £35 million to commercial fishing. First sale landings value – what the fishermen receive – is less than 2% of what sea anglers put into the economy. Prioritising short term earnings for commercial fishermen has to end and the wellbeing of the resources themselves needs to be first priority. Right now, our marine fisheries management isn't fit for purpose. If you compare the benefit to economy of the fish caught by commercial fishermen and sea anglers in England, you find sea angling contributes over 20 times as much.

I appreciate that EU wide measures are needed to protect bass stocks particularly vulnerable spawning aggregations, and that these need to include closing the major bass spawning areas to all commercial vessels that target bass during the spring months and capping the allowable monthly catch per vessel as an EU standard. I support your efforts to get EU wide bass conservation but we must do our bit within UK territorial waters as they have done in Eire with significant positive results. Here in Suffolk commercial fishing pressure in the Stour and Orwell estuaries has reached unprecedented levels this summer. Unlicensed netsmen continue to plunder bass stocks in these estuaries too and despite my submitting photographic evidence of the activities of unlicensed netsmen

to both the Kent and Essex, and Eastern IFCAs, they have done nothing to curb illegal netting. Furthermore they have ignored local representations to introduce byelaws to protect highly vulnerable bass stocks in these confined estuaries. The IFCAs are dominated by MMO nominees who have no interest in representing sea angling interest.

It is vital that the minimum landing size (MLS) for bass is increased from 36cm to 45cm as a matter of urgency to allow female fish at least once chance to spawn before they are caught. I would be pleased to learn when you propose to carry out the much delayed consultation on increasing the MLS for bass. I would also be grateful if you could impress on my 2 local IFCA's the vital importance of taking immediate steps to protect vulnerable bass stocks in Suffolk and Essex estuaries through using local bylaws and for them to start taking account of recreational sea angling interests.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Holborn

cc to:

Theresa Coffey MP  
Daniel Poulter MP  
Bernard Jenkin MP  
Kent & Essex IFCA  
Eastern IFCA



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for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

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Mr P Holborn  
Grovebury  
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Bury St Edmunds  
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Our ref: DWO351118/FA

July 2014

Dear Mr Holborn,

**Bass Stocks**

Thank you for your letter of 20 June about UK bass fishing and the positive contribution that Sea Anglers make to the UK economy. I have been asked to reply.

I would like to assure you that Defra is committed to managing the marine environment for the benefit of all marine users, including recreational and commercial fishermen alike. Defra recognises the importance of both sectors and their respective contributions to the UK economy.

As you are no doubt aware, in February 2013, the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea's (ICES) published a benchmark assessment report for European bass which indicated the stock levels were declining. It is clear from the conclusions of the ICES report that conservation measures need to be introduced at a European level. Defra has been, and still is, continuing to push for effective EU-wide conservation measures that will ensure the stock recovers and becomes sustainable.

In June 2014 ICES published its latest report on bass stocks which have continued the downward trend in numbers reported in previous years. The findings from this report are to be considered by the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF), which will inform both UK and EU policy as we collectively seek viable solutions to address the exploitation of the bass stock.

The UK raised concerns over the Commission's earlier decision to refer the UK's proposed management measures to their scientific committee rather than acting immediately to protect the bass spawning aggregation areas during 2014.

The UK position, supported by most other Member States, recommends short term action at EU level with a package of technical measures to address the decline. As you are aware potential measures include closing the major bass spawning areas to all commercial vessels that target bass during the spring months to protect spawning fish, and capping the allowable monthly catch per vessel as an EU standard. Beyond any interim package that may be adopted along these lines, there is a Member State consensus that an EU management plan should be developed.

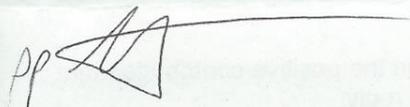


INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE

Defra will consider the need for domestic management of bass in the context of these discussions and the implications of potential delays to European action. Defra will also be looking at the importance of bass as part its research project on 'Population studies in support of the conservation of the European sea bass'. Further information can be found here:  
[http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Document.aspx?Document=11700\\_MF1233initialtwopagessummaryfinal.pdf](http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Document.aspx?Document=11700_MF1233initialtwopagessummaryfinal.pdf).

We are aware that there are currently concerns in certain parts of England regarding the issue of commercial netting from boats in estuaries, and the impact of this on recreational pursuits and the sustainability of fish stocks in the area. However, as statutory authorities, the Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) play an important role in the management of our inshore fisheries. The licensing arrangements around netting is therefore a local matter that you will need to take forward with the respective IFCAs, in this instance Kent and Essex, and Eastern. We expect the IFCAs to assess and take appropriate action on local issues.

Yours sincerely,



Fiona Amos  
Defra - Customer Contact Unit

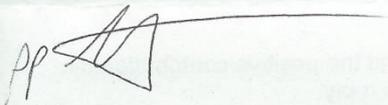


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Yours sincerely,



Fiona Amos  
Defra - Customer Contact Unit

