

Appendix 1 to Agenda item B8

20 August 2014

Dear Sir,

I am writing on behalf of our association concerning the extra pressure that has been put on Smoothound and Tope fishery in and around the Thames Estuary, Our association has members with over 40 years professional charting out of the Thames Estuary and over the last 4 to 5 years we have noticed the drop in our catch rate , with breeding females in noticeable decline over the last 4 to 5 years when the pressure from commercial netting has increased,

On all professional charter boats 95% of all Smoothounds are returned alive and even higher numbers of Tope returned, I am sure you are aware that these fish are slow growing not reaching maturity until males are 700mm and females at 800mm and with relatively low spawning numbers we are now very concerned that what is our main summer target will be depleted , these fish account for 80% of our summer bookings and with the loss of our Tope fishing (only since the building of the wind farms in the Thames Estuary) it is now more important as a fishery to us, We know that there are netting boats that are targeting only these fish and with reports of UNSOLD fish DUMPED !!!

We now feel the need to protect what small numbers are left before we see the demise of these magnificent sporting fish before they are wiped out as we have with the Spurdog fishery that once flourished in and around our coast.

Sincerely,

Stuart. S Belbin

Chairman

North Thames Professional Boatman's Association