

## **Conservation Officer Report CFSA Executive Meeting 27<sup>th</sup> September 2011.**

### Allocation of fishery resources between users.

Historically, RSA catches have been regarded as of such little significance, that fisheries management at EU and National level have pretty much only focussed on commercial exploitation. The development of what are known as 'Total Allowable catches' (TACs) and 'Quotas' only applied to commercial fishing.

And when there were plenty of fish, commercials weren't too interested in what RSA took, whilst recreationalists were happy to be left alone to enjoy their sport.

Things are changing however. Fish are both far less abundant and smaller. Some indication of the decline can be gauged from the startling statistics. UK landings of demersal fish – fish like, cod, pollack, plaice, flounder, bass, rays, dabs, ling, gurnard, etc. plummeted from 778,000 tonnes in 1970 to just 144,000 tonnes in 2008. This is despite a huge improvement in fish location/catching technology over that same period.

Now, fisheries managers, scientists, commercial fishermen, and others involved in the debate about fish stocks are beginning to take an increasing interest in what RSA takes.

It goes like this. You've got an apple tree in your garden and when it's loaded with apples – far more than you can eat yourself, you're not bothered if your neighbour picks a few off the branch that overhangs his garden. But what if it's a really bad year and there aren't even enough for your requirements? Then you want the couple of pounds that are on those branches overhanging the neighbour's garden!

In fish terms, if the commercials catch 1000 fish and the anglers catch 5, no one is bothered. It represents half of one percent. But if the commercial catch is down to 100 and the anglers are taking 5, that represents 5% and suddenly, everyone is interested. It's not that simple of course because as we all know, as fish have become scarcer, our catches have dwindled as well.

But you get the general drift.

Slowly but surely, the debate about whether RSA should be part of the TAC/Quota system is gaining momentum. The first serious signs of RSA being allotted a share of the fisheries catch are apparent in France & Spain where the commercials are even more influential within fisheries than they are here. The species is Blue Fin tuna. This species is in serious trouble and commercial catches are, at long last, being ratcheted down after decades of cheating and blatant disregard for quotas, minimum landing sizes and closed seasons. The commercials are not happy. They have flexed their considerable political muscle and now RSA is also controlled with quota controls. And what % have RSA been allocated? Just 1% !

So a public fishery resource that has been decimated by commercial overfishing is now being managed on the basis that RSA are allowed just 1% of the cake.

Could this happen over here? Might RSA one day be restricted to just 1% of a resource? Could we see a scenario where say RSA gets 1% of the total allowable pollack catch? How would this translate into actual management? Might we end up in a situation where recreationals are controlled with restrictive bag limits and closed seasons in order to comply with being allocated a miniscule share of the cake? Sounds like scaremongering?

Truth is, no one knows; and as much as I'm critical of the influence wielded by commercials in the UK, it isn't as bad in some other Member States.

What is clear, however, is that RSA needs to step up its game. We urgently require full time professional representation, in exactly the same way as the commercials are represented so that fisheries managers, scientists, politicians and the public are educated as to the social and economic validity of RSA.

It is no longer tolerable for RSA to be perceived as fishing rods with a fool on one end and a wriggling worm on the other. RSA actually represents those amongst the public who elect to directly access the public fishery resource for their own personal use.

#### Should competitive sea angling be based on catch and release of undersized fish?

I am aware that as a non competitive sea angler, I am straying into potentially controversial territory here. What is driving the competition element to seek dispensation from complying with Minimum Landing Size (MLS) legislation in order to run comps by counting undersized fish?

I've recently seen an email exchange in respect of the Federation International Peche De La Mer (FIPSM) World Champion ships. Take a look at:

[http://www.fipsmer.org/rules/FIPS-M\\_Reglements\\_English\\_Edition\\_1\\_2010.pdf](http://www.fipsmer.org/rules/FIPS-M_Reglements_English_Edition_1_2010.pdf)

It seems to me that fish stocks are so decimated in Italian coastal waters that in order to have a meaningful competition, the organisers have sought and obtained dispensation from legislation which stipulates all undersize fish must be returned immediately. The plan is for participants to be able to measure and record undersized fish and then those fish are returned.

Sounds innocuous enough BUT: Might this bring RSA into disrepute? Is it ethical to base an angling event on undersized fish? Anglers will surely use smaller and smaller hooks to target more plentiful undersize fish?

But what I really cant get to grips with is the apparent unlimited resources – man power and money – that RSA can find when it comes to organising and arranging competitions [ just take a look at <http://www.sfwc2011.it/> ] yet so little interest exists within the RSA community to provide equivalent resources to professionally represent their sector within the fisheries management arena.



Conservation Officer report for CFSA Executive meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2011.

Common Fisheries Reform.

As the 2012 Reform debate warms up, I increasingly hear the voices of MPs & MEPs predictably pandering to the commercial fishing sector.

When will they learn!?

In 2003, I read a paper written by Prof. Thomas Okey of the Fisheries Centre, University of British Columbia, Canada. Prof. Okey argued that one of the core reasons for failed fisheries management around the globe was the dominant role that the commercial catching sector played within the management process. The report's abstract reads: *"Contemporary economic sensibilities within this "industry captured" regulatory process generate perverse incentives for management decisions that conflict with, and can undermine, national sustainability goals and standards, even when those standards are logically sound and agreed to by consensus. Unfortunately, the institutionalized capture of resource decision-making by fishing industries promotes a pathological focus on short-term economic gains that consistently jeopardizes the long-term health of fish stocks and marine ecosystems."*

The report struck a chord with me because I had also arrived at the same conclusion albeit without the scientific expertise to articulate the rationale as well as Prof. Okey.

The Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) which had been set up as a result of the 2002 CFP Reform for sea areas such as North Sea, North West Waters, etc. are a typical example of how the commercial catching sector dominates the process. The RACs are legally committed to having two thirds of their membership from commercial fishing so that other stakeholders such as environmentalists and recreational sea anglers can always be outvoted by commercials.

Then an independent report by an American Natural Resource Lawyer, Josh Eagle, was published about Sea Fisheries Committees in 2006. One of his core findings was that commercial fishing interests were afforded an unwarranted elevated position on the Committees. This was something that recreational anglers had been complaining about for years!

Josh Eagle is an Associate Professor at the University of South Carolina School of Law and is affiliated both with USC's Marine Sciences Program and its School of Earth, Ocean and Environment. He teaches courses in ocean and coastal law, natural resources law, environmental law, and property law. He has authored or

co-authored more than twenty articles on these topics. In 2004, the British Council awarded Eagle an Atlantic Fellowship in Public Policy. This fellowship provided full support for seven months of comparative law research in England and Wales on U.S. and U.K. ocean governance regimes which enabled him to thoroughly research our Sea Fisheries Committees (now replaced with IFCA's).

Recently, two additional commentators have drawn attention to how the commercial fishing lobby are to a large extent, responsible for the depletion of marine fish stocks.

An article in the Times newspaper by their ocean correspondent Frank Pope stated:

*"the real culprits for where we are today are the fishing industry lobbyists."*

I attach the full article.

And: a leading marine ecologist, Rainer Froese has said that contrary to popular belief, the EU Commission is not to blame for the fisheries 'mess', but the member states and the fishermen are.

Froese, from the Leibniz Institute for Marine Sciences at the Christian-Albrechts University of Kiel, Germany, adds: *"The sad state of the European fish stocks is not a natural or societal failure that good management simply could not overcome."*

*"No, it is a desired outcome of Europe's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) which has allowed the fishing lobby to infiltrate the European Union's political system."*

*"In most member states this power is with the ministry of agriculture. Yet too many of these ministries have a cosy relationship with the fishing lobby - many of the civil servants firmly believe it is their job to protect the rights of their national fishing sector, including the rights to obtain subsidies and to overfish."*

*"Perhaps it is because the public still has romantic notions about fishing - the media are drawn to fishermen who block ports or dump fish in the streets of Brussels - that the European fisheries lobby gets away with destructive tactics."*

*"It routinely discredits scientists and their advice, denies the depleted status of stocks, fights the establishment on protected areas, defends the use of destructive equipment, insists on the right to catch juvenile fish and requests the abandonment of closed spawning seasons and areas."*

There was an additional voice that claimed the commercial fishing industry has too much clout. It was the voice of the previous Conservative Fisheries Minister, John Gummer who after his term as Minister ended was quoted in the fishing press as stating he was never able to implement the conservation measures he believed were required because the fishing industry wielded too much political clout. He went on to point out that the lawn mowing business employs more people but didn't have four Ministries across the UK. England, Wales, Northern Ireland & Scotland.

The results of decades of acquiescence to the industry include such stark facts as a reduction in demersal landings into UK from 778,000 tonnes in 1970 to a paltry 144,000 tonnes by 2008 and a reduction in the number of regular fishermen from 8240 in England & Wales in 1995 to a mere 4911 by 2008. Patently, the decisions of a succession of Fisheries Ministers who have listened too much to industry representation, is proving disastrous to the very sector who are making the noise. It brings a whole new meaning to the term self-made men!

What is needed is a Fisheries Minister with the guts of Doug Kidd - Ex Fisheries Minister New Zealand whose catch phrase was "Fish first - people second." He realised the obvious; that to have a profitable fishing sector (recreational and commercial) the single most important ingredient is FISH. Such a policy initially attracted considerable anger from many amongst the commercial industry but over time they reaped the reward. The public fishery resources must always be the number one priority.

To claim the CFP is "industry captured" is a gross understatement and until there is a cultural change amongst Commission staff, National fisheries administrations and above all amongst national Fisheries Ministers that place the wellbeing of our public fishery resources as their overarching responsibility, it is difficult to see how the decline in fish stocks will be ended or depleted stocks restored.

Our message to Benyon is as stark as it is simple: "manage our public marine fishery resources for the Nation rather than the National Federation of Fishermens' Organisation".

Malcolm Gilbert

## Conservation Officer report for CFSA meeting Friday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

### RSA must learn to unite.

There appears to be a growing debate within RSA about the willingness of RSA representatives to accept Catch & Release (C&R) as a core angling policy. Whilst it seems generally acceptable for C&R where fish are too small to keep (frequently the case nowadays) some anglers are concerned that RSA have too easily accepted C&R for eels and tope. Eels are still caught commercially and 45 kg of tope may be landed as a daily by catch by commercials. Some anglers (who understandably like to eat some of what they catch) are concerned that the recent notice by the Angling Trust that they may pursue C&R as an alternative to absolutely 'no fishing' in MCZ Reference zones, indicates to decision makers that RSA is content to accept C&R as ever and wherever it is suggested. This debate and others FORUM debates that I've witnessed and heard about, suggest that the notion of RSA being united on anything is unlikely.

This is a tragedy. United we stand, Divided we fall is a well known quote. Sea anglers will inevitably have different opinions about a wide range of issues, and rightly so, but I beg all recreational sea anglers to be mature enough to realise that for the common good of RSA we need to focus on our core goal of more and bigger fish.

It is depressing to witness so many within RSA expend huge amounts of time and energy, attacking each other, when all that effort really should be channelled into making representation to the common enemy - Defra's failure to manage our fishery resources responsibly.

### Another Defra Consultation

Defra have launched a Consultation into a Reform of Domestic Fisheries Management in England. Full details can be found at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2011/04/05/fisheries-1104/> where you can download Defra's covering letter, Consultee list, Consultation doc., Impact Assessment, full Gov. response to the Sustainable Access Inshore Fisheries Advisory Group.

At first glance one may conclude this hasn't much to do with RSA and superficially it hasn't. But: it is about management of the English under ten metre fleet and I don't need to spell out to recreational sea anglers

how years of Defra management have resulted in an enormous deterioration of our inshore fish stocks. The under ten fleet operate in inshore waters where the vast majority of RSA takes place, so any outcomes have the potential to impact our activity significantly.

One fact which I found interesting, if depressing.

Fisheries statistics/data distinguish between Demersal, Pelagic and shellfish. Most of the fish targeted by RSA fall under the heading of demersal. Species like: Pollack, wrasse, rays, bass, flat fish, cod, gurnard, etc.

In 1970, UK landings of demersal species amounted to 780,000 tonnes. Less than four decades later, in 2009, despite advanced sonar, GPS, new synthetic fishing net materials, sophisticated hydraulic haulers, etc. there were only 150,000 tonnes landed! That represents an 80% decline. Little wonder the quality of RSA has deteriorated!

Finally, and I know you've heard all this from me before, but it still needs repeating. The complexity of the current Defra Consultation (take a look if you think I'm exaggerating) requires many hours to read, digest and constructively respond to with a good dollop of additional consultation within the RSA sector to ensure that RSA's response is representative of the majority view. If grass root sea anglers want the RSA voice to be heard, they need to start thinking who will spend the time putting a response together to this latest Consultation and the many other that will inevitably follow. Effective, high quality responses take Resources that currently NO angling organisation has, and the Resources required can only materialise (if ever they do?) from grass root sea anglers. So my message to all those who just want to go fishing; is, IF you want your sport to be professionally represented to decision makers, just ponder for a moment upon who will do it?

Oh, and in case this report appears overly down beat, I'm pleased to say I went out boat fishing for the first time in many years recently AND I managed a couple of good Pollack & cod to take home for supper - they tasted superb! - far better than the fish I normally have to buy!

Malcolm Gilbert

## **CFSA Executive meeting 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb 2011,**

### **Conservation Officer Report**

#### **Collection of RSA data**

You may recall my mentioning in my last report (AGM 2011) EU CFP Control Regulation 55 . The wording has been altered many times so even now, the exact details of this regulation (if adopted) are unclear. In addition to the EU requirements, Defra wish to collect additional data that includes the socio-economic aspects of RSA. Defra want the RSA Community to assist and play a full role in this project which provides quite a dilemma for the RSA sector. The key question is 'What will the data be used for?'. Is the primary purpose to 'regulate', 'control' and 'restrict' RSA ? Defra for the moment say it is not but that they need to know more about RSA so that they can improve and develop the activity.

Do we trust them? Already. Some angling forums carry vehement and opposing opinions which pitches angler against angler – definitely not desirable.

There are risks/threats from both assisting Defra and not doing so. They will almost certainly proceed regardless and if RSA isn't involved we will never know whether the data collected is truly representative and accurate or whether the results may show that we kill far more fish than we actually do. However, should RSA play a role in the data collection, and subsequently all we see for our efforts are restrictions, it will result in enormous acrimony amongst the RSA community.

#### **Angling Summit 21<sup>st</sup> March.**

The content/agenda for the second day of the Angling Summit is destined to be split 50/50 between freshwater & sea angling. One of Defra's suggested agenda items is: "Building trust between RSA & Government". The civil servants who are involved in fisheries today, have little if any understanding of why RSA feels such levels of antipathy towards successive Governments as it does. They really need to understand at the most basic level that successive Governments have failed to responsibly look after our public fishery resources.

**C.I.P.S.. Confédération Internationale de la Pêche Sportive** [ [www.cips-fips.com/](http://www.cips-fips.com/) ]

Some of the competitive sea anglers may know of CIPs. For reasons that are not clear I have it on good authority that at EU level they are lobbying for licenses for RSA.

### **Bristol Channel bass fishery fails to achieve Marine Stewardship Accreditation.**

But the process identified some issues, which, if addressed, could well see a successful application in the future. This is the fishery that scuppered the attempt at increasing the mls of bass a few years ago because the fishermen claimed they were already discarding up to two thirds of the bass they caught as being undersized (less than 36 cm!). They argued that if the mls went to 40 cm (still only just over a pound and a half) their discard rates would increase and make them unviable. Defra appeared to not even consider the consequences of all those discarded baby bass and how such mortality would negatively impact those fisheries who chose to target larger older fish, recreational & commercial hook & line for instance.

### **Mullet netting**

I attended a meeting with David Rigden and Steve Smith of the National Mullet Club at the office of Eddie Derriman, Chief fisheries officer of Cornwall Sea Fisheries Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> Jan. I can provide notes of the meeting to those who are interested.

### **Hayle Harbour bait digging, sandeel digging and angling.**

Preliminary enquires reveal that there have been many opportunities to engage with both the authorities and other harbour users, including recreational users through what is know as the Harbour Users Ass. There is also a comprehensive Hayle Harbour management Plan for the period 2008 – 2013. As far as I am aware, despite the importance of Hayle harbour to anglers as a bait & angling venue, RSA appears to have been absent from any debate. Despite my intention to engage and bring RSA to the table, I just haven't had time to establish contact with Councillors, Administrators and other harbour users. This is a typical example of RSA's lack of resources to represent RSA interests effectively and proactively. I know anglers will become tired of my saying so, BUT if anglers really want their interests represented, they have to realise it can not be done without human and financial resources to do the work and those resources CAN ONLY come from the RSA community.

Malcolm Gilbert

When I was originally thinking of the issues this report should cover, I realised if I wasn't careful it would end up a dozen pages in length, so I have decided to stick to topical and what I consider to be the issues that may impact our activity the most.

EU CFP Control Regulation 55

Chapter V

Control of recreational fisheries

Article 55

Recreational fisheries

1. Member States shall ensure that recreational fisheries on their territory and in Community waters are conducted in a manner compatible with the objectives and rules of the Common Fisheries Policy.
2. The marketing of catches from recreational fisheries shall be prohibited.
3. Without prejudice to Regulation (EC) No 199/2008, Member States shall monitor, on the basis of a sampling plan, the catches of stocks subject to recovery plans by recreational fisheries practised from vessels flying their flag and from third country vessels in waters under their sovereignty or jurisdiction.  
**Fishing from shore shall not be included.**
4. The Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) shall evaluate the biological impact of recreational fisheries as referred to in paragraph 3. Where a recreational fishery is found to have a significant impact, the Council may decide, in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 37 of the Treaty, to submit recreational fisheries as referred to in paragraph 3 to specific management measures such as fishing authorisations and catch declarations.

Some of the issues.

Across Europe many countries have significant non commercial net fisheries. These may be 'subsistence' based, or 'community' based or simply to catch fish for personal consumption. Recreational angling organisations are insisting that such fisheries should be properly distinguished from 'recreational rod & line' fishing.

The CFP is of course primarily driven by a cultural mindset that perceives commercial fishing as the all important element. More important even than the fishery resources themselves which is IMO the core reason it has failed to deliver anything other than abject failure. As for RSA, well, we've only recently arrived on their radar screen and for the most part are still thought of as fools with a rod dangling a worm on the end. A serious RSA concern is therefore, what will be the outcome of all this sea angling catch data? If (and these are just fictitious figures for illustration) RSA is found to remove say 100 tonnes of plaice from around the whole south west each year and commercial fishing takes 2000 tonnes, will EU decision makers seek to restrict RSA so as to provide more of the plaice stocks for commercials? We believe we are

more fortunate in the UK than RSA in some other EU countries, because as a result of remonstrating with MAFF & DEFRA over the years, we have had a measure of success in convincing them that RSA is actually a valuable activity – socially and economically. We still have an enormous work load ahead of us and we need to impress upon the Government that the 5% mortality (fictitious) on plaice bought about by RSA also has a plus side – socially and economically. We want the Government to actually compare the economic impact from RSA's 5% of plaice mortality to the commercial catch of 95%. We are confident that it is our activity that provides the best proportional return from the plaice fishery resource.

### The Angling Summit.

On Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> (next week) the Government is hosting day 1 of a two day Angling Summit. Day 2 will be later in March. The Summit will be attended by the Minister and will cover freshwater and marine issues. Initially, it seemed that RSA was going to be treated a very poor 'third' out of coarse, game and sea angling with hardly any agenda time allocated to RSA. In my opinion, the Minister is anxious not to be seen engaging too closely with RSA for fear of the wrath of the commercial catching industry, however, the Chief Executive of the Angling Trust, Mark Lloyd secured the agreement of all the freshwater organisations that despite Defra's attempts at sidelining RSA, RSA would in fact be the first item on the agenda on Tuesday. There is no doubt that freshwater anglers are better organised than their saltwater counterparts and that the Angling Trust has secured more support from freshwater anglers than from sea anglers but this gesture by the freshwater community shows that generally, there is agreement with the notion that the voice of angling is far stronger if angling is united.

### Mullet seine netting

Two Committee members of the National Mullet Club have arranged a meeting with the Chief Fisheries Officer of Cornwall Sea Fisheries Committee on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> Jan. and have asked me to attend with them. I can not predict the outcome but will report back to the Federation after the meeting.

### Hugh Fearnley Whittingstall's Fishfight Campaign.

This has stimulated a great deal of debate which is good and whilst I think discards are to be avoided wherever possible, I think there are aspects of the campaign that are very misleading. The commercial catching sector has been discarding millions of baby juvenile fish without ever seeking to highlight the activity in front of media cameras. It is only when they discard valuable fish that they appear to want maximum publicity. This is because it is 'loss of earnings' that is motivating their anger, NOT conservation. This is a hugely complex subject, and I could easily present you with an enormous document with results of scientific discard studies etc. Don't worry I won't!

However imagine the fish stocks as ‘capital’ in the bank. Let’s give the ‘capital’ a number just to illustrate how fish stocks have been eroded. Let us say you have inherited £100,000 and the interest is 10%. You can withdraw £10,000 a year leaving the £100,000 intact. Fine. But you succumb to an advert for a fantastic holiday and end up withdrawing £20,000 so after interest has been added, your capital is down by £10,000 to £90,000. Your accountant warns you to tighten your belt and says you must now live off less than the interest so as to rebuild your capital back to the original £100,000. But temptation rules again and you spend some of your capital yet again, convincing yourself that you will really tighten up on your expenditure the following year.

Can you see where this is leading? Ten years later, your capital is down to £50,000 and any prospects of rebuilding your capital will require years of painfully living on bread and water!

By now you are probably wondering what this has to do with fish.

Total Allowable Catches (TAC) are set each year on a species by species basis for all sea areas. The ‘quotas’ you hear about are slices of the TAC. So if the TAC is reduced so to are quotas. Let’s look at just one species – cod – in the North Sea.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>TAC as set by the Council of Ministers (tonnes)</u>
1995	108,600
1996	116,900
1997	104,450
1998	125,200
1999	N/A
2000	73,610
2001	40,720
2002	41,620
2003	22,659
2004	22,659
2005	22,659
2006	19,260
2007	16,564
2008	18,229

How ever one tries to interpret these figures, they indicate a stock in free fall!

**So, one of the key questions must be: Why are we at this position with the remaining cake so small? Indeed, what events have led us to where we are now|?**

Who actually sets the TACs? We know the International Council for Exploration of the Seas (ICES) provides the scientific advice, AND WE KNOW THAT EACH AND EVERY YEAR, THE ADVICE IS, TO VARYING LEVELS, REJECTED AND

**DISCARDED BY THOSE WHO MAKE THE FINAL DECISION IN FAVOUR OF FAR HIGHER CATCHES THAN SCIENTIFICALLY RECOMMENDED.**

WHY? WHO OR WHAT IS INFLUENCING THAT DECISION?

The Council of Ministers agree the final TACS. That is the Fisheries Ministers from each member State.

So, in the case of the UK Fisheries Ministers; who lobbies them to successfully persuade them to agree TACs higher than those recommended by the science so that upon their return from negotiations in Brussels they proudly announce they have achieved the best deal possible for their fishermen?

You've guessed! THE FISHERMEN !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Does all this mean that it is right to discard tonnes of prime cod? Absolutely not. Hugh Fearnley Whittingstall's campaign to stop such lunacy must prevail. Where I disagree with Hugh is in respect of the sympathy he displays for the very sector – the commercial catching sector – that are the architects of the problem. They are self made men who are pointing the finger of blame at everyone but themselves.

Promotion of consumption of new species

Celebrity chefs who advocate we should all eat flounder, gurnard, etc. rather than cod and plaice are playing Russian Roulette with our fishery resources. They don't seem to understand that the 'management machine' that has destroyed our cod and plaice even though we have decades of scientific data and knowledge for such species, WILL DEFINITELY fail in respect of other less well known species for which we have minimal or no knowledge.

Malcolm Gilbert  
Conservation Officer

## Conservation Officer Report CFSA Exec. meeting 7<sup>th</sup> Dec.2010.

### **EU CFP Control Regulation 55**

As far as I can find out, DEFRA are still unclear or undecided as to the exact data they need to collect from RSA or how to carry out the collection. It is now clear that the EU are demanding all member States collect data to quantify angling catches of some species including those subject to 'recovery plans' such as cod, plus some sharks/rays plus bass.

### **Cornwall Maritime Strategy**

The first draft Strategy was circulated and on behalf of the CFSA, I have responded late last night within the deadline. The most contentious statement was that bass stocks are improving due to climatic changes. From discussion with CFSA members (and many other long term sea anglers) I do not believe this to be the case and forcefully said so. The Draft also over stated the economic importance of commercial fishing and strongly advocated 'sustainability' with little mention of 'restoration.'

### **Fisheries Debate in Westminster.**

An excellent example of 'angler power'.

Prompted by a sea angler in Plymouth, on 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec., Oliver Colville MP Plymouth, Sutton & Devonport (Conservative) asked the Minister Richard Benyon about the value of recreational bass angling and what the coalition Gov. were going to do for RSA.

[Oliver Colville](#) (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport, Conservative)

.....Over the next few minutes, I want to talk about recreational sea angling and ask my hon. Friend the [Minister](#) what plans the coalition has to protect the [UK's](#) premier recreational fishing industry from the over-fishing that currently takes place in UK and EU waters.

*In the run-up to this debate, I heard from a number of recreational anglers who are very concerned that the UK is losing out to the Irish. Some 20 years ago, the Irish decided to ban all commercial fishing for bass, and chose instead to focus on the substantial value of bass fishing as a recreational sport. Last night, one of my constituents wrote to me, telling me how he and many other British residents travel to the Republic of Ireland to spend up to 16 weeks a year angling for sea bass. He noted that the [Irish Government](#) are delighted with the huge revenue that visiting anglers produce, and he suggested that I ask the [Minister](#) if there were proposals to introduce similar legislation in Northern Ireland and other parts of the UK. I appreciate that there is a balance to be struck between the economic contribution that this species makes to Plymouth fish market and the protection of our recreational sea anglers. I must stress that I want to be supportive of Plymouth fish market and ensure that it is not affected.*

*I will not ask the Government to ban all commercial sea bass fishing, but I would be grateful if my hon. Friend explained-either now or at a later date-what measures the Government are proposing to introduce to help the substantial Plymouth-based charter fleet and the 240,000 British people who, according to Invest in Fish South West, go fishing in the south-west each year and depend on there being fish to catch.....*

[Richard Benyon](#) (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Natural Environment and Fisheries), Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Newbury, Conservative)

*.....I can give him every assurance that I want to see proper systems through the marine conservation zone process, so I can give him assurances on that and on recreational angling. I am an angler. I have been invited to fish for bass in his [constituency](#), or nearby, by one of his constituents and I give him every assurance that I will try to represent the benefits of recreational angling throughout the process of marine conservation.....*

### **Mullet.**

I am attending a meeting with National Mullet club reps. on 20<sup>th</sup> Dec. with Eddy Derryman (CFO Cornwall SFC) to discuss what measures - if any - can be taken forward to afford greater protection for mullet.

### **CFSA conservation Group**

Regrettably, only two members have responded so the Group is not yet operative. Two individuals simply doesn't make the Group effective. The objectives are to ensure that any opinions I make under the CFSA banner, truly reflect the opinions held by the majority of the CFSA. Trying to raise the profile of RSA in Cornwall will inevitably on occasions lead to criticism of current fisheries policies/management and such criticism will almost certainly be perceived to be critical of some aspects of commercial fishing and /or commercial fishing organisations. I've no wish to get controversial for the sake of it but many of our current 'ills' need to be robustly challenged so I need to be sure that any CFSA stated positions are genuinely supported by membership. I'd say I need at least half a dozen members to work with.

### **Commercials Challenge MCZs**

I attach a press release I picked up which illustrates how the commercial fishing interests are flexing their political muscle in respect of MCZs.

## Response by Cornish Federation of Sea Anglers (CFSA) to The Draft Cornwall Maritime Strategy.

Page 2. 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph reads:

*“Ports and shipping are central to the Cornish economy and provide important services to industry, **particularly the local fishing industry, which is also an established and essential element of the local economy.**”*

In 2001, the Regional Development Agency in conjunction with Pesca (EU money distributors for fishing industry) funded a study into the commercial fishing sector across the South West. The work was known as the “Socio-Economic Baseline Study Ekos Nautilus 2003” [Ekos & Nautilus were two leading economic consultancy organisations and the work whilst based on 2001, was published 2003] Their findings were that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of commercial fishing across the South West was a mere 0.38% (yes, that’s right, about a third of just one percent!) For Cornwall (which we are interested in) it was higher at 2%. That was in 2001. Since then commercial fishing has declined significantly so the GDP for commercial fishing is less than 2%.

I’m not suggesting that commercial fishing is valueless, BUT it certainly isn’t the backbone of Cornwall’s economy as many would have us believe.

Page 4. Fifth paragraph reads:

*“Sustainable Fisheries and aquaculture: Maintaining sustainable fish stocks is becoming increasingly important and controlled by the EU.”*

Before we talk about sustainability, we need to focus on restoring already depleted fish stocks. CFSA members have no interest in ‘sustainability’ if it means sustaining what we currently have! We need substantial rebuilding of stocks and THEN sustainability. Not sure the EU ‘controls’ all fishing. If this is genuinely the case why do we have a Sea Fisheries Committee? Some stocks are fairly discreet – lobster for example – and we (Cornwall) can implement policy & management measures that make a significant difference to the way we exploit and utilise a number of stocks.

Page 5. Paragraph 3.1 A Vision for Maritime Cornwall reads:

*“Sustainable coastal living has been achieved and Cornwall’s distinctive, healthy and resilient communities are proud of their rich maritime heritage and unique, high quality coastal and marine environment.”*

Is our Marine Environment genuinely of such high quality? Part of the marine environment is fishery resources and we know they are but a shadow of what they once were. If we refuse to accept and acknowledge the true state of our depleted fishery resources, it is unlikely we will ever aspire to see them restored.

Page 6. 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph.

*“Encourage efforts to enhance the economic and sustainable use of marine resources, including sustainable fisheries and aquaculture.”*

The most certain way to improve the economic impacts that Cornwall derives from its fishery resources is to implement a policy to rebuild depleted fish stocks so that they are more abundant and represented by a more natural age structure. Research shows such restored stocks are far more productive and generate greater exploitable yields for both recreational and commercial exploitation.

## **ANNEX: Background Information**

Page A-7 Paragraph 3.6 includes:

*“In the waters surrounding Cornwall there is evidence of an increase in warm water species (e.g. seabass stocks) ----- -- -- “*

The CFSA disputes this assertion.

Until the Buyers & Sellers legislation was introduced (2004) fish landings from the under 10 meter fleet were notoriously poorly recorded. These vessels did not require log books. Since the Buyers & Sellers has been operational recorded landings data has significantly improved as evidenced by the way in which the under 10 metre quotas (for TAC species) have become exhausted before the end of year. The vast majority of vessels that target bass are under 10 metres so the lion's share of bass landings for which data collection was historically poor are now collected.

As access to quota species has been increasingly restricted, effort has been transferred to non quota species such as bass. Indeed Defra have encouraged the catching sector to focus on non quota species.

The availability to the catching sector of bass have increased as the areas in which bass can commercially be caught have expanded northwards so fishermen from a greater proportion of the UK can now target bass.

So if seabass stocks have increased and landings data for bass is now being collected; plus effort on bass (as non quota species) has increased; and bass are available to more fishermen, the recorded landings should have increased dramatically!

Some landing data are provided at Annexe 1 which do not show landings of bass as substantially increasing.

**So, NO upward trend in landings.** A truer measure for stock status is Catch per unit of effort (CPUE) and very many CFSA members who have fished for bass over 30+ years do not believe bass stocks have increase. Quite the opposite in fact, especially in respect of older & larger bass.

Page A-11 Paragraph 5.4 reads:

*“A significant revenue stream is also derived from pleasure boating including yachting and cruising, that in 2008 accounted for approximately £5 M of tourist spend across the Districts, including Isles of Scilly.”*

The CFSA believe this figure of £5M is a gross under statement. The Nautilus research into Recreational Sea Angling across the South West found £55 million was spent by visiting anglers and of this, 17% was on private boat expenditure plus 14% on Charter boating. 31% of £55 M = £17M. We accept this is across the whole SW but that is **just** pleasure angling.

Now add all the 'pleasure' sporting boating (water skiing etc.), plus cruising yachts and general 'mucking about on the water' by tourists and the £5M looks unrealistic. Whilst visiting Padstow last summer the author noticed the inner harbour was full of 'gin palaces' – not a fishing boat to be seen! -- and the spend by those people in the local community (restaurants etc) is considerable. The tourist pleasure boating spend in Falmouth alone must exceed £5M. Incidentally, South West resident anglers spent over £35 million on pleasure boating (private boats & charter boats).

Page A-20 Paragraph 8.1

*“Recreational angling is also of increasing economic importance to Cornwall.”*

In so far as Societal changes over the last five decades have resulted in more and longer holidays as well as increased expendable income, Recreational Sea Angling is undoubtedly one of a number of areas with enormous potential and this potential is increasingly being recognised. Activity holidays are the biggest growth sector (personal communication SW Tourism, Emma Whitlingsea). This potential will however, only be realised if the decline in marine fishery resources is arrested and those resources are adequately restored. Cornwall has to compete with other parts of the globe where fisheries management policies specifically provide fish abundance and stock structure suitable for maximising the recreational sea angling potential.

Page A-20 Paragraph 8.2

*“The value of fish landed at Newlyn is substantial and the port ranks 9<sup>th</sup> in the UK for the quantity and value (£15.7 M) of fish landed.”*

At page 3 in the Draft Strategy doc. at 2.2 'key trends' are identified as of significant help to planning the future. Whilst Newlyn fish landings are still very significant, the trend is one of steep decline in value. Through the late 1990s Newlyn's annual landings value hovered around £22 - £23 M. If these figures are adjusted with the Consumer Price Index we should now be seeing well over £30 M worth of landings into Newlyn. So in real terms the trend for Newlyn and other Cornish ports is one of decline.

Annexe 1.

Bass landings across all south west between Weymouth and Padstow.  
2001. 164 tonnes

2002. 285 tonnes  
2003 211 tonnes  
2004 212 tonnes  
2005 159 tonnes  
2006 170 tonnes  
2007 239 tonnes  
2008 196 tonnes

Bass landings for England & Wales

1995 651 tonnes  
1996 560 “  
1997 559 “  
1998 485 “  
1999 675 “  
2000 403 “  
2001 451 “  
2002 620 “  
2003 574 “  
2004 610 “  
2005 507 “  
2006 541 “  
2007 654 “  
2008 767 “  
2009 656 “

In an ICES Report: C089/10, bass landings are tabulated by ICES rectangles.

Areas VII a, f, g ( includes North Cornish coast and west Cornwall)

1995 445 tonnes  
2000 544 tonnes  
2005 590 tonnes  
2006 434 tonnes  
2007 256 tonnes  
2008 276 tonnes

Area VII e, h, (includes South Cornish coast east of Lizard

1995 551 tonnes  
2000 1124 tonnes  
2005 1263 tonnes  
2006 1697 tonnes  
2007 1131 tonnes  
2008 826 tonnes

Conservation Officer Report for CFSA meeting Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2010.

**EU CFP Control Regulation 55.**

The debate across the EU as to the exact meaning (or should I say 'interpretation') of this new legislation, continues to escalate. This is in general terms all about 'monitoring', 'quantifying' and 'regulating' of 'recreational' catches.

For us, the interpretation of the MMO is the most crucial but we also need to be aware of how it is being implemented (or not) in other EU States because over time the Commission can seek to impose 'interpretations' that others have adopted, upon the rest of us.

The most worrying email exchange I've seen so far, implies that 'angler's' catches are to be scrutinised whilst those who fish say with gill nets or seine nets off the beaches are not covered!

**Fishermen's Mission**

This Charity is suffering a severe drop in donations from the public and both the Mission buildings in Newlyn & Brixham are having to downsize. For those not aware, these are meeting places, cheap food/drink, and a charity for down & out fishermen or fishermen's relatives in case of tragedy. Whilst I definitely believe they do good, I thoroughly dislike some of their claims about fishing. I recently bought fish & chips from Hayle and on the counter was a collection box - bearded fisherman, in southwester gripping a wooden ships wheel -- and the caption on the box read: *Please donate to those who brave the elements and risk their lives to put fish on our tables.*

Palpable nonsense! If that were remotely true, why, when foreign buyers push the prices up on Newlyn, are the fishermen ecstatic? (bearing in mind that the fish then goes overseas) Simply because it means more money AND it is money that drives fishing. In short, fishermen fish for money and to suggest they do it in order to put fish on our plates is utter rubbish.

**Irish Bass Management.**

Irish Bass.org leader, John Quinlan is meeting with the Irish Fisheries Minister today.

I should hear the news on that issue, tomorrow.  
There is no news on the proposed legislation for NI.

### **Cornwall Maritime Strategy Workshop**

I attended this at Wadebridge on 5<sup>th</sup> October on behalf of CFSA with John Munday of Redruth Sea Angling Club. I can do no better than quote from the agenda:

Consider how Cornwall will respond to changes effected by the Marine & Coastal Access Act, 2009.

Reviewing maritime issues in the round and develop a vision for the County whilst ensuring that it also fits with national and regional aims.

Integrating maritime issues into wider functions, including the Sustainable Community Strategy, Core Strategy of the local Development Framework, and the third Local Transport Plan.

Better integrating terrestrial and maritime policies/strategies.

Fisheries (thankfully) did not dominate the proceedings and actually very few attended from the commercial sector.

I was not convinced that many really understood what was going on! -- but certainly a good opportunity to identify worthwhile contacts amongst CCC staff for CFSA.

I wish to follow up the workshop with a letter to some of those contacts but need agreement from Exec.

Malcolm Gilbert

## Conservation Officer report for CFSA meeting Friday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2010.

### **Tope.**

Government are consulting on legislation for tope, which currently prohibits retention of any tope by Recreational Sea Anglers (RSA) and allows a 45 kilo by catch to be landed by commercial fishermen. There is some evidence that the 45 kilo limit for commercial landings is on occasions exceeded and the CFSA has responded expressing the opinion that no tope should be retained by any one. Although this would result in some additional tope being discarded, rather than landed, the simplicity of absolutely no tope being allowed to be landed will make enforcement the most simple and also completely eradicate any incentive to target tope or to retain tope that might survive if returned. It may therefore result in a reduction of tope mortality.

### **Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and Recreational Sea Angling.**

Some criticism I recently made of the Cornwall Sea Fisheries Committee's response to the CFP Reform, resulted in one CFSA member asking why I thought RSA would wish to play any role in the CFP and whether I thought anglers would wish to be controlled by Europe. My reply focussed on two core points.

1. Whether we like or loathe the CFP – it really does exist and has done for three decades and there are no indications that the UK will or even could leave it any time soon.
2. The CFP's competence extends right up to our beaches and very many fisheries management measures such as Minimum Landing Sizes, Minimum Mesh Sizes, Seasonal Closures, Total Allowable Catches, etc. are demonstrably having an enormous affect on our fish stocks and the quality of sea angling.

So whether we like it or not, the CFP has and continues to play a significant role in our recreational sea angling activities.

This raises the key question of whether we should just keep quiet and accept what ever crumbs fall our way, or, stick our heads above the parapet and join other stakeholders (who are already at the table) in an attempt to play an equitable role in the process of formulating fisheries policies and strategies.

### **Sustainable Access to Inshore Fisheries (SAIF) Group.**

This Group was set up by DEFRA to look at ways to maintain a viable inshore fisheries sector. RSA was invited to participate but at the time one or two vociferous RSA reps vehemently argued that RSA should not do so. As a result, 10 of the 16 individuals who made up the Group were from the commercial fishing sector and no one represented RSA. Given that this was an 'inshore' investigation and that the vast majority of RSA takes place in inshore waters, this beggars belief.

The results are entirely predictable and illustrate better than any words I could muster, just how crucial it is for RSA to participate where ever and whenever possible.

Here are just some of the Group's findings:

*1.18. Many commercial fishermen believe that recreational sea angling can have a detrimental impact on commercial stocks.*

*1.59. The impact of recreational sea-angling vessels on stocks should be assessed and Government and IFCA's should consider restricting and licensing the activity of non-commercial boats and sea-angling boats, in areas subject to long-term*

*management plans, where their catch is regarded as potentially significant for local stock management.*

So RSA is damaging stocks, not commercial fishing! – and (unless they mean Free of Charge licenses) we should pay to fish recreationally whilst commercials have free access.

### **Irish bass**

The Republic of Ireland is unique, within a European context, because it has elected to utilise its bass stocks for recreational exploitation. The economic impacts from such usage far outweigh conventional commercial exploitation. Recreational sea anglers are restricted with bag limits, higher minimum landing size than rest of EU and a seasonal closure during spawning. The legislation, introduced in 1990, followed a steep decline in stocks as bass became targeted commercially during the 80s. Stocks are now, at long last showing signs of making a recovery and, predictably, the commercials want access to them. They insist they wish to fish bass sustainably but recreationalists are asking why, if they fish sustainably, they want bass when they have access to ALL other species? Could it be that the commercials do not fish sustainably and have fished down all other species? More recently, the Northern Irish fishing administration consulted on proposals to make bass a sport fish in Northern Ireland as bass stocks also appear to be increasing in parts of the North. The proposal being considered replicates the existing legislation in the south. It will be interesting to see how events across the Irish Sea develop because successful saltwater sport fisheries in Ireland that generate substantial socio-economic benefits to their coastal communities are bound to help influence politicians and civil servants throughout the rest of Europe to understand the validity of managing/using marine fishery resources for recreation – and as a tourism driver.

### **Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authorities (IFCA)**

These are the organisations which will replace Sea Fisheries Committees (SFC) which are being dissolved at end of March 2011. As with SFCs, their jurisdiction extends to 6 miles and so their activities are hugely relevant to the RSA sector. At the time of drafting this report, I am not aware exactly who will sit on the Cornwall IFCA but I am informed that Steve Holyer (Helston Sea Angling Club) who sits on the current SFC and John Munday (Redruth Sea Angling Club) were regrettably both turned down for IFCA membership. So at this moment in time, it may well be that RSA representation is minimal and far less than the sector's socio-economic footprint warrants. If, when the full list of Marine Management Organisation appointees is known, RSA representation is not substantially improved over what it was on SFCs, this is a complete contradiction of the previous Government's stated policy.

### **Catch & Release (C&R)**

There is no doubt that C&R is growing in popularity and where fish used to be needlessly killed, this is a good thing. We just need to be aware that we don't promote C&R for either the wrong reasons or in such a way that negligible conservation benefits are achieved. The reasons for C&R are many -- a fish may be less than the legal minimum landing size, an angler doesn't wish to eat a particular fish, an angler may have already retained enough of a species for his/her consumption so chooses to return any additional catches, etc. In those countries where bag limits apply to RSA, clearly, C&R becomes mandatory for any fish caught over the retained limit. What we have to understand is that where bag limits exist (and C&R then becomes mandatory) the existence of bag limits is as a result of RSA being fully integrated into the management structures and RSA bag limits are just one component of a management plan that invariably also imposes equivalently restrictive measures upon commercial fishers for the benefit of the fishery resource.

There is a danger that fisheries managers (and even anglers) who advocate bag limits and increased levels of C&R in the UK, do so whilst no equivalent restrictions apply to commercials. Take bass for example. The only catch limit for a commercial fishing boat is 5 tonnes weekly. Depending on the size of fish this could easily represent more than 7000 bass – and that's per boat per week. The proportion of fishing mortality upon bass that is commercial, as opposed to recreational, has increased substantially over recent years. So RSA has to ask what is being achieved by returning bass? Is the practise genuinely enhancing the resource and the quality of bass angling over time OR are anglers simply returning fish so that there are more for commercials to catch and retain? There is no easy or simple answer to this question but I think RSA needs to appreciate that where mandatory bag limits and very high levels of C&R exist in other parts of the world, there are equivalently restrictive and rigorously enforced management measures imposed upon commercial fishing. Proponents of bag limits (and consequential C&R) in the UK, generally want restrictions for RSA without any remotely equivalent restrictions upon commercials. At a Ministerial meeting I attended that included representation from commercial fishing leaders to discuss the bass minimum landing size (mls), the commercials who trawl for bass in the Bristol Channel claimed that with the current 36 cm mls, they were, on occasions, discarding 65% of their catches as undersize. This was the main reason the Minister subsequently decided not to uphold his predecessors decision to increase the mls to 40 cm for it was clear that if that particular fishery was allowed to continue, the discard rate would increase with a 40 cm mls. When I consider how so many anglers fishing the Welsh & South West English coastline bordering the Bristol Channel, are carefully returning thousands of bass and then imagine the level of slaughter by the trawlers just off shore, the futility strikes me as profoundly tragic. Finally, taking some fresh fish for one's personal/family consumption is a right that RSA should be extremely protective or even proud of.

**Did you know:**

85% of all seafood consumed in the UK is imported?

That the fishery resources (species) upon which the £538 million English & Welsh RSA sector depend, only account for £42 million of commercial landings in Eng. & Wales ?

Malcolm Gilbert

PS

All 'opinions' expressed in this report are my own and not necessarily endorsed by the CFSA.

I am happy to provide further information on any of the above topics to CFSA members.

Message from CFSA Conservation Officer.

Firstly, let me say that I'm not convinced that 'Conservation' adequately summarises what I perceive my role to be. It's more about influencing decision makers really and could be regarded as lobbying. Let me explain a little.

For the most part, recreational sea anglers just want to 'go fishin'. Nothing wrong with that. We all go for a variety of reasons; to fish competitively, to catch some fresh fish for our own consumption, to relax, to enjoy, to experience the challenge etc.

But there's a problem. Most (I accept, not all) sea anglers who have been fishing for say a minimum of twenty years or more, agree that fish are in general getting scarcer and smaller. It seems to me the longer an angler has been fishing, the greater his/her sense of a deterioration in fish stocks. We shouldn't be surprised, after all, the science, despite being less than perfect, is pretty much unanimous -- fish stocks are declining enormously, some more than others.

The reasons are many and far too complex to fully explore here, but whatever the problems, they are increasingly being addressed. I'm not for a moment saying they are being addressed with sufficient urgency or vigour but the number of 'talking shops' trying to bring change to the way in which our marine environment, including the fish that are so crucial for our activity, are managed, is extraordinary.

Consultation after consultation, work shop after workshop, project after project – the last few years has seen literally dozens of initiatives aimed at evaluating where we are going wrong or teasing out proposals to protect our marine environment. The most recent initiatives include the various Marine Conservation Zones projects [Finding Sanctuary in our area] and the Marine Bill legislation and the replacement of Sea Fisheries Committees (SFCs) with Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authorities.

Stakeholders are being encouraged to take an active interest in all these initiatives and indisputably, recreational sea anglers are direct user stakeholders of some of our public fishery resources.

I make no secret of harbouring an ambition for far more sea anglers to take an active interest in the whole complex process surrounding the formulation of fisheries policies and strategies. This means keeping up to speed with what is happening at local, national and European level in respect of fisheries and the marine environment. There is no doubt that the debates are heating up and without wishing to be labelled a scare monger, there is the real potential for some ill-informed decisions to be taken that could have serious implications for Recreational Sea Angling.

The Cornish Federation of Sea Anglers (CFSA) is clearly the organisation representing the largest number of sea anglers in Cornwall who are club members, by quite a margin [I accept there are far more sea anglers who choose to remain unattached to any angling organisations] and I wish to see the CFSA extend (NOT replace) it's activities from those of running the competitive side of recreational sea angling to that of representing the views of sea anglers to a wide range of decision

makers. I want the CFSA to not only be a voice for sea angling at local and County level, but to also keep abreast of the debates at National and European level where issues arise that may affect our activities.

OK, that is briefly, **my** vision.

But what about CFSA members? What do they want, if anything, in respect of influencing decisions about a whole range of issues such as licenses, mandatory bag limits, minimum landing sizes, marine protected areas, close to shore netting, minimum landing sizes, etc.?

Initially, I am looking for half a dozen or so CFSA members who would be prepared to form a CFSA Conservation Group with me. I want to be able to bounce ideas off them, circulate news about fisheries and topical fisheries debates (especially where recreational sea angling issues occur) for their opinions, ask for their assistance in drafting information for the CFSA website and Shockleader.

It is crucially important that any output on behalf of the CFSA reflects grass root views and not simply my opinion. I'm happy to play a leading role but I must be sure that others within the CFSA guide my enthusiasm and help drive the CFSA Conservation/lobbying agenda.

I do not envisage regular meetings but would wish to communicate via the internet.

If you would like to discuss anything, please do not hesitate to contact me.

- 1) As an ex professional fisherman holding a skippers certificate of competency I maintain a strong interest in the marine environment and the Cornish fishing industry as it still provides valuable business for me as a service provider to the marine sector.
- 2) I am also very fortunate and privileged to be a member of Cornwall Sea Fisheries Committee where I represent the interests of recreational sea angling which gives me an insight of the complex conservation and management issues that currently bedevil the fishing sector.
- 3) In any discussion with regard to fisheries policy it is an essential prerequisite that all engaging in the process accept unreservedly that the RESOURCE is paramount, without vibrant healthy seas supporting abundant fish stocks, marine organisms and bird life anything else is pointless, this necessarily dictates that narrow sectional interests or political dogma must never take precedence over the well being of that resource.
- 4) Fisheries and the marine environment must be regarded as a bank account where the harvest equates to the drawing of interest, the moment the capital is tapped the whole structure will start to unravel.
- 5) Any fishing method or system that needs to draw on the capital to function by depleting stocks beyond sustainability is doomed and morally damned from the start.
- 6) Sensible, competent and equitable regulation must be the cornerstone of all future conservation initiatives for all rather than the present thoroughly discredited regime which has, over time, descended into the realms of madness.
- 7) That the reviled Common Fisheries Policy has been an unmitigated social environmental and financial disaster encapsulating badly drafted, destructive and inherently insensitive regulation over an extended time-frame is beyond reasonable dispute.
- 8) This is seen to a large extent to be due to the intransigence of officials, who, being controlled by politicians not always fully on top of their brief, have wilfully persisted with policies that whilst probably well intentioned were non-the-less patently flawed from day one.
- 9) One definition of officialdom states "that it takes a simple issue and makes it complicated", this, to a layman with long practical experience, seems to be true, there has invariably been a mindset of steely administrative inflexibility that has over this period ruled out any form of compromise or willingness to fine tune events to evolving circumstances regardless of demonstrably developing adverse consequences.
- 10) However well intentioned the original concept of the CFP may have been this regime of badly formulated insensitive micro management will invariably foster a sense of injustice resentment and outright hostility by those who suffer as a result of poor policy decisions taken in places remote from unfolding events by poorly briefed politicians and civil servants, this is reinforced by the universal hostility to it, that has resulted.
- 11) Together the European Commission and DEFRA's officials have succeeded in laying waste to fishing communities and infrastructure throughout Europe, wrecking businesses and lives at the heart of these communities in the process, while the economy and environment in these regions has continued to deteriorate at an accelerating pace as desperate people fought to survive the regulatory onslaught.
- 12) At the epicentre of this catastrophe has been the inherently flawed quota system which has led to the dumping of un-quantifiable amounts of fish at sea over the period that quotas have been in force, ostensibly for "conservation" purposes.
- 13) This incredible example of the disastrous consequences of administrators, charged with the regulation of a living resource that will never respect arbitrary lines drawn by politicians pens on maps, being given free rein, was in reality, morally and economically bankrupt from its inception, insofar that it did not and never could conserve a single fish.
- 14) Until recently Brussels has placed great reliance on what has predictably proven to be flawed science that paid scant regard to evidence on the fishing grounds whilst continuing to set ever tighter quotas which have only exacerbated the discard problem to an alarming degree.
- 15) This is especially true in the mixed fisheries prosecuted in the English Channel, Western Approaches and Bristol Channel by vessels from Devon and Cornwall along with those from France, Spain, Belgium and Holland.
- 16) The European Commission in Brussels and DEFRA in English territorial waters, having belatedly woken up to the futility of previous policy currently seem to be exhibiting clear signs of increasing desperation at both National and European level as the latent wrath of citizens, increasingly aware of the folly perpetrated in their names, focuses on the collective failings of those whose stewardship has proven so dire.
- 17) This is clearly the motive behind the unaccustomed willingness of politicians and fisheries administrators to suddenly consult all and sundry on the best way forward in order to hopefully develop a future policy that may actually deliver meaningful improvements to the unfortunate citizens who happen to be affected at grassroots level by such ongoing serial institutional failure.
- 18) Could it be that, finally, increasingly obvious public outrage at discard levels and the perceived ineptitude of fisheries mismanagement in general has registered itself on the collective consciences of those who have failed to deliver sound workable policies to such a degree that both National and European politicians can no longer continue to ignore the outrage that has long been evident had they bothered to listen sooner?
- 19) This is vitally important because the currently failed policy has actually, however unintentionally, abused a priceless natural resource that is a vital source of high quality food which given better more competent stewardship has the ongoing potential to be self sustaining in perpetuity.
- 20) A uniquely bizarre unintended, unforeseen consequence of discards has been that, locally, in Cornwall, when combined with the release of rescued seals from a local sanctuary and tourist attraction being familiarised with humans there has possibly been an evolutionary modification of seal behaviour insofar that seals now associate fishing boats and their gear with a source of free food.
- 21) This strange example of the random consequences of cause and effect may account for the escalating levels of damage to monkfish in particular in the Cornish tangle net fishery directly attributable to seal activity leading to increasing calls for a seal cull, which effectively would be a retrograde step, as a probable direct result of rescued seals becoming humanised and discovering an easy plentiful new food source.
- 22) Vessel decommissioning schemes have at considerable taxpayer cost succeeded in reducing catching capacity only to a limited degree insofar that the incredible level of technology found on relatively small modern "rule beater" vessels that have entered service in recent years ensures that they are super efficient fishing machines.
- 23) Many of these "rule beaters" were built with the money obtained from decommissioning larger vessels at tax payers expense which in reality merely shifted excess catching capacity into another sector with full regulatory consent, currently a proportion of these rule beaters have been decommissioned, again at tax payer expense, why was this fiasco not previously spotted by the army of officials involved?
- 24) Another serious problem that Brussels tinkering has ensured unwittingly is the destruction of an inherently safe seaworthy but relatively inefficient class of vessel in the 15 to 25 metre size bracket only to be replaced by increasing numbers of the less safe but highly efficient under 10 metre "rule-beaters", until recently exempt from the quota system.
- 25) This has transferred massive overcapacity into the inshore fleet which has only recently been subjected to catch recording and quotas set at a level that virtually guarantees financial catastrophe for many, it is even more inappropriate when many of these boats were built with money from older boats previously decommissioned at tax payers expense.
- 26) The recent introduction of catch monitoring and reporting paints a horrifying picture of the actual catching capacity reintroduced when these vessels were constructed to replace previously decommissioned tonnage without let or hindrance from fisheries managers charged with reducing overall catching capacity, effectively a large part of vessel decommissioning was a waste of time and, more significantly, tax-payers money.

- 27) This is a glaring example of the huge financial cost of politicians collective inability to embrace the irrefutable law of cause and effect combined with an unforgivable but not unexpected failure to grasp commercial reality and the sheer entrepreneurial ingenuity that drives it which was virtually guaranteed to create the almost inevitable unwelcome consequences that invariably emerged.
- 28) Once again decommissioning has recently been used as a blunt instrument at considerable taxpayer expense to scrap numbers of under 10 metre vessels (some originally built with grant aid) that would never have been built in the first place were it not for the artificial regulatory distortions and temporary largesse generated by the Common Fisheries Policy.
- 29) Despite this saga of serial ineptitude there still continues to be massive overcapacity in the English under 10 metre inshore fleet particularly in the shellfish sector which has exploded as a result of vessels leaving the whitefish sector because of impossible quota restrictions created by the Common Fisheries Policy.
- 30) This type of artificial vessel displacement from one fishery to another is a typical consequence of administrative meddling in a business that like any other ought, perhaps, to have been regulated by purely economic means.
- 31) Ironically the class of larger vessel decommissioned during the first wave has taken pressure away from the offshore grounds where most used to work, there are now a fraction of the number of vessels be they British French or Spanish offshore than there used to be and this fact is clearly demonstrated by the higher catch rates being reported by remaining vessels as the grounds seem to have rapidly recovered.
- 32) From the steadily improving catch levels experienced by a smaller numbers of larger vessels working offshore beyond the 12 mile limit it seems to suggest that stocks are actually in an increasingly healthy state, this class of vessel generally has access to sufficient quota either owned or leased to ensure discards are minimal or in many cases non existent.
- 33) Problems can still arise when catch levels of certain species suddenly and unexpectedly surge as they often do due to big year classes, better science may soon be able to predict these events and hopefully develop the flexibility to promptly adjust quotas accordingly as necessary.
- 34) Inshore vessels suddenly subjected to catch monitoring and miniscule quotas often report extreme difficulties in avoiding discards if they are to remain fishing in a very mixed fishery, once again a large proportion of blame for this highly undesirable situation lies with the artificial distortions created by the Common Fisheries Policy.
- 35) Political opinion driven by media pressure seems to be edging towards the concept of banning discards in favour of landing everything caught which may give a better more accurate indication of actual stock levels, it has proven to work in Norway and Iceland.
- 36) It ought to be borne in mind by officials that a fish landed iced in a box is no more or less dead than a similar fish merely discarded to become a meal for a semi tame seal or seabird adapting to, and opportunistically exploiting, an unnatural food source.
- 37) One very practical suggestion that has emerged that may bear further scrutiny is that over quota fish landed under such a regime be sold and the income generated used to finance the purchase of additional fish quota by fishermen-owned quota companies such as the already operating Duchy Fish Quota Company based in Newlyn.
- 38) Current trends indicate that marine protected areas (MPA's) designated by Natural England will play an increasing role in future fisheries management and conservation initiatives.
- 39) Marine protected areas that are intelligently identified, accepted by the majority stakeholders, implemented and subsequently properly monitored to ascertain benefits or otherwise are no doubt potentially highly effective conservation and stock management tools if embraced willingly by stakeholders who buy into the concept rather than being arbitrarily imposed as seems increasingly likely.
- 40) When monitoring any designated MPA clear provision must be made to cancel or otherwise fine tune the designation should the original aims and objectives demonstrably fail to be met, any MPA that fails to deliver clearly demonstrable benefits is pointless, unnecessary and financially unsound.
- 41) The advantage of the MPA concept is that, subject to local decision making, it ought to be possible to tailor each one to specific local objectives with conservation as a priority, this need not necessarily entail closing all designated MPA's to all activity or banning everything as some suggest, but rather controlling effort by restricting certain gear types, amounts of gear worked or by implementing seasonal closures as necessary.
- 42) Neither must this mean that a presently perceived bias against mobile gears is intensified, possibly because they are easier to police, while static gear escapes attention because it is more difficult to monitor.
- 43) Experience suggests that seasonal closures appear to have been highly beneficial on the Trevoise grounds off North Cornwall giving credence to the long held, but formerly ignored belief in regulatory circles, that it is logical to protect spawning fish, this is a good example of what a well designated MPA could achieve, it is even more remarkable given that it was introduced on the instigation of fishermen.
- 44) Seasonal closures are particularly relevant in the context of bass and pollack where spawning aggregations of both species in known locations are highly vulnerable to intensive directed fishing effort, be it pair trawling or netting, this madness frequently glut markets with often low quality produce, which quite predictably lowers market prices, so valuable breeding stock is decimated for relatively low returns.
- 45) It is increasingly felt that both species which are the cornerstone of sustainable inshore fishing practices and recreational sea angling would be much better exploited by hook and line fisheries prosecuted by small boats at times when both demand and market prices are high.
- 46) Commercial handline or pole fishing is a highly skilled operation, by its very nature it is entirely self regulating and admirably suited to slot into the MPA concept.
- 47) Dozens of boxes of fish roe often seen on fish markets in the main spawning season are clear evidence of unsustainable and unacceptable fishing practices which further strengthens the case for seasonal closures in defined areas, which again, in reality would fit well with the MPA concept.
- 48) A long standing problem has been the offshore winter pair trawl fishery for bass by targeting spawning aggregations which are highly vulnerable to this method, there have been repeated calls to ban the method, however it is not the actual method that is problematic, rather its timing, perhaps a simple seasonal closure for targeted bass pair trawling in the western channel would be more effective and acceptable.
- 49) From the recreational sea angling perspective the pair trawl fishery appears to have had an impact on the size of bass at sexual maturity, bass were generally accepted to be sexually mature at circa > 42 centimetres but the bulk of the spawning stock were much larger 3 kilo plus fish, in recent years gravid bass of <40 centimetres have been observed with a corresponding decrease in the numbers of bigger fish.
- 50) This will possibly lead to many more bass of a much smaller average size (a race of dwarves?), increasing numbers of much smaller fish is a classic sign of a stock in distress, both recreational sea anglers and commercial handline fishermen have a vested interest in the capture of higher numbers of larger bass which provide better sport and higher financial returns, the small bass market should be supplied by farmed bass.
- 51) Commercial hand liners operating out of small remote Cornish Coves (so called "pole men) are the perfect means of harvesting bass, pollack and mackerel in a low impact manner which produces small catches of superb quality fish in a highly sustainable manner, they encapsulate the tourists vision of Cornish fishermen and are a vital feature of Cornwall's unique coastline, NATURAL ENGLAND PLEASE TAKE NOTE!
- 52) There is also a similar but more extensive artisanal fishery on the Breton Coast operating along similar lines, both fisheries are admirable and must be nurtured and preserved, they are the fisheries most at risk from the activities of the offshore winter pair trawl fishery which is seen as particularly destructive when it targets spawning aggregations of bass in the late winter.
- 53) The monitoring of "O" group juvenile bass in the Fal and Helford Rivers in Cornwall, an ongoing project conducted under licence from DEFRA by the remarkable Captain Derek Goodwin, (an octogenarian human dynamo) tends to suggest two weak year classes which does not bode particularly well for the future.

- 54) Bass nursery areas introduced by MAAF (DEFRA's predecessor) have proven to be highly successful as revealed by Captain Goodwins valuable work over many years, it is good to acknowledge a rare success story with regard to fisheries management
- 55) However as soon as the juvenile bass leave the nursery areas they are highly vulnerable to gill nets inshore, the two weak year classes highlighted by Captain Goodwins netting samples could potentially create a considerable hole in a stock composed of predominantly small fish, given the possibility of a series of poor year classes this could have serious long term consequences for a pressurised resource if not addressed.
- 56) Cornish North Coast storm beaches such as Porthtowan and Perranporth used to be noted for regularly producing significant numbers of bass in the 3 to 4 kilo range for recreational sea anglers.
- 57) In recent years these fish have been virtually absent but have been replaced by high numbers of juvenile fish of barely legal size which were formerly unheard of in these locations.
- 58) The bass stock from a pure numbers perspective is apparently healthy but in reality it is actually quite severely out of balance owing to the worrying absence of the larger class of breeding fish in their normal haunts, replaced by immature bass not formerly present in these locations, this follows more than a decade of significant inshore gill netting activity combined with the targeted winter pair trawl fishery offshore.
- 59) A typical example of well meaning (but spectacularly inept) British fisheries regulation involved the banning of British vessels pair trawling for bass inside 12 miles in an attempt to placate the angling lobby which politicians recognise as significant.
- 60) Unfortunately at the same time the French being in possession of EU rights regulated by Brussels were able to continue fishing into six miles while taking massive catches, despite local boats being excluded.
- 61) The cetacean by catch question that this pair trawl fishery raises at during the winter season ought to be reason enough to seasonally close the fishery as it cannot be pure coincidence that cetacean mortality as evidenced by numerous carcasses washed ashore during this season causes public outrage and strong anti fishing sentiment which is not currently being addressed by the EU.
- 62) Another potentially even more serious problem involves the increasingly active near shore summer gill net fishery for red mullet, the fishery is proving lucrative on the back of increasingly abundant red mullet numbers so more gear is being introduced and more vessels are piling in to take advantage.
- 63) Net soak times can vary, the most successful boats appear to work less gear but turn it over more frequently which hopefully minimises the potentially heavy by catch of small pollack and wrasse.
- 64) Less professional operators working more gear with correspondingly longer soak times to compensate for lower skill levels are probably causing heavy by catch mortality by allowing nets longer soak times while the target species is left highly vulnerable to damage from cuttlefish and crabs which ruin catch quality.
- 65) It is reiterated that there is a perception that boats working offshore using mobile gears get more disproportionate regulatory attention than inshore netters, could this be because they are an easier prey for target driven enforcers?
- 66) Uncontrolled gill netting is probably the most serious threat to close inshore species of interest to recreational sea anglers both shore and boat.
- 67) At present neither UK National or EU regulators have any idea how many kilometres of static gill and tangle nets exist, given that huge amounts probably sit unused in fishermen's stores in addition to what is actually at sea fishing, if this were to be seriously examined the results could prove startling.
- 68) Perhaps some thought ought to be given to licensing sellers of sheet tangle and gill netting throughout the EU with the proviso that all sales are recorded and reported (which would be relatively easy to implement).
- 69) Likewise fishermen ought to be licensed to buy sheet netting (which again is potentially easy to implement) or ready rigged nets so that over a period it would be possible to accurately monitor how much static netting gear of a specific type was in use or available for use by any given individual or vessel.
- 70) It is accepted that, properly used, particularly in the offshore context, gill nets and tangle nets can be a highly selective fuel efficient tool for targeting size specific mature fish with minimal by-catch mortality, however misused (particularly tangle nets) they are an environmental menace that slaughters fish and other creatures in the most destructive unacceptable manner.
- 71) A combination of effort control, after establishing how much gear is actually being used, by setting a ceiling on gear length combined with well structured sensibly implemented MPA's could be a major contribution to conservation without preventing responsible fishermen exploiting opportunities in a responsible professional manner.
- 72) A particular issue arises in Cornwall in relation to small inshore boats able to return easily to port repeatedly to load more gear, bigger offshore netters working trips are, to a degree, limited by the physical amount of gear they can actually carry and the excessive steaming time and fuel involved in returning to port for more gear.
- 73) It is hoped that practical, effective, affordable acoustic devices will soon be available to eliminate or at least keep cetacean by-catch to the absolute minimum in the gill net fishery.
- 74) It is not unreasonable given their financial input to expect that recreational sea anglers can target fish from the shore or boat in the reasonable expectation that they will, given an average degree of competence, have some measure of success in catching what they target.
- 75) In practice this means that they should not have to perpetually run the gauntlet of excessive commercial fishing activity to successfully achieve their objective, this is a prime example of the potential benefits to be gained from an MPA network .
- 76) From the MPA standpoint perhaps serious consideration could be given to establishing hook and line only zones around specific reefs and inshore sandbank systems which would also potentially benefit commercial hand-liners targeting, typically, bass and pollack in a relatively low impact manner, again this sits comfortably with a well structured MPA regime.
- 77) Inshore sandbank areas are often significant flatfish nurseries which can be seriously harmed by continual trawling activity, a prime example is the Skerries Bank in Start Bay which is well protected by a trawling ban and very economically significant for angling charter boats, a similar area in Porthcurno Bay in Cornwall enjoys no protection and therefore never fulfils its true potential as a nursery area.
- 78) There are several other relatively small but nonetheless significant areas which would benefit from some measure of protection for juvenile flatfish particularly turbot which would be much more valuable if allowed to grow bigger before coming under fishing pressure.
- 79) Vessel monitoring already exists on larger vessels, as well as an aid to fisheries monitoring and enforcement its contribution to safety is vital, the ability to instantly establish a vessel's position in a distress situation is priceless.
- 80) Monitoring systems should be introduced across the entire fleet as soon as possible, the technology is available, this would reduce the requirement for expensive patrol vessels enabling enforcement effort to concentrate on identified risks and landing points.
- 81) This is highly relevant in the case of the very small numbers of recreational sea anglers fishing from unlicensed vessels who abuse their position to sell their "by the back door" catches often to the detriment of licensed commercial fishermen.
- 82) This albeit very limited practice eschewed by the vast majority of law abiding anglers is justifiably a major cause of friction and distrust and a potential flashpoint between professional fishermen and recreational sea anglers which is entirely due to the selfish actions of a tiny minority of recreational sea anglers.
- 83) A similar reverse situation can occur when the odd rogue commercial fisherman antagonises anglers by interfering with their legitimate activities, the miscreants on both sides of the divide ought to know better, there are so many legitimate issues of mutual concern, they should be ashamed of themselves and learn to work together.

- 84) Scalloping seems perpetually in the news for all the wrong reasons as Natural England flexes its muscles without apparent thought for the inevitable unhelpful consequences that its unilateral closures inflict on other areas.
- 85) The inshore scallop fleet in Devon and Cornwall is stable and has been for many years, it consists primarily of modern purpose built vessels which represent a major investment in the future by their operators.
- 86) There is no doubt that reef systems need protection, I have campaigned on this issue for over ten years, it should be recognised that scallop gear will be seriously damaged if it is towed over high reefs, the problem of scallop dredge damage really arises on mixed grounds and ross coral banks.
- 87) That said current proposals around Lands End by Natural England have appeared to omit three highly significant reef systems, the Wolf Rock, Carn Base and the Runnelstone while the proposal on the table appears to include a section of prime trawling ground between the Ship (Seven Stones) and the west side of Cape Cornwall Bank.
- 88) The West Country inshore scallop fleet is effectively hemmed in by the presence of large industrial scallop vessels towing up to eighteen dredges per side working in to six miles, the same applies to local static gear vessels unable to risk heavy gear losses to large scallopers when fishing outside the six mile limit.
- 89) Beam trawlers in this six to twelve mile zone have long been limited by horsepower and gear size, why are scallopers exempted?
- 90) If these large vessels were excluded from the six to twelve mile zone the smaller local vessels could expand into the area relieving pressure on inshore grounds all round.
- 91) This could be simply achieved by limiting dredge numbers to eight per side on all sizes of vessels wishing to fish in this zone, why do fisheries administrators appear to repeatedly ignore this glaring anomaly?
- 92) Perhaps a measure of this type could be sweetened for the displaced vessels by restoring the former 10% whitefish by-catch allowance for vessels working more than 8 dredges per side outside the 12 mile limit, this was reduced to 5% to no avail other than increase discard rates of fish not specifically targeted but nonetheless already dead.
- 93) Currently it would appear that potentially more regulators are involved in fisheries monitoring enforcement and research than there are actually full time fishermen to be regulated, Natural England's present exponential growth is almost certainly exacerbating this very serious financial issue generated entirely by ongoing serial regulatory inefficiency.
- 94) It therefore necessarily follows that the combined cost of fisheries regulation enforcement and research is possibly more than the gross financial output of the English fishing industry, if this does turn out to be true it is a totally unacceptable example of "big government" at its worst and a serious misuse of tax payer funds.
- 95) Any system where the regulators potentially outnumber the regulated will invariably be inefficient, inherently unsound and inevitably doomed to ultimate failure, in England Natural England must be factored into this equation.
- 96) The soon to be introduced Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCA's) must be structured to deliver ongoing meaningful improvements on what presently occurs under the increasingly outmoded Sea Fisheries Committee regime which they are designed to replace, presently this may not be a foregone conclusion given the current level of institutional regulatory failure.
- 97) It necessarily follows that there are currently, almost certainly, too many regulatory layers to deliver maximum regulatory efficiency at minimum tax payer cost even before factoring in what is currently in the pipeline.
- 98) IFCA's are, in theory, an ideal opportunity to introduce a local decision making process that regulates from the bottom up, rather than as presently, from the top down, eliminating the implied inefficiencies the present system delivers to the serious detriment of our precious marine environment, the outcome in practice is awaited with a degree of trepidation as previous experience counsels caution.
- 99) Properly implemented this imminent new regime offers the tantalising prospect of stripping out several layers congenitally inefficient administration that has played a large part in creating the present unacceptable regulatory mess, the localised bottom up regulatory model that, subject to proper safeguards, delegates local control to local agencies better suited to local area management must be the best way forward.
- 100) Under this regulatory model there would need to be provision for regular contact and close liaison with French and Spanish organisations which would hopefully be created by this local-regional management model which would empower the citizens closest to the resource to manage it responsibly and sustainably to the greater benefit of all.
- 101) For this to work politicians would need to accept citizens rights to local and regional self determination within the EU long bitter experience teaches that Brussels is simply not up to the task.
- 102) The sixty four thousand dollar question hinges around the will of both English and EU politicians and civil servants to implement the sea changes in outlook and culture required to deliver the economies necessary to restore the balance between regulator and regulated, which as it stands presently is both unacceptable and unrepresentative.
- 103) Unless or until politicians and officials accept unreservedly that they are ultimately responsible for the catastrophic mess that has occurred on their watch and that any rectification measures devised must involve pain on their part commencing with a declaration of all out war on twaddle and fudge this consultation will be yet another cruelly cynical shambolic attempt to appease and hoodwink citizens by papering over the cracks
- 104) Whatever else transpires it is incumbent on politicians and civil servants to deliver a balanced marine regulatory regime that works fairly, equitably and effectively in whatever form proves necessary to deliver demonstrably better tax payer value than hitherto, if this involves a heavy cull of those responsible for past mistakes then so be it.
- 105) It should be clearly noted that organisations such as Natural England which already seem to be multiplying exponentially on the back of the English Marine Bill are already regarded with great suspicion by a broad cross section at grass roots level on account of their perceived autocratic nature and top down approach, they cannot and will not function effectively without the acceptance of those they will impact most heavily upon.
- 106) There is presently compelling evidence of a serious danger of ongoing duplication of effort and its attendant economic implications which waste scarce monetary resources as various unelected unaccountable QUANGO's hop on the bandwagon created by the English Parliaments Marine Bill.
- 107) Clear evidence of slackness in the system is already apparent, as presently, MPA advisory groups wait for work to be completed, which in reality, ought to have been completed and ready to be utilised before the English Marine Bill gained Royal Assent, this early failure by a well funded QUANGO is bound to impact unfavourably on the function of IFCA's from day one.
- 108) Anecdotal evidence suggests that the (EU funded?) Finding Sanctuary Project has cost tax payers circa £5,000,000 to produce similar work to that has been undertaken by the Cornish Fish Producers Organisation for circa £30,000, yet the Finding Sanctuary work is still overdue and impacting on the work of MPA advisory groups, which currently, In Cornwall, are dead in the water as a result.
- 109) There was a similar project commenced locally in Cornwall, "Identifying Significant Areas", the results of which have never seen the light of day as far as those who contributed their experience and knowledge at grass roots level are concerned, this is a clear illustration of why so many willing voluntary participants are so seriously under-whelmed by the performance standards of those responsible.
- 110) I attended an angling consultation meeting organised by English Nature in Peterborough at the time that English Nature was about to be replaced by Natural England in preparation for the enactment of the English Marine Bill where it was categorically stated that the new organisation would be driven from the bottom up, it was sold to us on that basis, subsequent experience tends to indicate that this is not or will not be the case.

- 111) ALL PUBLIC BODIES, IN WHATEVER FORM THEY TAKE OR AREA THEY OPERATE IN, MUST BE FULLY ACCOUNTABLE AT ALL TIMES, UNLESS THEY ARE THEY MUST NOT BE UNDULY SURPRISED WHEN THEY ENCOUNTER NEGATIVE REACTIONS OR OUTRIGHT HOSTILITY FROM THE CITIZENS THEY EXIST TO SERVE.
- 112) THEY MUST CLEARLY AND DEMONSTRABLY DELIVER BEST VALUE IN A TRANSPARENTLY ECONOMIC MANNER, CONSEQUENTLY THEY MUST STAND OR FALL BY RESULTS ALONE, OUT OF CONTROL, REMOTE, DETACHED, DISPASSIONATE OFFICIALDOM FEEDING ON ITS OWN INEPTITUDE SIMPLY WILL NOT DO.
- 113) IT IS AS THE PRESENT REGIME CURRENTLY STANDS NOT TOO HARD TO IMAGINE THAT THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION ACTUALLY DESPISES THAT SECTION OF EU CITIZENS WHO OBTAIN THEIR LIVELIHOOD FROM THE SEA AND THAT IT HAS ACTUALLY BEEN WAGING A COVERT WAR OF ATTRITION ON THEM, THEIR LIFESTYLES AND TRADITIONS.
- 114) THIS MORALLY BANKRUPT POLICY HAS NOT ONLY DEVASTATED FISHING ECONOMIES IT HAS ALSO HEAVILY IMPACTED ON THE WIDER LOCAL ECONOMIES OF THE AFFECTED REGIONS BY SUPPRESSING OR EVEN DESTROYING DEMAND FOR SUPPLIES AND SERVICES TO THE FISHING FLEET WHICH CONTINUE TO HAVE FAR REACHING ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES TO PERIPHERAL REGIONAL ECONOMIES.
- 115) WERE CENTRALISED REGULATORS TO HAVE THE VISION AND COURAGE TO HAND (SUBJECT TO SAFEGUARDS) CONTROL OF VITAL MARINE RESOURCES TO THE LOCAL CITIZENS MOST AFFECTED WHO STAND TO GAIN OR LOSE THE MOST FROM SUCCESS OR FAILURE HUGE ECONOMIC BENEFITS AND ADMINISTRATIVE ECONOMIES WOULD BE VIRTUALLY GUARANTEED.
- 116) IF THIS FAILED WHICH IS ACTUALLY UNTHINKABLE THE SITUATION WOULD STILL SCARCELY BE WORSE THAN AT PRESENT.
- 117) IF AS IS HIGHLY LIKELY SUCH EMANCIPATION SUCCEEDED WHERE INFLEXIBLE FINANCIALLY UNSOUND BRUSSELS CENTRIC MICRO MANAGEMENT PREVIOUSLY FAILED POLITICIANS COULD CLAIM THE CREDIT FOR A STUNNING SUCCESS.
- 118) THAT MODEL OF LOCAL MANAGEMENT COULD DELIVER EVERY RIGHT THINKING CITIZENS VISION OF CLEAN VIBRANT SEAS POPULATED BY HEALTHY ABUNDANT MARINE AND BIRD LIFE. STILL CAPABLE OF PROVIDING A BENEFICIAL SUSTAINABLE HARVEST FOR COASTAL COMMUNITIES IN PERPETUITY.

CONSULTATION RESPONSE BY THE CORNISH FEDERATION OF SEA ANGLERS BY CONSERVATION SPOKESMAN KEVIN BENNETTS.

- 1) As an ex professional fisherman holding a skippers certificate of competency I maintain a strong interest in the fishing industry as it still provides valuable business for me as a service provider to the marine sector. I am also privileged to be a member of Cornwall Sea Fisheries Committee representing the interests of recreational sea angling which gives me an insight of the complex issues that bedevil the industry currently.
- 2) That the reviled Common Fisheries Policy has been an unmitigated social environmental and financial disaster over an extended timeframe is beyond reasonable dispute. This is seen to a large extent to be due to the intransigence of beaurocracy, which, being controlled by politicians, have wilfully persisted with policies that while well meaning were non-the-less patently flawed from day one. One definition of beaurocracy states "that it takes a simple issue and makes it complicated"., this seems to be true, there has invariably been a mindset of steely beaurocratic inflexibility that rules out compromise or any willingness to fine tune events to evolving circumstances regardless of demonstrably developing adverse consequences, however well intentioned the original concept may have been.
- 3) Both the European Commission and DEFRA 's beaurocrats have succeeded in laying waste to fishing communities and infrastructure throughout Europe, wrecking businesses and lives at the heart of these communities in the process. At the epicentre of this catastrophe has been the inherently flawed quota system which has led to the dumping of unquantifiable amounts of fish at sea over the period that quotas have been in force, ostensibly for "conservation" purposes. This incredible example of the disastrous consequences of unbridled beaurocracy charged with the regulation of a living resource that will never respect arbitrary lines drawn by beaurocratic pens on maps was, in reality, morally and economically bankrupt from its inception, insofar that, in reality, it did not and never could conserve a single fish.
- 4) Until recently Brussels has placed heavy reliance on what has predictably proven to be flawed science that has paid scant regard to evidence on the fishing grounds whilst continuing to set ever tighter quotas which have only exacerbated the discard problem to an alarming degree. This is especially true in the mixed fisheries prosecuted in the English Channel, Western Approaches and Bristol Channel by vessels from Devon and Cornwall.
- 5) The European Commission in Brussels and DEFRA in English territorial waters, having belatedly woken up to the futility of previous policy, seem currently to be exhibiting signs of increasing desperation at both National and European level. This is clearly the motive behind the unaccustomed willingness to suddenly consult all and sundry on the best way forward in order to hopefully develop a future policy that may actually work.
- 6) Could it be that, finally, increasing public outrage at discard levels and the perceived ineptitude of fisheries mismanagement in general has registered itself to such a degree on their collective radars that both National and European politicians can no longer continue to ignore the depth of feeling that has long been evident had they bothered to listen sooner. This is vitally important because the current failed policy has actually, however unintentionally, abused a priceless natural resource that is a vital source of high quality food which given better more competent stewardship has the ongoing potential to be self sustaining in perpetuity. Another probable unintentional, unforeseen consequence of discards has been that, when combined with the release of rescued seals familiarised with humans there has been an unforeseen evolutionary modification of seal behaviour insofar that seals now associate fishing boats and their gear with a source of free food. This could account for the escalating levels of damage to monkfish in particular in the tangle net fishery directly attributable to seal activity leading to increasing calls for a seal cull which effectively would be a retrograde step as a probable direct result of rescued seals becoming humanised.
- 7) Vessel decommissioning schemes have at considerable taxpayer cost succeeded in reducing catching capacity only to a degree insofar that the incredible level of technology found on relatively small modern vessels that have entered service in recent years ensures that they are super efficient fishing machines. Another serious problem that Brussels tinkering has ensured unwittingly is the destruction of an inherently safe seaworthy but relatively inefficient class of vessel in the 15 to 25 metre size bracket only to be replaced by increasing numbers of less safe highly efficient so called "rulebeaters", until recently exempt from the quota system. This has created massive overcapacity in the inshore fleet which has recently been subjected to quotas set at a level that virtually guarantees financial disaster for many.
- 8) Again decommissioning has been used as a blunt instrument at taxpayers expense to scrap numbers of under 10 metre vessels (some originally built with grant aid) that would never have been built in the first place were it not for the Common Fisheries Policy. There is still massive overcapacity in the English under 10 metre inshore fleet particularly in the shellfish sector which has exploded as a result of vessels leaving the whitefish sector because of impossible quota restrictions created by the Common Fisheries Policy. This type of artificial vessel displacement from one fishery to another is a typical consequence of beaurocratic meddling in a business that like any other ought to have been regulated by purely economic means.
- 9) From The steadily improving catch levels experienced by a smaller numbers of larger vessels working outside the 12 mile limit it seems to suggest that stocks are in an increasingly healthy state, this class of vessel generally has access to sufficient quota either owned or leased to ensure discards are minimal. Problems still arise when catch levels of certain species suddenly and unexpectedly surge as they often do, better science may soon be able to predict these events and revise quotas accordingly as necessary.
- 10) Inshore vessels suddenly subjected to catch monitoring and miniscule quotas often report extreme difficulties in avoiding discards if they are to remain fishing in a very mixed fishery. Political opinion seems to be edging towards the concept of banning discards in favour of landing everything caught which may give a better indication of actual stock levels. It ought to be borne in mind that a fish landed in a box is no less dead than a similar fish merely discarded to become a meal for a semi tame seal exploiting an artificial food source. One very practical suggestion that has emerged is that over quota fish landed under such a regime be sold and the income generated used to finance the purchase of additional fish quota by fishermen owned quota companies such as the already operating Duchy Fish Quota Company based in Newlyn.
- 11) Current trends indicate that marine protected areas (MPA's) designated by environmental bodies will play an increasing role in future fisheries management and conservation initiatives. Marine protected areas that are intelligently implemented and properly monitored and observed by stakeholders are no doubt potentially highly effective tools if embraced willingly by all stakeholders. The advantage of the MPA concept is that, subject to local decision making, it will be possible to tailor each one to specific local needs with conservation as a priority, this does not necessarily entail closing an area or banning everything as some suggest, but rather controlling effort by restricting certain gear types or implementing seasonal closures. This must not

mean that presently perceived bias against mobile gears is intensified possibly because they are easier to police while static gear escapes attention because it is more difficult to monitor.

12) Seasonal closures appear to have been highly beneficial on the Trevoze grounds off North Cornwall proving the long held but formerly unfashionable belief that it is logical to protect spawning fish. This is particularly relevant in the context of bass and pollack where spawning aggregations in known locations are highly vulnerable to intensive directed fishing effort which often gluts markets and lowers market prices. It is increasingly felt that both species would be much better exploited inshore by hook and line fisheries at times when both demand and market prices are high. Dozens of boxes of fish roe often seen on fish markets in the main spawning season is unsustainable and unacceptable further strengthening the case for seasonal closures in defined areas which, in reality would fit well with the MPA concept.

13) A long standing problem has been the offshore winter pair trawl fishery for bass which targets spawning aggregations which are highly vulnerable to this method, there have been repeated calls to ban the method but perhaps a simple seasonal closure for targeted bass pair trawling in the western channel would be more effective. A typical example of (well meaning) inept British fisheries regulation involved the banning of British vessels pair trawling for bass inside 12 miles. Unfortunately the French being in possession of EU rights regulated by Brussels were able to continue fishing into six miles while taking massive catches, despite local boats being excluded. The cetacean by catch question that this fishery raises ought to be reason enough to seasonally close the fishery as it cannot be pure coincidence that cetacean mortality as evidenced by numerous carcasses washed ashore during this season causes public outrage which is not currently addressed.

14) Another potentially serious problem involves the increasingly active near shore gill net fishery for red mullet, the fishery is potentially lucrative so more gear is being introduced and more vessels are piling in to take advantage. Net soak times can vary, the best boats appear to work less gear but turn it over more frequently which hopefully minimises the potentially heavy by catch of small pollack and wrasse. Less professional operators working more gear with correspondingly longer soak times to compensate for lower skill levels are probably causing heavy by catch mortality by allowing nets longer soak times while the target species is left highly vulnerable to damage from cuttlefish and crabs which ruin catch quality. It is reiterated that there is a perception that boats using mobile gears get more disproportionate regulatory attention than inshore netters because they are an easier prey for target driven enforcers.

15) Uncontrolled gill netting is probably the most serious threat to close inshore species of interest to recreational sea anglers both shore and boat. At present regulators have no idea how many miles of static gill and tangle nets exist given that huge amounts probably sit unused in fishermen's stores in addition to what is actually at sea fishing. Perhaps some thought ought to be given to licensing the sale of sheet netting with the proviso that all sales are recorded and reported. Likewise fishermen ought to be licensed to buy sheet netting or ready rigged nets so that over a period it would be possible to accurately monitor how much static netting gear of a specific type was in use or available for use by any given individual.

16) It is also accepted that, properly used, particularly in the offshore context, gill nets can be a highly selective fuel efficient tool for targeting fish with minimal by-catch mortality, however misused they are an environmental menace that slaughters fish and other creatures in the most destructive unacceptable manner. A combination of effort control by establishing how much gear is actually being used and setting a ceiling on gear length combined with well structured sensibly implemented MPA's could be a major contribution to conservation without preventing responsible fishermen exploiting opportunities in a responsible professional manner. In this instance we talking small inshore boats able to return easily to port repeatedly to load more gear, bigger offshore netters working trips are limited by the physical amount of gear they can actually carry and the excessive steaming time and fuel involved in returning to port. It is hoped that practical effective acoustic devices will soon be available to eliminate or at least keep cetacean by-catch to the absolute minimum in the gill net fishery.

17) It is not unreasonable given their financial input to expect that recreational sea anglers can target fish from the shore or boat in the reasonable expectation that they will, given an average degree of competence, have some measure of success in catching what they target. This means that they should not have to perpetually run the gauntlet of commercial fishing activity to successfully achieve their objective. From the MPA standpoint perhaps serious consideration could be given to establishing hook and line only zones around specific reefs and sandbank systems which would also potentially benefit commercial hand-liners targeting, typically, bass and pollack.

18) Vessel monitoring already exists on larger vessels, as well as an aid to enforcement its contribution to safety is vital, the ability to establish a vessel's position in a distress situation is priceless. Monitoring systems should be introduced across the entire fleet as soon as possible, the technology is available, this would reduce the requirement for expensive patrol vessels enabling enforcement effort to concentrate on identified risks and landing points. This is highly relevant in the case of the small numbers of recreational sea anglers fishing from unlicensed vessels who abuse their position to sell their catches often to the detriment of licensed fishermen. This is a major cause of friction and distrust and a potential flashpoint between professional fishermen and recreational sea anglers.

19) Scallop fishing seems perpetually in the news for all the wrong reasons as Natural England flexes its muscles without apparent thought for the inevitable unhelpful consequences that its unilateral closures inflict on other areas. The inshore scallop fleet in Devon and Cornwall is stable and has been for many years. There is no doubt that reef systems need protection, I have campaigned on this issue for over ten years. That said current proposals around Lands End by Natural England omit three highly significant reef systems while the proposal on the table includes a section of prime trawling ground. The Westcountry scallop fleet is hemmed in by the presence of large industrial scallop vessels towing up to eighteen dredges per side working in to six miles. Beam trawlers in this area have long been limited by horsepower and gear size, why are scallopers exempted? If these large vessels were excluded from the twelve mile band the smaller local vessels could expand into the zone relieving pressure all round. This could be achieved simply by limiting dredge numbers to eight per side.

20) Currently and very concerningly it would appear that potentially more bureaucrats are involved in fisheries monitoring enforcement and research than there are actually full time fishermen to be regulated. It therefore necessarily follows that the cost of fisheries regulation enforcement and research is possibly more than the gross financial output of the English fishing industry, if this does turn out to be true it is a totally unacceptable example of "big government" at its worst. Any system where the regulators potentially outnumber the regulated will always be doomed to ultimate failure.

----- Original Message -----

From: [Cadman Simon](#)

To: [kevin@consolsoils.co.uk](mailto:kevin@consolsoils.co.uk)

Cc: [Derriman Eddy](#) ; [BH@borlase-co.co.uk](mailto:BH@borlase-co.co.uk)

Sent: Monday, August 20, 2007 12:16 PM

Subject: Commercial & Recreational bass fishing

Dear Kevin

Following up on your AOB agenda item at the CSFC meeting on 20 July 2007, where you suggested (and I agree) that recreational boat anglers and commercial boat fishermen should work together to formulate a modus operandi, I have since spoken with several commercial bass fishermen who thought the idea was worth exploring.

So far, I have only run the idea past the commercial sector fishing in the Manacles, which as you know is the area that is most problematic in terms of conflict between them and the recreational boat anglers for space and numbers of fish being removed from that fishery.

Many of the commercial bass fishermen working in the Manacles are members of the South West Handline Fishermen's Association (SWHFA), and thought that it would be helpful if the CFSA made a formal approach to the SWHFA to try and convene a meeting at which a good understanding of each others needs in the fishery could be gained, hopefully leading to an agreed way forward to fish around one another.

It is my view that an attempt to resolve the fishing issues in the Manacles area should be looked at first in isolation, separate to other areas of conflict. To try and gather interested parties in from other 'hot spots' around the County in one place could be difficult as some of the problems elsewhere may be subtly different and a large gathering of people may become too unwieldy to find resolutions.

I would be happy to assist in the furthering of better relations and understandings of fishing practices between commercial and recreational fishermen. If you would like help in promoting a meeting I will gladly pass details on to the boat skippers which I come across at sea. It just so happens that we are about to embark on the bi-annual round of sea fishing meetings which we hold at a dozen locations around the County. They are open to all with an interest and would be a good forum to introduce this possible way forward, if progress has been made to hold your meeting.

I think that some form of working agreement, perhaps a 'code of practice' is well worth pursuing and if one can be arrived at, I can easily pass details on to many of the boat fishermen that are active in the fishery.

Good publicity in fishing papers/magazines, clubs and associations, perhaps on local radio/TV should be quite easily attainable for any agreement reached.

You can contact SWHFA through David Muirhead.

Triss Rose Cottage, The Lizard, Helston TR12 7NL. Email: [BH@borlase-co.co.uk](mailto:BH@borlase-co.co.uk) (work)  
Tel: 01326 574988 (work)

If I can be of any further help, please let me know.

Regards

Simon Cadman

Senior Fishery Officer

Cornwall Sea Fisheries Committee

Old Bonded Warehouse

Quay Street

Penzance

Cornwall TR18 4BD

Tel: 01736 369817

Fax: 01736 331020

Email: [scadman.seafisheries@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:scadman.seafisheries@cornwall.gov.uk)

Website: [www.cornwall.gov.uk/seafisheries](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/seafisheries)

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----- Original Message -----

Subject: Flounder Survey

From: "John Brooks" <[jcbsula@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jcbsula@yahoo.co.uk)>

Date: Thu, 19 April, 2007 10:49 am

To: "Darren Libby" <[darrenlibby@comfortcaregroup.co.uk](mailto:darrenlibby@comfortcaregroup.co.uk)>

"Kevin Bennetts" <[kevin@consolsoils.co.uk](mailto:kevin@consolsoils.co.uk)>

"Jim Taylor" <[madfishjim@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:madfishjim@tiscali.co.uk)>

"Mark Kaczmarek" <[mkaczmarek@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:mkaczmarek@cornwall.gov.uk)>

"Adrian Hill" <[recorder@thecfsa.com](mailto:recorder@thecfsa.com)>

"Simon Toms" <[simon.toms@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:simon.toms@environment-agency.gov.uk)>

"Stuart Athay" <[skipperstuie@hotmail.com](mailto:skipperstuie@hotmail.com)>

"Ted Tuckerman" <[tedtuckerman@eclipse.co.uk](mailto:tedtuckerman@eclipse.co.uk)>

> Dear all

>

> Please find the E mail from Rod Wilson at the Exeter Uni. He has asked for more help in the Flounder Survey in the form of different questions and on an excel spreadsheet. If any one can fill it in with hard catch figures it would be great, please return all the mails back to me [michael@spiller7210.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:michael@spiller7210.freeserve.co.uk) and I will collate them for Rod.

>

> Thanks for your help

>

> Mike Spiller

>>

> ----- Original Message -----

> From: <[R.W.Wilson@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:R.W.Wilson@exeter.ac.uk)>

> To: "Michael Spiller" <[michael@spiller7210.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:michael@spiller7210.freeserve.co.uk)>

> Sent: Sunday, April 08, 2007 10:24 PM

> Subject: Flounder Survey

>>

>> Hi Mike,

Please find attached a template I have drawn up in Microsoft Excel for another survey on the flounder caught in recent years. If the clubs can complete this version for the last ten years (or even earlier if they have the data) then this would be much more useful.

I think that getting data from the club competitions is most likely to be the best source of information, but if clubs, or individuals, have other flounder data that they can provide the full details for then this would be just as acceptable. The important issues are to:

- 1) Provide data for each rivers separately, not combined.
- 2) Provide estimates of number of anglers, number of lines per angler, and time of lines in the water.

The latter is essential if we are to calculate the catch-per-unit-effort, which is crucial if we are to compare trends over time, and between sites.

Data on the River Teign and Exe are obviously what we are targeting, but it is just as important to have other rivers/estuaries to compare with, especially if we think that the Teign and Exe have suffered in particular in recent years. So please send the request to as many clubs around the South West (or further?) as you like.

Please also feel free to modify the spreadsheet (e.g. to add your

address for where replies should be sent, or room for further comments).  
Many thanks and I hope your meeting goes well.  
Regards  
Rod

-----  
Yahoo! Mail is the world's favourite email. Don't settle for less, sign up for your freeaccount today.

From: Phil Lockley

To: Kevin Bennetts

Sent: Friday, April 06, 2007 1:56 PM

To: Western Morning News from Phil Lockley.

Date: Thursday, April 5, 2007

Interview with Kevin Bennetts.

(740)

THE British fishing industry is edging ever closer to an environmental and economic catastrophe, one engendered by the discredited and detested Common Fisheries Policy

(CFP), says Kevin Bennetts, ex commercial fisherman, avid sea angler and now a

member of the Cornwall Sea Fisheries Committee.

His stance toward the forthcoming Marine Bill, from which British anglers and

fishermen may remain at loggerheads, describes it as "unilateral tinkering on a

subject that requires full involvement throughout Europe, not just the UK" he said.

"The chickens – hatched by Prime Minister Edward Heath's treachery in 1983 when he

handed over control of our priceless fishing grounds to Brussels – have now come

home to roost with a vengeance.

"Our emasculated fishing industry is reduced to factional infighting in the scrabble

to survive the relentless onward march of bureaucracy.

"Defra now holds a poisoned chalice, one forged from thirty years of eye watering

mismanagement and governmental indifference, compounded by the greed of certain

catching sectors.

In Cornwall, as a result of arbitrarily imposed vessel size limitations, a class of

inherently safe seaworthy vessels has disappeared to be replaced by boats measuring

under 10 metres known as 'rule beaters.

"These technologically advanced vessels offer formidable catching capacity, but

generally lack the reserves of stability safety and endurance of the vessels they

replace and this effort tends to be heavily concentrated on the inshore grounds.

"Thus trawlermen, scallopers, netters and potters all jockey for position

inside the 6-mile limit and in the case of static gear fishermen, this is often necessary as high-powered French trawlers often exercise their 'grandfather rights' and fish within UK waters up to the six mile limit."

He said how modern day high-tech fishing has resulted "in some cases, overfishing and serious consideration ought to be given to actively encouraging inefficient methods such as artesian hand line fishing which yield small quantities of superb quality premium produce with the absolute minimum carbon footprint," he added.

"As a result of understandable financial pressures on the one hand and declining catches on the other, potters and/or gill netters are now working more gear to try and stay in business."

He told of hidden factors that politicians have difficulty grasping, "the ever changing world of fishing," he commented.

"In the case of potting, the demand for bait has increased exponentially. For example, with Rick Stein's popularisation of previously used 'bait fish' like gurnard, what was once cheap has become a highly sought and expensive fish for the table.

"Other potential bait species such as wrasse and flounder – which historically were never commercially significant – are now used. Inject many thousands of disgruntled anglers who use those species as sport fish, many being returned, there is serious potential for damaging and unwanted conflict.

"The Marine Bill, long in gestation, is an unknown quantity, hopefully it will offer something for everyone but unless or until Brussels addresses the shortcomings of the CFP and the untold damage it has inflicted on us all, the future of the Marine Bill working is bleak."

He favours the growing popularity of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), saying it is a regime which appears to offer, "the tantalising prospect of pro active local stakeholder led inshore management from the bottom up, a complete contrast to the present cumbersome reactive top down style historically practiced by the government."

"Hopefully not a rehash of the rightly discredited no-take-zones (NTZs), MPAs may be an opportunity to identify and clearly manage identified and significant

areas to

benefit both the resource and ultimately the various stakeholders.

“Structured and

representative management is the key, arbitrary and permanent bans are a recipe for

conflict and bitterness.

“For example, control of gill netting during the spawning season on inshore reef

areas (when prices for fish tend to be very low) could benefit the inshore pollack

stock. This would trickle-down to boost the sustainable hand line fishery and also

help recreational anglers.

“Presently the Cornwall Federation of Sea Anglers are implacably opposed to ‘bag

limits’ or a sea angling licence fee, since to make it work it must be enforceable,

fair and demonstrably beneficial to those who pay.

“However, were measures of this type proven to work, it may then be possible to

explore the concept of an angling licence fee, opening up the interesting concept of

the fund offering some form of compensation to those that may be financially disadvantaged by short seasonal closures (commercial fishermen).”

Meeting with Ben Bradshaw MP

Nobel House

14 March 2007

J My name is Andy Alcock I am the Chairman of the South West Federation of Sea Anglers; as a Federation we represent some 27 Clubs with memberships ranging from as little as 25 to as great as 500 a total of approximately 2,500 recreational sea anglers.

J The SWFSA believes we should not let organisations drive a wedge between the recreational sea angler and commercial fisherman by highlighting and focusing on views that are not shared by all concerned.

J The SWFSA believes that as stakeholders recreational sea anglers should be entitled to a share in the responsibility of managing our fish stock but not to the detriment of the commercial fisherman. By definition the two names spells the right of one against the recreational pursuit of the other.

J The problem as we see it is when the boundaries between recreational sea angling and commercial fishing become blurred due to the recreational sea angler making a profit from his catch by selling it direct to a merchant, to a restaurant, to a pub or by any other means he sees fit.

Several organisations share the view that while it is not illegal to sell fish caught from the shore (unless it is not disclosed to the Revenue) it is when it is caught from an unlicensed boat; creating a huge problem with black fish.

J As recreational sea anglers we have to decide are we in it for

the fun or in it for the money. If it's for the fun then as Federations we have to get our own house in order and eradicate the black fish market to justify our right as stakeholders. If it for the money then become a commercially licensed fisherman.

J In conclusion the SWFSA believes that recreational sea anglers and commercial fishermen should be supportive and understanding of each others needs to conserve, protect and to promote our fishery.

----- Original Message -----

From: John Brooks

To: [jcbsula@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jcbsula@yahoo.co.uk)

Sent: Saturday, November 18, 2006 6:16 PM

Subject: Sea Anglers Forum

Hi

I have spoken over the months with the four members of the Sea Fisheries Committee who have a particular interest in sea angling, and with a few other anglers, all of whom think it would be a good idea for a group of anglers to meet up with the four with an interest in sea angling, namely Stuart Athay, Kevein Bennetts, Mark Kaczmarek and Simon Toms.

After several false starts, I have found a venue where we can have a room, The Coppice Inn at Lanner. This is fairly easy to find and has a good car park. The landlord is happy for us to meet one Thursday, and if we could manage either the 30 November or 7 December, then we could have a meeting before Christmas. If neither of these two dates are convenient, then I will get some dates for after Christmas.

I would propose that apart from the above four, we keep the numbers down to a dozen or less so that the meeting is more manageable. If you think of anyone who could bring some good ideas to such a group, please let me know. The topics that could be included might be:

Bass MLS - what next

Byelaw on multi-rig trawling

Nets

Closed areas

Closed seasons

Bag limits

Ny other topics that could be discussed.

Hopefully the SFC members with an interest in sea angling will have some idea of what anglers in Cornwall want, and can use the fact that such a meeting has been held to support their proposals.

I look forward to hearing from you.

John Brooks

From: Kevin Bennetts

To: [Tim.Oliver@informa.com](mailto:Tim.Oliver@informa.com)

Cc: Phil Lockley

Sent: Sunday, October 29, 2006 10:40 AM

Subject: Bass Wars.

Hi Tim,

What an unedifying spectacle the current confusion and vitriol surrounding the bass minimum size issue must be conveying to the media and general public.

In the midst of the bitter recriminations both sides seem to have totally forgotten the real villains who all British stakeholders should be concentrating their fire on. They are so busy

blaming each other while the French quietly gear themselves up for yet another winter decimating the spawning aggregations of bass in the Channel.

Clear evidence is emerging of increasing hostility to this lethal fishery in France, a major French supermarket announced that in future it will not be taking pair trawl caught bass ostensibly on quality grounds. One cannot but wonder if this significant move was a result of pressure from the powerful Breton handlining lobby who also want curbs on this method to

protect their own interests in a lucrative very sustainable fishery based on fish of good size almost exclusively plus 2 kilos in very good numbers.

Trying to ban the pair trawling method outright would be counter productive almost certainly impacting unfavourably on our own fleet at some future time. What might just be effective would be a Brussels imposed community wide seasonal closure for bass that would

include every method including angling from say mid January to mid March. If the fish could

not be sold there would be little point pursuing them. If a localised discard situation arose in a

mixed fishery it might just be a price worth paying in this isolated instance.

Given the current abundance of small bass many are complacent about stock health. That said last winters sustained spell of cold easterly weather did not augur well for a good year class. This is borne out by a virtual absence of 'o' group bass in sample netting on the Fal and

Helford this summer. Previous year classes are growing exceptionally well given the warm conditions. However it will only take a couple of poor year classes to make a considerable hole in a large stock of basically small fish.

What are missing in any number are the prime breeding fish from 2 to 4 kilos which would also be of huge benefit to the hook and line fishery both commercial and leisure. I wonder where they are?

Best regards,

Kevin Bennetts,

Cornish Federation of Sea Anglers.

Cornwall Sea Fisheries Committee.

----- Original Message -----

From: Kevin Bennetts

To: [tope@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:tope@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

Cc: jim taylor

Sent: Monday, October 16, 2006 11:05 AM

Subject: TOPE CONSULTATION RESPONSE BY THE CORNISH FEDERATION OF SEA ANGLERS

Dear Mr Cotter,

The response by the Cornish Federation of Sea Anglers is as follows:

1 Tope are an important target species on the North Cornish Coast for both charter boats and private craft. They are generally encountered from May till August peaking in June and July when they can be very prolific. There is no recognised or significant Tope fishery on the

South Coast of Cornwall.

2 They are encountered in areas of moderate to strong tidal runs particularly Godrevy and Trevoise on generally rough bottoms running on to sand. Nearly all targeted effort is within the

six mile limit and therefore within the jurisdiction of Cornwall Sea Fisheries Committee.

This

could be highly significant in facilitating local conservation measures.

3 Generally the most numerous fish are pack Tope in the 5 to 15 kilo range with a high proportion of male fish. Later in the season there is often a run of large female fish from + 15

to (exceptionally) 25 kilos it is felt that these could be pregnant in the majority of cases.

4 While there is presently no targeted commercial Tope fishery any reappearance of Spurdogs in this area where they were historically prolific prior to gill netting would have serious implications for the Tope population which has possibly filled the gap left by the elimination of the Spurdog stock.

5 Given the seasonal nature of this fishery it might be prudent to consider an embargo on gill

netting and long lining within the six mile limit from Pendeen to Hartland from May to August

(inclusive) .Being an inshore area this would be relatively easy to introduce and enforce within

the present Cornwall Sea Fisheries patrol regime. As things stand at present this would not adversely affect established commercial fishing patterns.

6 Given the migratory nature of the species there is obviously no one size fits all quick fix. The

present low market value of Tope is a very positive conservation tool. That said the repugnant

trade in Shark fins could have a rapid and disastrous effect on the health of the stock. It is therefore seen as imperative that this issue is urgently addressed at both European and IICES level.

7 Another possible local influence is the insatiable demand for pot bait. Most potters working

offshore now fish shark baits on every marker buoy. Given the sheer number of these buoys

this must be having a seriously negative effect on the general Shark population. It is not clear

whether Tope are taken in this way but it ought to be borne in mind as none of these fish ever

figure in any catch statistics.

8 The vexed question of by catch is a perennial hot potato. The CFSA's view is that any fish

caught commercially ought to be landed to give a better picture of what is actually being caught. Discards as engendered by the quota system are as repugnant as shark finning therefore it is felt that a mechanism should be devised to prevent a targetted Tope fishery evolving. There is clear historical evidence of the unsustainability of gill nets targeted at small

Shark species. It would be regrettable if lessons have not been learned from previous mistakes.

9 It is felt that Tope because of their current relative abundance, low commercial / high recreational value should be designated a sport fish with catch and release practised while the status quo is maintained viz a viz limited commercial bycatch. With this in

mind it is strongly suggested that DEFRA take on board concerns about the hidden and unreported, unregulated shark fishery for pot bait.

Many thanks for the opportunity to contribute to the debate, it is hoped that the above points

are relevant and a positive outcome ensues.

Yours faithfully,

Kevin Bennetts,

Conservation spokesman CFSA

Member CSFC

----- Original Message -----

From: John Brooks

To: [jcsula@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jcsula@yahoo.co.uk)

Sent: Saturday, November 18, 2006 6:16 PM

Subject: Sea Anglers Forum

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Any other topics that could be discussed.

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I look forward to hearing from you.

John Brooks