

DRAFT letters for CFSA members and clubs to use in making representation to Councillors in support of prohibiting all netting from estuaries and inside the ten metre depth contour (as delineated on all charts) around the coast of Cornwall.

Dear Councillor -----,

I have been sea angling in Cornwall for ????? years and in that time have witnessed/experienced a significant deterioration in the quality of my fishing as fish have become smaller and scarcer.

One of the findings of recent DEFRA research into sea angling in England – Sea Angling 2012 -- was that deteriorating inshore fish stocks is the single biggest threat to the valuable recreational sea angling sector.

Since the Marine Act 2009, and replacement of Sea Fisheries Committees with Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authorities (IFCAs), the responsibilities of IFCAs includes the requirement to *“to protect the marine environment from, or promote its recovery from, the effects of unsustainable exploitation”* and *“seek to balance the different needs of persons engaged in the exploitation of sea fisheries resources in the district.”*

I do hope that you will support the demands of the Cornish Federation of Sea Anglers in bringing an end to all fin fish netting in our estuaries and shallow close to shore waters so that the far more sustainable hook and line fishing (both commercial and recreational) can benefit.

Dear Councillor -----,

For decades we have known that many fish stocks such as plaice and cod have been overfished.

Recreational sea anglers who have fished for bass, also believed bass were less abundant, especially the older larger fish. However, we were told that bass stocks were being sustainably managed.

Now, scientists and Government have stated bass stocks are in serious decline with a number of poor year classes in the pipe line. Scientists have recommended a 36% cut in catches.

Why then is netting still allowed in our bass nursery areas where bass (mainly immature) that are incidentally captured are meant to be returned even when dead, and why do we allow any netting in our estuaries where the method inevitably catches large numbers of immature fish ?

Also, on occasions, shoals of bass aggregate along the shoreline where mono netting has the ability to remove far greater numbers than hook and line fishing. Why do we allow such a method of fishing in these areas?

Please support the CFSA Petition calling for all netting methods to be prohibited in our estuaries and close to shore waters.

Dear Councillor,

A key duty of the IFCA is to ensure exploitation is carried out in a sustainable way. Sustainability, under the current CFP, is defined as exploitation that does not prejudice exploitation of resources by future generations.

Anglers have witnessed a significant deterioration in the state of fishery resources and it is patently clear, that fisheries are not being carried out sustainably.

A further duty of the IFCA is to promote recovery from unsustainable exploitation.

The evidence that bass stocks have not been sustainably exploited is now overwhelming and includes the latest scientific advice from ICES that advises a 36% reduction in catches of bass for 2014.

Previous claims from recreational sea anglers that bass stocks were not being exploited sustainably have been ignored by a management regime preoccupied with avoiding short term pain and the consequence is that it is only when the horse has bolted that measures are considered to secure the stable door.

One of the most compelling pieces of evidence that illustrates how bass stocks in Cornish waters were historically represented by far larger fish is the length frequency charts as per MAFF Laboratory Leaflet No 59 (1987). This data shows inshore reefs of Cornwall where line fishing took place were providing 80% of bass (by numbers) of 48 cms (1.20 kilo) or more.

By 2006, some nineteen years later, when DEFRA were consulting on increasing the Minimum Landing Size for bass to 45 cms, a debate amongst the Cornwall Sea

Fisheries Committee included the assertion from three commercial fishing members that bass as large as 45cm were exceptionally rare. This is a powerful illustration of how the 'base line' has shifted.

Please support the Cornish Federation of Sea Anglers in their quest to remove netting from estuaries and from close to shore shallow waters where netting can potentially remove far greater numbers of bass than the more sustainable hook and line fishery (recreational and commercial), both of which maximise the value to Cornwall from the bass fishery resource.

Dear Councillor,

RE: Netting in Cornish estuaries.

I/We believe that the complexity of existing legislation for netting in our estuaries is a major handicap to effective enforcement.

Whilst fixed netting is illegal in most estuaries; drift, splash and seine netting is legal. In addition, some estuaries include areas designated as Statutory Bass Nursery Areas (BNAs) and in these areas the retention of bass whilst fishing from a boat is illegal.

Quite how those charged with enforcement are able to satisfactorily prove that bass on board a fishing vessel that is known to have been fishing in an estuary, are not from a BNA is not clear.

Members of the public who would normally be the eyes and ears for reporting anything they thought was illegal, are either reporting activities as illegal which are subsequently found to be legal, or because of the uncertainty are not reporting netting activities at all, including those that are illegal.

I/We believe the answer is to simplify the legislation with a general zero netting regime in our estuaries.

We believe this very simple legislation will facilitate enforcement and furthermore enable the public to confidently alert those responsible for enforcement, of any netting activities they witness.