

From: Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG)

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Anglers' Management & Development Levy

General Principles

- 1) The SRG believes that, despite its many strengths, the current management system for freshwater fisheries in Scotland is under considerable financial pressure. Without additional monetary, human and information resources it will simply not be able to fulfil the ambitions of the Scottish Government's Wild Fisheries Reform (WFR) programme, especially with regard to non-migratory species.
- 2) Nowhere is this funding gap more evident than in relation to research and data collection. Very little is currently invested in monitoring or research on non-migratory freshwater species. In particular there is no systematic approach to gathering information on the range and abundance of stocks, their resilience to exploitation and environmental pressures, or the impact on them of existing or proposed management measures. Equally, there is a lack of information on the inshore marine fisheries which support Scotland's large recreational sea-angling industry.
- 3) In addition, new funding will be essential: to underpin the wider range of enforcement work required by an "all species" management system; to carry out angling participation, promotion and development (APPD) activities; and to implement management measures.
- 4) It is imperative that any funding streams identified to fill this gap are dependable, stable and sufficient for the task at hand. Furthermore any new funding must not be seen as a substitute for the existing and relatively limited public sector investment in the sector.
- 5) Some management activities targeted on migratory salmonids can benefit all species, but it is neither reasonable nor practicable to expect the migratory sector to substantially cross-subsidise the management of other species. A new source must be found to bring in additional funds to support management and APPD activities for all species.
- 6) The SRG has summarised the options for raising these additional funds as follows:
 - a) Levy a "rate" on non-migratory fisheries proprietors akin to that on migratory fisheries.
 - b) Introduce a tax on the sale of fishing permits.
 - c) Place non-migratory fisheries proprietors under a statutory obligation to undertake appropriate management actions, and leave it to them to find the money to fund this.
 - d) Raise a tax on the sale of fishing tackle (already subject to VAT).
 - e) Introduce a "management and development levy" raised directly from individual anglers.
- 7) The SRG believes that option (a) has some superficial attractions, but it carries considerable potential costs in relation to collection and would place a particular (and arguably unfair) burden on tenant angling clubs and the owners of commercial fisheries. Options (b), (c) and (d) share similar flaws, as well as serious problems of practicability. But even if *any* of Options (a) – (d) was viable, the financial burden would simply be transferred to anglers in the form of higher prices or membership fees.
- 8) A direct "management and development levy" on anglers as per Option (e) is therefore viewed by the SRG as being the fairest and most cost-effective approach and, in principle, is considered by a wide cross-section of organisations, representing all types of angling and fisheries management, to be the only viable and acceptable funding system if combined with appropriate levels of Government funding. The SRG therefore believes that it is essential that safeguards are included in the funding model to ensure that funds raised should be wholly allocated to the expenditure needs of the angling and management sector including: FMOs - on whose management

committees anglers should be directly represented - and also on local and national angling promotion and development initiatives. The SRG believes that further work is now required on how such a levy might be implemented, and by whom, to achieve the desired effect. The SRG notes that the angling governing bodies have an existing structure of instructors and coaches (ADBOS) which could be instrumental in providing services to fulfil the proposed angling development responsibilities of FMOs. ADBOS is currently supported by SportScotland to develop competition angling.

- 9) The SRG believes that the benefits of a system based on an individual “management and development levy” on anglers go beyond its efficiency and effectiveness as a means of raising revenue. It provides anglers with a personal stake in the management of all types of wild fisheries and APPD activities, which can both encourage and entitle them to become more closely engaged with management and APPD initiatives. In addition, it offers a unique opportunity to capture data on the extent and distribution of angling participation, and to track how that develops over time.
- 10) Therefore the SRG has concluded that any new management and development levy must:
 - a) Be compulsory.
 - b) Be universal:
 - i) apply, and be collected, nationally.
 - ii) apply equally to Scottish-based anglers and visitors.
 - iii) apply to anglers pursuing any and all species in freshwater.
 - c) Be easy to understand and access.
 - d) Be efficient, with collection, administration and enforcement costs kept to a minimum.
 - e) Be set at a level that represents good value for money for all anglers while raising sufficient funds to make a meaningful net contribution (after collection costs) to support the delivery of management and APPD objectives as agreed in a National Fisheries Plan and local FMO management plans.
 - f) Have uniform rates for all types of angling activity with the exception of juniors, the elderly or disadvantaged groups for whom a nominal charge should be applied.
 - g) Be based on an annual fee, but offer a shorter term (eg week/month) option to cater for visitors and occasional anglers.
 - h) Be capable of capturing, generating and disseminating information to and from anglers.
- 11) Any system must provide:
 - a) an appropriate level of angler influence in the management of the resource and development of the sport at regional and national level.
 - b) transparent, accountable and democratic mechanisms for the setting of fee levels, the disbursement of funds and the management of business.
- 12) The SRG suggests consideration should also be given to providing ancillary benefits to those who pay a management and development levy. These might include access to services such as insurance, membership of governing bodies, or fisheries access arrangements.
- 13) Finally the SRG believes that sea angling, whilst it may not be immediately susceptible to a “management and development levy” system, also has important investment and APPD requirements and can contribute much in terms of the management of coastal and estuarial zones.