

NWIFCA Quarterly Meeting

11 December 2012: 11.00.a.m.

LOBBYING OF FISHERIES MINISTER ON INCREASE OF SEA BASS MINIMUM LANDING SIZE

Purpose: To alert members to the lobbying carried out by the Angling Trust and Bass Anglers Sportfishing Society (BASS) asking for the raising of the Minimum Landing Size of Sea Bass to 48 cm.

Recommendations

The report be received.

Background

1. The Angling Trust and BASS have publicised their lobbying of the Fisheries Minister, Richard Benyon, on the topic of MLS for Bass. They have resurrected their case for increasing the MLS for Bass to 48 cm. Please see attached blog post from 29th November on <http://fightingforfishing.anglingtrust.net/>
2. The NWIFCA is not aware of any evidence that Bass stocks in NW England are under threat or declining. Indeed, catches appear to be high and increasing at many sites in the NW.
3. The current EU minimum landing size for Bass is 36 cm. Size at maturity for Sea Bass varies between sexes. Most literature cites this to be 35 cm for males and 42 cm for females. However, more recent studies suggest that this may be geographically variable. It has been suggested that Bass in NW England are generally smaller in size.
4. The NWIFCA is taking steps to increase protection of Bass stocks by banning fishing activity in Heysham Bass Nursery Area.

Scientific Officer
December 2012

<http://fightingforfishing.wordpress.com/2012/11/29/benyons-big-boost-for-bass/>

Benyon's Big Boost for Bass ?

[29 Nov](#)

Angling Trust secures support for bass conservation from Minister

As you may have heard, just when I thought I'd escaped, the Angling Trust sent me back to the party political conferences. My job was to make the case for fishing and to take the political temperature on the issues that are important to anglers. By smiling nicely and being in the right place at the right time I also managed to secure exclusive interviews for our house magazine *'The Angle'* with some of the politicians who matter most to us anglers including my former parliamentary neighbour and Fisheries Minister Richard Benyon who had some encouraging things to say about bass conservation.



Delegation from BASS and the Angling Trust to DEFRA supported by angling MPs George Hollingbery and Charles Walker

The Trust has been working closely with our colleagues in Bass Anglers Sportsfishing Society (BASS) on resurrecting the case for an increase in the minimum landing size of bass from 36cms to 48cms to protect spawning stocks. Bass don't spawn until they are a minimum of 42 cms and often larger. The current mls is simply insane and explains why UK bass stocks are declining.



A 48cms Irish Bass caught by AT's Marine Campaigner David Mitchell and put back to breed again

I asked Richard Benyon this straightforward question and was delighted with his reply. Take a look..

AT....Are you sympathetic to campaigns for bass conservation and better protection for our estuaries?

RB...I have this old fashioned view that creatures should be allowed to breed at least once before we seek to harvest them for food. That's why I authorised the review of the current bass minimum landing size and we shall have to see what that throws up. I do recognise that estuaries are special environments and can be important as spawning and nursery areas. I am always open to arguments on how we can better protect important habitats and that includes our estuaries.

My view is that the minister can't say fairer than that at this stage. We were delighted to have secured the Defra review of the bass mls at our meeting with Benyon earlier in the year. This was in part thanks to the great support we have received from our friend John Quinlan of Irish Bass who told the minister just how much their recreational bass fishery is worth to the struggling Irish economy. A staggering 15 million Euros a year. The UK figure would be many times more and when compared with the figure for commercial UK bass landings of around £6 million you see how powerful the economic case becomes.



This lovely four pounder is just an average bass in Ireland. Most UK bass anglers rarely get to see fish like this from the shore.

If anyone fancies sampling some of the great fishing to be had in the west of Ireland contact John Quinlan at info@irishbass.org

Remember there's a two fish bag limit and the mls is about to rise to 50cms you'll be putting a fair few back – as we should!

