



Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network

Angling Regeneration Centre (ARC)

Introduction

Sea angling is part of our national heritage. It is a socially inclusive, environmentally friendly, low impact and selective fishing activity which increases the quality of its participants; it is enjoyed by young and old, male and female alike.

Sea angling contributes more than **£150 million /yr** to the Scottish economy, much of it in coastal communities where alternative opportunities are severely limited.

Decline of sea angling stocks

Most of the species which are of interest to anglers are of limited commercial value for human consumption; these include Pollack, Skate, Conger Eel, Wrasse, Tøpe, Mullet, Spurdog, Porbeagle Shark, etc.

However, over the past 25 years, the unmanaged and uncontrolled exploitation of these species has compromised the very assets that attract anglers to Scotland's coasts and seas - **quality stocks of fish.**

Fish are a publicly owned resource, they should be managed for the benefit of all

The tremendous decline of the stocks not only denies sea anglers access to quality fisheries, it also costs the Scottish economy **£20+ million/yr** and threatens the existence of many communities and service industries.

Recovery and regeneration

For species to recover and regenerate their environment must be protected from destructive practices.

There is much talk of achieving this through various conservation area initiatives - European Marine Sites, Marine Nature Reserves, Marine Protected Areas, NIMAS, NTZs, SSMEIs, ICZM, IFGs etc etc.

These are long-term solutions with a high legislative content and require strong political willpower !

The kind of management needed to produce an angling 'product' aligns well with the long term conservation needs of most species; SSACN believes a pragmatic way forward would be to introduce a number of Angling Regeneration Centres.

If fisheries management was realigned to improve fish stocks, Scotland could once again be a premier European sea angling destination.

Angling Regeneration Centres

An Angling Regeneration Centre may be considered as being an area where the emphasis is on the regeneration of stocks through conservation and education in order to redevelop Scottish recreational sea angling.

The designation of an Angling Regeneration Centre needs to be flexible, for example, it could consist of several areas within a coastal feature such as a Firth, or it could encompass the entire feature itself. It could also be part of a bigger Marine Protected Area.

Whichever model is used, it is essential that they be in areas suited to recreational and leisure activities.

The basic pre-requisites of an ARC are :

- FISH
- Background of angling activity
- A basic infrastructure on which to build
- Local business and political commitment
- Regional / National political support

As the regeneration of stocks and habitats is one of the key objectives, then

- commercial exploitation will have to be limited to non-destructive methods
- anglers could be subject to bag limits, size limits, seasonal restrictions
- artificial reefs and other such management techniques could also be used.

Strategically placed Angling Regeneration Centres could provide protection for either specific species of fish under threat and/or provide an opportunity for broader biodiversity regeneration, for example :

- Solway – flatfish, rays and bass
- Loch Etive – spurdog and rays
- Clyde – all species recovery programme
- Moray Firth – all species recovery programme

Angling Regeneration Centres will provide local solutions for local issues and help ensure the survival of sea angling communities.

A primary requirement of an Angling Regeneration Centre is that it should provide a valuable educational asset for all ages and abilities.

It is essential that a Centre should be freely available and accessible to all.



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Angling Regeneration Centre (ARC)

A typical Angling Regeneration Centre

An ARC will require a local management team comprising representatives from all local sectors with an interest in the Centre in order to determine the policies and processes for the day to day running of the centre and to assist conflict resolution if necessary.

Depending on size and location, we envisage a building (for trial periods perhaps local village halls) that would cater for all the activities an ARC will offer.

It is equally important that the visitors to an ARC, whether local or tourist, angler or educational group, feel they are part of the Centre and that there are opportunities for them to get involved and contribute.

Education and Communication will be the focus of an Angling Regeneration Centre.

Informal open days, guest speakers offering tips and advice, trace making evenings, a weekly/monthly low cost magazine showing outstanding catches, anecdotes, tips, etc would all help create the right atmosphere.

Facilities should also be available to help the angler develop their skills, this could be achieved through close cooperation with coaching bodies.

A Centre should also provide greater awareness and appreciation of the social and economic importance of sea angling as part of the visitor experience.

Access to as much of the information and educational material as possible should made available through low cost, internet based solutions.

In summary, an ARC should :

- Have a Management Team
- A building with all facilities
- Disabled access to angling 'hot spots'
- Casting and training area
- Designated angling areas on piers and beaches
- Information boards throughout the Centre
- Safe slipways or frequent tractor launching
- Safe car parking with easy access
- Communication - Magazine / website

This can only be achieved through all interested parties, including Local and Regional Government, sea angling clubs, voluntary bodies etc, working in partnership.

Benefits

By making sea angling more accessible, ARCs will help:

- Scotland to show recreational sea angling leadership in Europe.
- Minimise the need for species by species legislation
- Preserve the most popular participation sport.
- Protect inshore marine biodiversity.
- Promote the sustainable use of natural resources.
- Increase public awareness and knowledge of the inshore marine environment.
- Increase the number and diversity of people taking part in the the sport.
- Develop the services supporting the leisure industry.
- Provide a platform for the further development of other marine recreational activities.
- Increased activity will encourage the development of new businesses.

'Best Value' fisheries within a healthy and sustainable ecosystem, accessible to all.

A successful Centre would deliver great socio-economic benefit through increased biodiversity, educational opportunity, tourism and job creation.

The viability of sea angling is predicated on a healthy marine environment and suitable EU, UK, National and local fishery management policies.

Recreational Centres

The principles behind Angling Centres could easily be extended to include many more marine leisure activities.

This would then open up the opportunity to create more business opportunities, particularly those in supporting services, managed leisure activities, and tourism.

Access to the sea must remain free, but charges could be made for activities put on by the centre for its upkeep.

What we need is politicians who understand 'Best Value', share the vision and have the will to help make this happen.

Nature will do the rest.