

PRESENTATION – PETITIONS COMMITTEE
COMMITTEE ROOM 2 THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT
0930-1230, MONDAY, 2ND MARCH, 2009

Scottish Anglers National Association Ltd., representing 340 Angling Clubs and 150 Individual Members, about 31,500 members in total, is recognised as the Governing Body for Game Angling in Scotland.

In undertaking this enquiry the Welsh Assembly has the golden opportunity to avoid creating the discriminatory situation caused in Scotland by the Land Reform (Scotland) Act, 2003, which has disadvantaged salmon and trout anglers, devalued proprietor's property and is currently destroying jobs and much needed business in angling and other country sports.

Part 1 of the Act gives everyone statutory access rights to most land and inland water. People (**supposedly**) only have these rights if they exercise them responsibly by respecting people's privacy, safety and livelihoods, and Scotland's environment.

SANA is surprised and concerned regarding the proposal to review the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, especially since so few of the anglers concerns, stated in initial meetings of the Scottish National Access Forum, have in fact been addressed in the interval. Initially SANA was a full member, but now only enjoys "Correspondence Representation". We are especially concerned about the apparent suggestion to progress to motorised access to inland freshwaters.

Scottish anglers are losing benefits of angling beats, for which they have paid handsomely, to others, who pay nothing to use the entire inland freshwaters of Scotland. Most migratory anglers pay for their annual rental and thereafter pay their share of the District Salmon Fishery Board levy on the assessed rateable value of their beat/fishings.

Angling opportunity is adversely affected by any disturbance viz.

- canoeing and rafting – **the effect of a single canoe can be mitigated by the canoeist liaising with an angler and quietly proceeding when directed, but large numbers of canoes and "Eskimo Rolls" etc. create major problems, and rafts, especially the commercial type, on the upper River Tay have basically wiped out the salmon fishing since no salmon now lie in the river and catches have fallen away to nothing. (Fishing and Canoeing and Rafting are poles apart. You cannot play two games on the same pitch.)**
- paddling and swimming
- throwing stones into the water
- allowing dogs to swim in the water
- Simply walking along the bank of a river – **all fish react immediately to any disturbance of the waters around them. They will run for cover, become uncatchable and even, when possible, leave the area altogether. It is a criminal offence to disturb spawning redds and that may be done merely by wading about in the shallows, around them or even being on the river bank near them.**

However ramblers insist on an unrestricted right to roam in unlimited numbers along the immediate waters-edge and do not accept the necessary presence and restriction of fenced paths or buffer-zones adjacent to the riverbank.

Scotland has in the past proved an attractive tourist venue for anglers, particularly Migratory fish, who annually bring in £75/78 Million (**2003 figure of estimated sustainable annual income**) to the Scottish economy. Apparently the penny has not yet dropped that a great deal of that big money now goes instead to Norway, Iceland or Russia or even Patagonia, which are all now within easy air travel, and where common sense and less Disturbance prevails. **Money, which Scotland can ill afford to lose!**

One proprietor on the lower River Tay has recently paid off 2 Ghillies and ceased business, because he regularly had to refund clients due the fishing being ruined by other river users. Anglers and proprietors needless to say have no redress for their lost angling opportunity or business under the present system, which raises a compelling argument for realistic charges being laid on all water based sports--- not only angling-- - and consequently why limit it just to water based sports.

Therefore it would appear that, in Scotland, responsible access includes the destruction of angler's sport and proprietor's livelihoods. The disturbance of habitat by canoeists and rafters, especially in the close season when fish are spawning certainly merits serious consideration. In the opinion of the angling fraternity, the apparent weakness of local Access Forums and local Councils in administering this ill thought out legislation is a contributory factor.

Recently we have seen the damage caused to our banking system by self interest, imprudent, misguided and reckless management and, in the future, I strongly suspect we will see our inland freshwaters in a similar state due to the not dissimilar manner of their regulation.

In conclusion, I would respectfully suggest that, prior to completing your deliberations; you also seek the opinions of the Association of Salmon Fishery Boards, Scottish Gamekeepers Association, Scottish Association of Country Sports, and the Scottish Branch of the British Association of Shooting and Conservation on this matter.

James R. Picken,
President, SANA Ltd.