

## Ethical Fishing Guidelines

**DRAFT for consultation**



For Angling Facilities Controlled by  
Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council

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**Stephen Middlehurst  
Community Manager  
Operational Services**

## Introduction to the Draft Guidelines

This report has been prepared to examine current angling activity on facilities controlled by the Borough Council. It reviews which pools are leased to clubs, how many clubs are operating, what rules are applied to fishing club members and how are they enforced.

### Current Position with Borough Council Controlled Angling Facilities

❖ Bathpool Park.

Blood Pool  
Leg of Mutton Pool  
Farm Pool  
Reservoir Pool

Let to Kidsgrove and District Angling Society.

❖ Birchenwood Countryside Park.

Fanny Pool

Let to Mow Cop District Angling Club

❖ Bateswood Local Nature Reserve.

Cloggers Pool

❖ Boggs Wood, Keele Golf Course.

Boggs Pool

Formerly let to Silverdale Angling Club.

❖ Oaklands Park Pools, Porthill

Let to S.J.Hancock

❖ Madeley Pool, Madeley.

Newly formed club organised by Madeley Parish Council.

Most of the clubs above have general rules intended to govern the behaviour of club members and include some examples of good practice in relation to ethical fishing. However, there is a need to draw up an over-arching set of ethical fishing guidelines which can be consistently applied to all Borough Council controlled angling facilities and which can be applied in conjunction with individual club rules.

### **Background Information**

In order to determine current good practice research has been undertaken into various documents which have been developed by relevant stakeholders including the Environment Agency, RSPCA, National Angling Alliance and others. The documents have been reviewed to compile a draft set of ethical fishing guidelines in relation to the support of improved methods of fishing, nature conservation, animal welfare and codes of conduct. The following are a selection of the documents reviewed:

#### **Environment Agency**

The Environment Agency regulates angling through legislation and byelaws to ensure that fishing is carried out in ways that are sustainable and to protect fish stocks for future generations of anglers.

#### **Medway Report on Shooting and Angling (1976 -1979)**

Chaired by Lord Medway the enquiry was sponsored by the RSPCA as a result of pressure from its membership to formulate definitive policies towards shooting and angling.

The enquiry comprised a number of leading scientist and two representatives from the fishing and shooting organisations. The terms of reference were “To enquire into practises relating to shooting and angling in the United Kingdom whether for the purpose of control, sport or feed which may involve cruelty, and to make recommendations as may appear appropriate in relation to such practises”

The main findings of the report in respect of fish, was that they are capable of suffering. This merely confirmed what many involved in animal welfare had suspected for some time: that fish feel pain.

#### **Animal Welfare Bill 2004**

As fish are vertebrates they fall into the definition of “animal” It had been argued by the committee of investigation that both recreational and commercial fishing activities contravened the cruelty offence. Defra said that they felt the Draft Bill would not interfere with normal fishing activities but stated that they intended to include a specific fishing exemption into the actual Bill although an over rider was written into the Bill which does not allow anglers a *cart blanche* to inflict unnecessary suffering in the pursuit of this activity and as such recommends a code of conduct be developed and adopted.

#### **National Angling Alliance Code of Conduct for Coarse Angling**

This document was prepared by the “The Specialist Anglers Alliance” (SAA) For the National Angling Alliance (NAA), and endorsed by the Environment Agency

This report was produced with the help of the:

- Anglers Conservation Association

- Angling Trades Association
- National Convention for the Welfare of Swans and Wildlife
- National Federation of Anglers
- RSPCA
- Specialist Anglers Alliance

The report covers all aspects of fishing and shooting and the welfare of the surrounding environment. It is divided into the following headings:

- **Care of the Environment** - the use of nylon lines, litter left by anglers, the positioning of “swims” (angling pegs and area fished within the pool/lake) and the relationship to the lake/pool bank side and the existing wildlife within. The relationship between conservation sites, and those designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and how these should be managed as fishing areas.
- **Good Hygiene** rules required for fishing sites, which should include toilet provisions and include information leaflets to all members so that they can report directly pollution occurrences within rivers and lakes and pools to the respective agency.
- **General Behaviour** not only for fishermen, but the parking of vehicles, use of bright lights, the use of bank sticks, umbrellas and other associated furniture.
- **General Safety**, in respect of casting out lines, wading into pools and lakes, overhead power lines, fishing from a boat, and lakes which are iced over.
- **Tackle, Rigs and Bait**, this covers use of equipment, like poles, the number of rods in use, the laws relating to night fishing, what type of bait is suitable for various types of pools/lakes and what bait is detrimental to the fish and the environment.
- **Fish Handling**, how fish should be netted, how hooks should be removed, how to return fish back into the pool/lake, the use of keepnets, keesacks and landing nets and the byelaws relating to their usage.
- **Movement of Fishing Stock**, from one pool/lake to another.

The Environment Agency (angling and wildlife section) produced a short paper from the National Angling Alliance Code of Conduct for Coarse Angling; this report was titled (Enjoy Fishing - Follow the Golden Rules) and this has formed the basis of the proposed Ethical Fishing Guidelines for Newcastle Borough Council controlled angling facilities.

### Comparison with Other Local Authorities

Reviewing other local authority angling arrangements revealed that most Council's have a policy or code of practice in place. Most of the good codes of practices related to one or more of the reports mentioned above (Medway Report, Environment Agency Golden Rules of Fishing). It is clear that those authorities who managed angling effectively had adopted a code of practice which had been

developed and agreed in consultation with anglers and clubs who used the authorities' pools and lakes.

### **The Wider Effects of Good Fishing Management**

#### **An extract from “The Way Forward for Angling” written by the Environment Agency in 2001**

Good fisheries management brings much wider benefits to the water environment. Anglers are a powerful voice in the drive for improving fisheries and their associated habitats, and angling also brings important benefits to the economy, particularly in rural areas, and to people's quality of life.

Angling should be accessible to all, including the young, the old and the disabled; it provides a unique opportunity for people to enjoy the natural environment in a quiet and unobtrusive way; in turn bringing tremendous social benefits in terms of people's sense of well being.

For these benefits to be realised it is important that angling is carried out in a way that is sustainable in terms of fish stocks and the wider environment. The Agency regulates angling through legislation and byelaws to ensure that fishing is carried out in ways that are sustainable and to protect our fish stocks for future generations of anglers. However, there are many other aspects of angling that are best improved through encouragement and education.

The Agency is keen to work in partnership with others to promote angling and therefore welcomed the opportunity to join with the Specialist Anglers' Alliance (SAA) in the production of the revised Code of Conduct.

All anglers should read the information on their rod licences and should be aware of the laws and byelaws that apply to them when fishing. The code is designed to complement the existing legislative framework and provides a commonsense guide to values and behaviour to which anglers should aspire.

The Environment Agency categorically supports the sport of angling, and through co-operation and collaboration with other interested parties is wholly committed to provide the nation with better fish stocks, better fisheries and better angling.

#### **Proposed Ethical Fishing Guidelines for Newcastle Borough Council Controlled Angling Facilities**

The Council will require anglers using its angling facilities to adopt the following rules based on information from the Medway Report, the National Angling Alliance Code of Practice, and the Environment Agency Golden Rules of Fishing:

Angling benefits our environment in many ways. If you spend hours by the water, you learn to appreciate the natural world. This often leads to an interest in protecting it. But the places you fish are important for wildlife too. Inexperience or a little carelessness with your gear can easily harm wildlife – and the good image of angling.

### **Litter from angling**

Always take your litter and equipment away with you. Discarded nylon line is really dangerous for birds and animals. Take your line home. Either burn it or cut it into short lengths before disposing of it carefully.

### **Breakages and snagging**

Rigs may get caught in bank side vegetation, branches or other underwater snags. If you can, remove caught rigs immediately. But don't put yourself at risk.

If you can't recover a caught rig, or if you lose terminal tackle, tell the club bailiffs or the fishery owner. They can arrange to remove it.

Use tackle that is the right size for the fish you are planning to catch.

### **Swim choice**

Choose your swim with care. Avoid snagging bank side trees, vegetation and obstructions in the water.

Make sure you don't damage the vegetation at the water's edge.

Be careful not to disturb nesting birds.

Try to avoid places where people feed waterfowl. If birds expect food, they are more likely to get tangled up in your equipment. Take extra care if you have to fish in such places.

### **Unattended rods**

Once you have set up your equipment for angling, always stay with your rods. It is illegal to leave setup rods unattended.

Birds or animals could try to eat the bait on the hooks and hurt themselves. They could also become entangled in the line.

Once you have set up your equipment for angling, always stay with your rods.

If you need to leave your swim, stop angling, gather together all your lines and secure the hooks to the rod. Remove bait from the hooks.

### **Rigs**

Try to lose as little line as possible in the event of snagging. If you can, use a hook length with a lower breaking strain line than the reel line. If you use reel line straight through to the hook, make sure it has a weaker link. And make sure that leger links have a lower breaking strain. Remember that weaknesses occur at the knots where line is joined, where it is tied to swivels etc, and where shot are pinched onto the line. This is true for all types of rig.

Check your reel line regularly for signs of wear and damage. Remove any damaged

line and dispose of it carefully.

Replace your reel line regularly.

### **Bolt rigs**

It's OK to use bolt rigs or fixed leads. But ensure that the Leger weight can slip free in the event of snagging or tangling. And make sure that a fish or bird will not end up dragging a leger around if the line breaks.

### **Hooks**

Where possible, use barbless hooks or reduced barb hooks. Birds can free themselves more easily from these hooks. And rescuers will also find them easier to remove.

### **Weights**

Lead weights are illegal in most sizes. Non-toxic weights are widely available and should be used whenever possible. You may use lead weights that are 0.06 grams (No. 8 shot) or less, or more than 28.35 grams (1oz).

### **While fishing**

Beware of birds swimming into your line or picking up surface baits.

Submerge rod tips if you are legering using bite alarms. Keep lines under surface to avoid waterfowl. If weed growth is light, it may be possible to use backleads to keep the line below the water's surface.

Always watch your rod when you're legering with quivertips or other visual bite indicators. You may be able to keep the rod tip under, or close to, the water's surface. If this is not possible, only retrieve the line when there's no risk of birds swimming across it.

Retrieve your line if you're float fishing and birds seem likely to swim through it. Remember that a wagger float with the line 'buried' still presents a risk – it will be only just below the surface.

Take great care when fishing with surface bait such as bread or 'floaters'. These may attract waterfowl.

Sometimes you can avoid the problem by anchoring the bait with a back-lead. This allows you to submerge the bait below the surface when a bird approaches.

But remember that swans can easily reach food a metre below the surface and that other birds often dive for food.

If your floating baits are attracting too much attention from the birds, move away or choose a different fishing method.

### **Help new anglers**

If you see beginners using unsuitable tackle, why not help them? You might also help to make a lifelong angler by improving their catches. **If the worse happens...**if a swan. Or other large bird or animal is caught in your line, cut the line immediately. Never hold onto the line, as this may cause severe injury and will increase distress. Report the incident as soon as possible to the Swan Sanctuary. Call their hotline on 01932 240790. You can also visit their website at [www.theswansanctuary.org.uk](http://www.theswansanctuary.org.uk) Free small birds immediately. If treatment is required, hold comfortably in a small box or other dark space.

### **Consider the welfare of fish**

The use of double and treble hooks should be avoided especially when the intention is to return the fish alive to the water.

Fish that have swallowed the hook and those intended for food should be killed humanely before any attempt is made to unhook them.

To assist in removing hooks all anglers should possess suitable disgorgers appropriate to the size, and species of fish they are likely to catch.

The use of barbless hooks is likely to cause less injury to the fish's mouth and, being easier to remove, reduce the amount of handling required.

If keep nets are used, fish should be confined for the shortest possible time, to reduce the risk of injury.

Great care should be taken when handling fish to minimise damage to the thin protective layer of skin and mucus covering the scales. Damage to this layer will increase the chance of infection and reduce the ability of the fish to survive.

Prolonged playing of fish, especially those destined to be returned to the water and the use of ultra-fine tackle, which necessitates such playing, should be avoided.

Fish, which are to be killed following capture, should be dispatched as quickly as possible. Anglers should know how to kill a fish humanely.

### **Conclusion**

It is recommended that the Borough Council seeks to adopt the above Ethical Fishing Guidelines which have been adapted from current legislation and established good practice. Consultation on the draft Ethical Fishing Guidelines should be undertaken with relevant stakeholders, including existing local angling clubs, and the draft guidelines should be reviewed to take into account representations received.

The Guidelines should be applied to all pools/lakes within the control of the Borough Council and should be incorporated into the respective leases of these facilities where they are leased to a club or other third party.

Educational and awareness raising presentations should be organised to promote



## **APPENDIX A**

the Ethical Fishing Guidelines to existing angling clubs, schools and other interested parties and explain the benefits of adhering to them.

A communications strategy should be drawn up to assist in the launch and dissemination of the Guidelines.

The Guidelines should be reviewed periodically to take into account legislative and other changes which may need to be incorporated to keep them up to date and relevant.