

The Rt Hon Mark Spencer MP
Minister for Food, Farming and Fisheries
Fisheries Minister for England
and currently for Northern Ireland
and DAERA Permanent Secretary

By email:

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14 September 2023

Dear Minister Spencer and Ms Godfrey,

Action to prevent the Atlantic salmon becoming extinct in your waters

Thank you for your letter of 22 June in response to our letter of 4 May, asking what actions you will take to prevent the further loss and possible extinction of the iconic Atlantic salmon in your waters.

We note your intentions. However, such salmon action plans have been in place for some time, yet populations continue to decline. Furthermore, whilst many of the proposed actions might be the right ones, delivery is just too slow. We agree that part of this decline is due to decreased sea survival over which you have little control. However, this does not account for all of the decline. Up to 40% of the total decreased survival is occurring in freshwater as a result of the continuing deterioration in the quality of many of our salmon rivers with little progress in sorting out agricultural and sewage pollution. There is growing public awareness and indeed outrage at the declining quality of our rivers and the loss of an iconic species such as the salmon would represent the absolute failure of any government to tackle this important issue.

As per our previous letter, time is not on our side, and we could see the extinction of the salmon in some of our rivers within the next 20 years. So we cannot afford to proceed with business as usual and we are pleased to note that steps are being taken to reprioritise the Salmon and Sea Trout Action Plans. We hope that your governments will support these initiatives and ensure that the necessary resources will be made available.

We will be monitoring progress with these and alongside scrutinising the manifestos of all political parties at the next election to see what priority is put on these important issues. The Westminster Government has set legally binding targets for environmental improvement by 2030. That is two parliaments away, so what happens in the next parliament is critical.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'David Bunt', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

David Bunt
Chief Executive Officer
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