6.3 Proposed measures to improve survival of caught and released salmon

6.3.1 To ensure that as many salmon as possible survive after being caught by rod and line the Angling Trust, Atlantic Salmon Trust and Environment Agency are leading on the development and promotion of best practice catch and release techniques for all rivers. These build on the existing good practices which are already in place and have been promoted previously. Please see Appendix 5 for an example of this or by using the following link: [http://www.wyeuskfoundation.org/files/C&R_2013.pdf](http://www.wyeuskfoundation.org/files/C&R_2013.pdf)

6.3.2 As improved catch and release practices apply to all of the salmon caught by a rod fishery they can provide an important contribution to the number of fish available to spawn. For example: for a fishery that catches an average of 200 salmon per season an increase of 10% in catch and release from 90% to 100% would see an additional 20 salmon not being killed. Improving catch and release practices so that the mortality of salmon post release reduced from 20% to 10% would also equate to an additional 20 salmon, when applied to all 200 salmon being caught and released. When combined together these two changes to rod fishery practices would result in an extra 40 salmon surviving to spawn.

6.3.3 The current recommendations identified below have been developed by the Angling Trust and the Anglers’ Advisory Group. It is broadly based and developed from an independent review commissioned in 2016 by the Environment Agency which considered the methods available to improve the survival of rod caught salmon (a summary of this review is provided in Appendix 6 and the full report is available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/impact-of-catch-and-release-angling-practices-on-survival-of-salmon](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/impact-of-catch-and-release-angling-practices-on-survival-of-salmon)). These recommendations are:

- Consider the appropriate angling method and tackle to use where catch and release is mandatory or where release is intended.
- Use appropriately strong and balanced tackle to minimise fight duration and therefore avoid fish becoming exhausted. This is particularly important at high water temperatures.
- Use a landing net.
- Avoid angling at high water temperatures (where they exceed 18 °C in the mid-morning).
- Use single or double barbless hooks to minimise risk of injury.
- Avoid the use of large treble hooks, particularly on Flying ‘C’ spinners, because they increase the risk of injury substantially.
- Use the least harmful bait/lure type (e.g. artificial flies with minimal, appropriately sized, barbless hooks fished actively), even though it may not be the most effective for catching fish. The physical impacts of some types of bait angling often result in higher mortality of released salmon.
- Identify where a fish can be safely landed before commencing fishing, preferably in slack water where the fish can be safely retained in a landing net and promptly released.
- Minimise air exposure, ideally not removing the fish from the water during landing, unhooking and photographing. Do not take fish out of the river onto the bank.
- Use fish-friendly landing nets with soft knotless mesh to help protect fish from abrasion injuries and split fins.
- Handle fish gently with wet hands and avoid squeezing as this can damage internal organs; contact with the gills and eyes should be avoided.
- Always support the fish under the belly and keep in an upright position, preferably underwater and facing into the current. However, during the unhooking process the fish can be laid on its side to stop it moving and to avoid injury. Do not hold fish up by the tail.
• Remove the hook with a long pair of forceps, disgorgor, or other unhooking devices. When it is not possible to remove the hook, cut the leader as close to the hook as possible as the hook will work its way out: this is less damaging than prolonged handling.

6.3.4 The promotion of these recommendations will be led by the Angling Trust to river associations, angling clubs, fishery owners and individual anglers through a variety of direct and media driven communications. The Angling Trust have also partnered with the Atlantic Salmon Trust and FishPal to produce a series of 3 videos, titled ‘The Gift’, on best practice angling catch and release. Part 1 covers fishing tackle, Part 2 covers planning the river and Part 3 covers catch and release. Further information and a link to these videos can be found on the Angling Trust website at: http://www.anglingtrust.net/news.asp?itemid=3688&itemTitle=New+video+guide+to+responsible+salmon+fishing+is+a+hit+with+anglers&section=29&sectionTitle=Angling+Trust+News

6.3.5 Please see the questions 6.3a – 6.3c, where your views are sought on these recommendations and any implications that would result from applying them to the waters that you own or fish. Some of these recommendations may benefit from being implemented through national byelaws, rather than by a voluntary approach. These are set out and your views sought in Section 6.4.