

MARTIN SALTER MP



READING WEST

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NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release:
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SALTER SAYS “NO TO UNREGULATED CANOE ACCESS”

Reading West MP, Martin Salter, has urged the government once again to reject the campaign by the British Canoe Union (B.C.U) for statutory river access for non-powered craft. On behalf of the B.C.U, John Grogan MP has tabled House of Commons Early Day Motion 1331 – virtually identical to an EDM he tabled in 2005 – which calls for the right to paddle along every river and stream in England and Wales – a move which would frankly destroy angling on our smaller rivers, streams and brooks and disturb wildlife, nesting birds and spawning grounds.

Mr Salter has tabled an amendment to EDM 1331, on behalf of members of the All Party Parliamentary Angling Group, which has been co-sponsored by Group Vice-Chair Charles Walker (Conservative, Broxbourne), Jon Cruddas, (Labour, Dagenham), and Lynda Waltho (Labour, Stourbridge). The amendment urges the government to continue their policy of supporting Voluntary Access Agreements, produced by canoeists and anglers working together, such as the one on the River Dart (now jeopardised by the national BCU organisation exerting pressure for it to be torn up). Over 30% of the major rivers and canals already provide access for canoeing and the Environment Agency plans to open more water to canoeists following the publication of its “Voluntary Canoe Access Agreements” Report in 2006.

Last year the then Environment Minister Barry Gardiner reconfirmed the government’s policy stating in a letter to Mr Salter:

‘Our view is that increased access to water, for activities such as canoeing, can most effectively be achieved via the voluntary approach, which involves landowners and water users coming to a formal, written agreement about access to a particular stretch of water which takes into account the needs of all interested parties.’

Mr Salter said:

“Despite the government repeatedly giving its backing to voluntary access agreements, the B.C.U are once again seeking the right to paddle without consent along streams and brooks, past people’s back-gardens, through private property in pursuit of their sport, without any concern for disruption of other users of the waterside such as anglers and birdwatchers. Anglers have no automatic right to fish in any river or lake and in the vast majority of cases they require the permission of the riparian landowner, pay fishing club fees as well as their annual rod licence.”

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Paul Knight, Director of the Salmon and Trout Association (S&TA) said:

"The S&TA's policy is to support locally-brokered access agreements, so that all those wishing to use our water ways for recreation may do so in a coordinated manner in which no one sport can unjustly impact another, or jeopardise the social, economic or environmental benefits accruing for the public good. It should also be remembered that water recreation relies on a healthy and sustainable aquatic environment, and all those using our rivers and lakes for sport should be willing to operate under codes of conduct, and contribute to management and conservation costs, and be bound by regulations aimed at protecting the natural resource from undue human impact."

Martin Salter added:

"I would urge anglers to contact their local MP and press them to sign my pro-angling amendment to EDM 1331. Whilst there is scope for canoeists and anglers to share many of our suitable rivers it is only right and proper that a balance is struck both to protect the environment and prevent one group who pay nothing from spoiling the sport of those who have invested a huge amount of time and money in helping to create excellent fisheries and thriving wildlife habitats."

/ENDS

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Notes to editors: The full text of both EDM 1331 and the amendment can be found at: <http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=35572&SESSION=891>
