



## **Joint statement on management of zander in Canal & River Trust waterways by the Environment Agency (EA), Natural England (NE) and the Canal & River Trust.**

### **Introduction**

Zander (*Sander lucioperca*) are an invasive non-native fish species in England. They were first introduced into England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They do not naturally occur in the British Isles, and whilst introduced fish have established populations in some river catchments, they are still absent from much of the country. Zander have an impact on native species and therefore are subject to legal controls.

We recognise that some anglers value zander as a sport fish and are upset to see their removal from fisheries. However, the current legal situation around zander is clear. Zander are listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, because they continue to pose a conservation threat to native biodiversity and habitats. The inclusion on Schedule 9 means it is illegal to introduce zander to the wild.

The Keeping and Introduction of Fish Regulations 2015 require that a permit must be granted by the Environment Agency for fishery owners to introduce or keep zander in England. Whilst some permits issued do allow the keeping of zander (for example in fully enclosed stillwaters), permits on canals and other online waters usually require the permit holder to remove zander from their fishery. This is to prevent zander from spreading into new catchments. Given that river fisheries are in multiple ownership and fish are free to swim between them, the Environment Agency does not issue permits to river fishery owners to keep zander.

### **Management of zander in Canal & River Trust waterways.**

#### **Natural England**

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 is unambiguous in that it is illegal to release species to which the Act applies without a licence, including zander, whether this is the first or subsequent releases.

- Section 14 (b) Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 prohibits introduction into the wild of any animal which is listed in Schedule 9 to the Act. This includes zander.

#### **Environment Agency**

- The Environment Agency issues permits to the Canal & River Trust that set out what fish can be introduced, and kept, in Canal & River Trust controlled canals and stillwaters. In some waters, Canal & River Trust are required to actively remove zander from those waters as a condition of their permit, to prevent the spread of zander to other waters, and limit their impact on native fish species.
- Canal & River Trust proposals on zander management are being considered as part of a full review of all of their permits, which will be completed this year.
- Canal & River Trust are at liberty to manage the fish stocks they own, providing they operate within the law.

- Where Canal & River Trust intends to use nets, electric fishing and other survey equipment for fisheries management purposes, including removing zander, they must have written authorisation from the Environment Agency.

## **Canal & River Trust**

### **Compliance under KIFr 2015**

Some of our KIFr permits – issued by the EA - require us to undertake the management of non-native fish. Where we do not comply, we may face prosecution, or enhanced costs if the EA feel they need to deliver the work and re-charge.

### **Compliance under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981**

Zander cannot be introduced to new fisheries (Section 14) nor returned to any fishery once caught (schedule 9). This applies both to the Trust e.g. when we undertake fish rescues and to anglers who if they capture a zander deliberately or accidentally whilst in pursuit of other species, must not be returned.

**Risk of spread** - The Trust must prevent the spread of non-native species which may cause wider harm.

The principal scientific work on the impact of zander on the narrow, turbid, boated canal network was undertaken by Smith in the 1990's in a doctorate supported by British Waterways. It concluded that on shallow, narrow, turbid canals, zander had a deleterious impact on fish populations.

The Trust will continue to respond to reports of non-native fish species in our waterways and manage them in line with current legislation and to protect our networks fish community. Individual anglers and club officials are reminded that zander and other non-native species listed under KIFR and W&CA cannot currently be returned to the waterways in our ownership.