



## Letter to the Editor

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SIR –

Britain has been quietly increasing exports of European eel to Russia over the past few years, from half-a-million juveniles in 2022 to three million in 2024. This is despite the fact the species is endangered and no river in England and Wales is close to meeting its conservation target.

There are now proposals to increase this five-fold, to fifteen million individuals. The advocates for this policy maintain there is a surfeit of eels in the Bristol Channel; and that rerouting the stock to Kaliningrad will ensure a greater proportion make it back to the Sargasso Sea to spawn.

In truth, the conservation logic is cover for a commercial trade, where eels are grown on in a contained area and eventually harvested for consumption. We have the director of Kaliningrad's fisheries agency, Yuri Maslov, on record as saying that, whilst the imported fish could look to leave Russian waters in several years, 'by that time they will have already been caught'.

Even at times of peace, it would be irresponsible to propose a trade where monitoring procedures are compromised. In the current geo-political climate, trade with Russia surely is also an issue of national security, a view supported by the 55,000 signatories to the petition to end the trade.

It would be better for the eel and the elvermen if DEFRA pursued a cost-effective programme of 'conservation fishing', catching and re-releasing the juvenile fish into suitable habitat in Britain.

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Yours sincerely,

**Andrew Kerr**

Chairman, Sustainable *Eel* Group

The full list of signatories is as follows:

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**Vanessa Becker-Hughes**, Eel Ambassador and Founder of the Somerset Eel Recovery Project

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**Richard Benwell**, Chief Executive at Wildlife and Countryside Link

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**Charlie Burrell**, Conservationist and Founder of Knepp Wildland

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**Charles Clover**, Co-Founder and Senior Advisor at Blue Marine Foundation

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**Paul Coulson**, Chief Executive at Institute for Fisheries Management

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**Willem Dekker**, Former Chairman of ICES Working Group Eel

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**Alastair Driver**, Honorary Professor of Environmental Management

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**John and Elaine Elkington**, Founder and Chief Pollinator at Volans

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**Mark Everard**, Associate Professor of Ecosystem Services at University of the West of England

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**Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall**, Chef, Author and Broadcaster

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**Richard Fleming**, Nature Writer

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**Ben Goldsmith**, Environmental Advocate and Host of Rewilding the World

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**Zac Goldsmith**, Former Minister of State for Climate, Environment and Energy

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**Derek Gow**, Conservationist and Wildlife Reintroduction Specialist

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**Mark Lloyd**, Chief Executive of the Rivers Trust

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**Rupert de Mauley**, Former Parliamentary Under-Secretary at DEFRA

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**Tessa Munt**, Member of Parliament for Wells and Mendip Hills

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**Chris Packham**, Conservationist and Presenter of BBC Springwatch

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**Richard Page**, Environmental and Marine Consultant

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**Paul Powelsland**, Barrister at Lawyers for Nature

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**Carl Sayer**, Professor of Geography at University College London

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**Charles Rangeley-Wilson**, Nature Writer and Filmmaker

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**James Robinson**, Chief Operating Officer at the RSPB

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