<date> 2018

<your MPs Name> MP.

House of Commons,

Westminster,

London, SW1A 0AA

Dear <MPs Name>,

I am writing to you on behalf of canoeists, I have been paddling locally with The Sharks, regarding an issue we believe needs your attention. Not only is access on water a matter that affects us locally, but nationally the rights of canoeists to paddle on rivers actively contested.

On 28th November 2018, British Canoeing will be launching its *‘Clear Access, Clear Waters’* Charter in Westminster. It will address the matter of public access to English waterways. We understand that you will be invited to the launch event and we would greatly appreciate your time in attending and representing the paddling community in your constituency.

Waterways are a fantastic resource that should be available **for everyone** to enjoy responsibly, without prejudice or exclusion. Currently the law surrounding access on water is unclear. At present just 4% of waterways are classed as ‘undisputed’, where canoeists can be on the water without threat of litigation or confrontation from angling groups or landowners. Instances of conflict and abuse toward canoeists and other water users such as open water swimmers are increasing and we feel change is urgently required.

Not only does this affect local people like me, this is a matter that affects people and clubs across the Country, there are some fantastic stretches of water for canoeing and kayaking on in Britain and one of the great things about paddlers coming from other areas is that it also brings economic benefits, we need to eat, places to stay etc. Britain, also has a proud tradition in Canoe Sport, picking up medals at Olympic and World Championships and if we are to continue to do so, we need Clarity on Access.

This is about providing opportunities for people across the Country and often to people from poorer back grounds, most canoe clubs actually provide kit, so that it is affordable to participants.

At its root, there is a difference in opinion regarding interpretation of the law, Canoeists believe there is a historic right for everyone to access the water, to paddle on all ‘navigable’ waterways; Many anglers and landowners however believe rivers to be private on ‘off limits’ and do not wish their interests to be disturbed.

Nationally, around 1.8million people go canoeing each year, 300,000 monthly. Our club itself has many members who live in your constituency and provides affordable opportunities for them to get on the water and enjoy the fantastic sport that is canoeing.

**We feel the situation regarding access on water is getting worse. If future generations are to become custodians of the natural environment and be engaged in its protection, then there must be clarity over rights of access.**

Greater access to waterways will not only enable more people to paddle for health and enjoyment but increase the awareness of the environment. Paddlers are in a unique position to retrieve litter from otherwise inaccessible parts of our country – so greater access would be in the interests of working toward the 25 year plan ambitions.

It is not unreasonable to envisage a future where everyone can enjoy **fair and shared access to water** and future generations can have the opportunity to engage fully with the ‘blue environment’.

This is a valuable opportunity to bring about landmark legislation that will benefit generations to come.

We would like to extend an invitation to you to visit our club soon and have a go at canoeing. We also strongly urge you to represent the members of our club at the launch event, hosted by British Canoeing on the 28th November.

Yours sincerely

<your name>

<your address>