Fishing for Answers:
Final Report of the Social and Community Benefits of Angling Project

Section 1: Angling and Sports Participation

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The full report is available at:
www.resources.anglingresearch.org.uk
1. Angling and Sports Participation

In Brief

The first section of this report describes angling’s contribution to sports and participation outcomes. This incorporates:

• Angling’s role in encouraging very large numbers of people to participate in a sport incorporating a breadth of physical activity
• Angling offering a distinctive alternative to other sports, including ‘life-long’ participation, green exercise and distinctive forms of competition.

1.1 Introduction and Context

Getting people involved in sports and activities has been a very long-standing concern for national and local governments and numerous charities and agencies in the UK. Increasing sport participation is a key aim of the national sports councils in the UK, and sport-based funding has been one of the key sources of financial support for developing angling participation in recent years.

• In England, angling participation is funded by both Sport England and the Environment Agency, with the Angling Development Board (ADB), soon to merge with the Angling Trust, as the main delivery agency
• In Scotland, the Angling Development Board of Scotland (ADBoS) lead participation development, funded principally by Sport Scotland
• Similar arrangements exist in Wales and Northern Ireland.

At times angling is considered somewhat sceptically as a ‘sport’ – usually based on ill-defined assumptions about physical activity levels – yet angling does deliver key sports-based outcomes and meets some standard definitions of sport\(^1\): the active participation of millions of people; competition that is both formal and informal, elite and community; a structure of governing bodies, clubs and projects; and activities that attract support and resources from public agencies. However, angling offers some distinctive features from other sports that mean it delivers added value in some areas of social and community benefits from participation.

Our research into angling participation has been based on:

• An extensive, quantitative and qualitative, online survey of angling participation with over 2,400 anglers taking part\(^2\)
• Semi-structured, in-depth interviews with over 150 anglers and angling stakeholders
• Website-based comment and feedback tools
• Site-based research at 12 key angling sites in England and Scotland, 36 young people’s projects, a case study in Assynt, Scotland and numerous clubs, sites, projects and organisations.

1.2 Angling’s Contribution to Sports Participation

1.2.1 Participation Numbers

Angling gets millions of people involved in sport in the UK.

Although estimates vary, it is indisputable that recreational angling in the UK has millions of participants and therefore must be acknowledged as making a valuable contribution to getting people active in outdoor settings.

- The EA Public Attitudes to Angling (2010) report\(^3\) said that 9% of the population over 12 years of age in England and Wales (equivalent to 4.2 million people) had been fishing in the last year.
- Sales of the EA Rod Licence (a legal requirement for anyone fishing in freshwater in England and Wales) increased by 35% from 2000/01 to 1,431,981 in 2011\(^4\)
- In Scotland, sports participation statistics show that around 3% of adults (16+ years) and 3% of children (8-15 years) took part in angling during the most popular two months of each year 2006-2008\(^5\)
- Based on 2008 population figures for Scotland of 5,168,500, this equates to 155,055 participants (which has remained fairly constant since 1987\(^6\))

Sport England estimate that the numbers taking part in angling once per week stand at 134,000 with 980,000 taking part once per month\(^6\). This makes angling the 16th highest participation sport in England in terms of weekly participation and 16th in monthly participation. However, because angling is classed as a low intensity activity, it ranks at only 29th in terms of Sport England funding.

In Focus: The Angling Development Board www.anglingtrust.net/adb

In England, the Angling Development Board (ADB) is the main sports development organisation for angling. The ADB’s Angling Whole Sport Plan 2009-2013 secured funding for angling from Sport England on the Sustain and Excel outcomes; and from the EA on growing participation. The ADB will merge with the Angling Trust in April 2012 creating a single governing body for angling development.

The ADB’s achievements between 2008 and 2011 include:

- Growth from 2 staff to 13 full time and 5 part time staff
- Green rating Sport England business assurance
- The establishment of 29 County Angling Action Groups (CAAGs)
- Securing £232,000 funding additional to Sport England funding
- Attracting 13,021 participants in CAAG and club projects (11,233 Under 18)
- The development of a new recognised coaching standard; 1040 new coaches qualified; £75,000 in coach training bursaries
- Approving 53 ‘Clubmark’ standard angling clubs
- Organising 86 flagship National Fishing Month events 2011
- Achieving a sports satisfaction rating of 84.5%

Mass Participation: Angling’s Distinction

Angling participation features some distinct characteristics compared to other sports, and it is these characteristics that add value to the absolute participant numbers it delivers:

- Duration of activity is typically much longer (though less frequent) than other sports (as such the Sport England measure of 3x30 minute segments of activity per week seems ill-suited to measuring angling participation)
- Participation can take place throughout the life course contributing to lifelong activity and ‘active ageing’
- The extent and nature of participation in angling goes far beyond the act of simply holding a fishing rod, delivering many social and environmental benefits through a number of ‘associated activities’.

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6 Based on Sport England’s Active People Survey, statistics from ADB based on third quarter of 2011
In Focus: The Angling Development Board of Scotland (www.adbscotland.org)

The Angling Development Board of Scotland (ADBoS) is a partnership between the three Scottish National Governing Bodies for Angling; The Scottish Angler’s National Association (SANA), The Scottish Federation of Coarse Angling (SFCA) and the Scottish Federation of Sea Anglers (SFSA). To date, ADBoS has been funded by sportscotland to deliver work programmes that include the development of the UKCC-endorsed coaching qualification for Angling at Levels 1 and 2, and the Club Angling package.

Since forming in 2010 ADBoS have:

• Launched the first ever licensed Coach Approval Scheme in Scotland with 15 approved coaches to date
• Launched UKCC approved Level 1 and Level 2 Coaching qualifications with 30 Level 1 and 10 Level 2 qualifications delivered per year; with an additional 4 coaches are currently working towards Level 3 qualifications
• Developed a Club Angling Programme to develop grass roots provision with over 220 young people participating per year
• Assisted the three governing bodies to secure ‘fit for purpose’ approval from sportscotland and the Foundation Equity mark.

ADBoS have secured sportscotland funding (one of a handful of non-Commonwealth Games sports to have done this) to support ongoing work to 2015 and will deliver:

• A 10% increase in Club Angling approved clubs
• 10% increase in people participating in Club Angling
• 50% increase in international level elite anglers
• Delivery of 72 Club Angling programmes by 2015
• Engagement with 60% of the new sportscotland Community Sports Hubs which will embed angling within broader sport provision across all regions of Scotland.

ADBoS are also:

• Developing new proposals for social inclusion angling delivery and are targeting Cashback for Communities (proceeds of crime) funds to assist with this.
• Supporting continued professional development of coaches.
• Working with the SQA to launch a secondary schools based angling National Progression Award which will sit on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)
1.2.2 Physical Activity

Angling provides opportunities for many different levels of physical activity for people of all abilities, including the less able.

‘After a good day’s fishing on a boat I’m exhausted, especially if I’m fishing a competition!’
(Survey comment, 40 year-old male sea angler).

Ensuring the physical health and fitness of communities has become a strategic policy area for national governments. One of five main policies listed under *Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives: A Cross-Government strategy for England* (2008) was a commitment ‘to build physical activity into our lives’\(^7\). The Scottish national physical activity strategy, *Let’s Make Scotland More Active*\(^8\), made a similar commitment when it was launched in 2003.

Whilst often regarded as a sedentary activity, data from the angling participation survey conducted for this research demonstrates the variation in physical activity that is inherent in angling. The column chart below illustrates the data from the relevant survey question, which asked respondents to assess the intensity of physical activity usually associated with their angling participation. Respondents could choose from 3 categories of intensity: low, moderate or high.

![Chart 1: Physical Activity Intensity by Type of Angling](image)


The findings shows that:

• While a similar proportion of coarse, sea and game angling respondents (approximately 20%) viewed their participation as being low intensity physical activity, these were in the minority.

• Most anglers viewed their participation as moderate, although this was noticeably less for game anglers than for coarse and sea anglers.

• Many more game anglers (34.2% of the total) regarded their participation as high intensity physical activity.

It is also possible to contrast the physical activity associated with angling at some of the different settings in which we have researched angling participation:

• Sitting by a canal in Manchester coarse fishing with bait having driven a car to the location (very low intensity)

• Young people's GHOF angling event at Charlton’s pond, Billingham (low intensity)

• Fishing the hill lochs of Assynt, Scotland having walked several miles up steep hills to the loch (very high intensity and long duration)

• Wading in rivers or the sea and constantly casting and retrieving spinners, such as in salmon fishing in Scotland (high intensity)

• Walking along beaches and clambering over rocks to go sea angling in Northumberland (intermittent moderate intensity)

• Rowing boats to go fishing on a reservoir (intermittent moderate intensity).

Data collected from surveys of, and interviews with, anglers in Assynt, in North West Scotland showed that in some instances angling can be extremely vigorous. Two sets of survey data collected from anglers in 2009 and 2010 showed that angling participation was rated as high intensity physical activity by more than 55% of the total sample (n=108). The rugged terrain and large lochs in the area mean that just getting to a fishing spot (usually by walking or rowing) requires considerable effort. As the angler describes below, angling can be a significant element of weekly physical exercise:

'I trout fish on a long length of river. Contrary to popular perceptions of anglers “sitting on baskets” I often walk up to 6 miles in a day’s fishing over varied and sometimes challenging terrain. Whilst I partake of several other forms of exercise I feel my weekly angling session contributes significantly to my fitness and overall health.'

(Web comment submitted 25/8/11)

However, the measurement of physical activity involved in sports tends to be ‘blanket’ - Sport England’s criteria has been the number of adults participating in at least 30 minutes of sport at moderate intensity at least three times a week (“3x30”). As such, angling has subsequently been classified as a low intensity activity, but such a classification does not take into account:

• The variation of activity in types and location of angling

• The often long duration but less frequent nature of angling activity

• The relationship of activity intensity to the ability of the individuals taking part
Physical Activity: Angling’s Distinction

There are a number of ways in which the physical activity involved in angling offers something distinctive from other sports, and when considered collectively these distinctions demonstrate that angling plays a key role in getting people active, particularly those who might otherwise fall outside of ‘mainstream’ sports participation. The distinctions are summarised in Table 1 and suggest that angling:

- Provides opportunities for activity for the less able that many other sports do not
- Needs to be understood in relation to the ability of participants
- Helps keep or encourage people to be active later in life
- Provides sustained duration of physical activity
- Provides opportunities for green exercise with inherent added health benefits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distinction</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i) Angling provides physical activity for the less able</td>
<td>Angling can offer many ways to be active for people with ability impairments.</td>
<td>• Of 128 coarse angling respondent comments in our survey 33 explained that a disability impaired their physical activity. • Sport England’s SQSE survey in 2009(^{10}) showed that 39% of the 1,469 surveyed anglers had a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity (80% with affected activity), double the proportion of other sport respondents (19%).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) Physical activity levels are relative</td>
<td>Physical activity in angling needs to be understood as relative and subjective to the individual concerned – it can, for example, make relatively inactive people active.</td>
<td>• Some respondents revealed that angling was an important part of their recovery from ill-health; others disclosed that angling was one of the few activities they could manage given their physical limitations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii) Opportunities for older people to be active</td>
<td>Compared to other sports, people can readily participate (and compete) in angling until late in life.</td>
<td>• The mean age of anglers surveyed in 2009 for our research was 48.9 years • The average age of respondents in our Assynt research was 53, with 20% in the 50-54 age range and 14% aged 45-49 and 14% aged 55-59 • 73% of anglers surveyed in the aforementioned Sport England research were aged 45 years or more (42% were 55+ years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv) Angling provides sustained physical activity</td>
<td>Angling is often less intense, but longer in duration than other sports, producing similar energy use.</td>
<td>• When Pretty et al (2007) compared physical exertion in angling to six other activities(^{11}), angling was half as vigorous as activities like mountain biking or horse riding but because of the longer duration, the total energy used per session was greater than any other activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v) Angling provides physical activity in green spaces</td>
<td>Exercise in ‘green spaces’ can have added value in terms of mental and physical health.</td>
<td>• Our interim reports have emphasised the added benefits of activity in angling in terms of socialisation and environmental awareness.(^{12}) • Other research highlighted in Section 2 has emphasised the mental and physical health improvements from green exercise.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: The Distinction of Angling in Providing Physical Activity Outcomes

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12 See the series of project Theme Papers produced as interim reports in 2010 available at www.resources.anglingresearch.org.uk
The lesson from this work is that when assessing angling as a source of physical activity there is a need to differentiate in relation to: (a) the type/discipline of angling being practised; (b) the physical capacity of the individual, and (c) the context/environment in which participation takes place.

**In Focus: Does Angling Make Your Heart Beat Faster?**

We were interested in identifying the potential effects that angling participation might have on the heart rate of an angler. Using a wrist-watch heart rate monitor we asked 'Thomas', a member of the Upper Don angling club, to record a session of fly-fishing on the river at Wharncliffe, near Sheffield. This involved:

- An experienced 37 year old game angler
- Prior benchmarking of heart rate: waking up (47 beats per minute); walking the dog (average of 114 bpm); and running (163 bpm). Calorie expenditure for the walk was 222 C.
- A fishing session lasting 3 hours 50 minutes and 8 seconds that had a calorie expenditure of 1075 C with an average heart rate of 102 bpm and a maximum of 151 bpm.
- Heart rates varied significantly dependent on activities - walking along the bank, wading in the river, casting, hooking and landing fish, missing fish, and disentangling line.

Chart 2, below, shows the changes in heart rate over the first hour of the session.

![Chart 2: Measurement of Heart Rate and Activity, Game Angler](chart2.png)

Although a basic, one-off exercise, it demonstrates the differentiation of heart rate within one session of one particular type of angling. For the record, Thomas landed and released a total of 54 fish (brown trout or grayling) during the session.
1.2.3 Clubs and Sports Infrastructure

Angling provides a national infrastructure of clubs and governing bodies.

Angling has a very large infrastructure of clubs which help develop participation, manage waters, skills and competitions and generate social value to individuals and communities.

- Our angling participation survey recorded a sample where 73% (n=1,704) of anglers were members of clubs. This is significantly higher than Sport England’s Active People Survey data from the period 2007-2010 which put membership at 15-19%\(^{13}\)
- The Angling Trust has over 1,500 member clubs.

Membership of clubs varies in terms of motivation and type of angling:

- Our survey suggested that anglers ranked access to waters as the highest club membership motivation with 86% (n=1,994) ranking it 1st.
- Club membership amongst sea angling respondents was 49% (n=175), with the most popular reason for joining a club ‘to be around like-minded individuals’ (87%, n=229) – due in part to the lack of private fishing rights for seas and coasts.

As with other sports there has been a drive to improve the running of angling and the governance of the sport. The unification of governing bodies in England (AT) and the creation of ADBoS in Scotland have improved national governance significantly. At a club level the ADB have 53 clubs that have been awarded the Clubmark scheme in England.

Angling’s club structure offers a number of social and community benefits:

- Because angling takes place in natural environments, angling clubs frequently get involved in environmental improvement work through working parties, something discussed more fully in Section 3
- Because of the nature of the sport, angling clubs can be a gateway to charitable, community and education work
- Angling clubs can also be a route to a wide range of other activities that form a broader scope of participation.

In Focus: National Fishing Month (www.nationalfishingmonth.com)

National Fishing Month\(^{14}\) is an annual event that promotes angling through the provision of hundreds of showcase and local events designed to introduce people to fishing. It seeks to encourage people of all ages, and especially families, to try angling regardless of the cultural or social background they come from.

We conducted bespoke research on both NFM 2010 and 2011\(^{15}\). In the 2011 event:

- There were 15,000 people were engaged in 326 events
- The events brought together people of all ages from 2 year olds to pensioners
- 46.7% of participants were in the 10-15 age range with over 10% over 40
- 24.6% of participants were female (compared to around 5% nationally)
- 14% of participants were from the top 20% most deprived areas

13 Sport England (2010) Active People Survey (APS) results for Angling. Period: APS3 (Oct 08/Oct 09) to APS4 (Oct 09/Oct 10). In part the difference was a bias in our survey, which was promoted heavily to the memberships of the angling national governing bodies in England and Scotland.
14 NFM is owned and run by the Angling Trades Association and supported by the Environment Agency, Angling Development Board, Professional Anglers Association and Angling Trust.
1.2.4 Extended Participation

Beyond the act of going fishing, angling is a gateway for a wide range of positive social and environmental activities.

Through ‘unpicking’ what is involved in angling participation, we found that anglers were involved in a wide array of other activities, not immediately associated with the act of fishing. Certain qualities of angling participation set it apart from mainstream sports in terms of the scope of additional activities involved.

- The **ownership of fishing rights** by clubs means they take on additional responsibilities and provide opportunities for anglers to undertake different tasks.
- Angling’s **reliance on wildlife and nature** means that anglers have a vested interest in maintaining the quality of the angling environment.
- The **social structures and cultures of angling** lend themselves to widespread interchange about the activity – coaching, teaching and debating on the internet.
- The **accessibility of angling** can lead to **intergenerational learning** and integrated participation.

Our angling participation survey asked anglers to comment about additional activities they undertook. Chart 3 indicates the levels of participation in these activities, and the ‘word cloud’ in Figure 1 is used to visualise thirty of the most-frequently occurring roles: club themes were present in the highest number of comments (26), and activities involving writing about angling was the next most frequently occurring theme (21 comments).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Coarse Angling</th>
<th>Game Angling</th>
<th>Sea Angling</th>
<th>Count of all Responses (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tackle &amp; Bait</strong></td>
<td>Tying your own flies</td>
<td>136 (10%)</td>
<td>415 (68%)</td>
<td>61 (17%)</td>
<td>612 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preparing and maintaining tackle and rigs</td>
<td>1206 (85%)</td>
<td>319 (52%)</td>
<td>312 (87%)</td>
<td>1837 (77%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collecting/preparing and maintaining your own bait</td>
<td>857 (60%)</td>
<td>88 (15%)</td>
<td>200 (56%)</td>
<td>1146 (48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media</strong></td>
<td>Buying/reading angling books and magazines</td>
<td>1183 (83%)</td>
<td>507 (83%)</td>
<td>290 (81%)</td>
<td>1980 (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Watching angling-related television and films</td>
<td>1100 (77%)</td>
<td>428 (70%)</td>
<td>277 (77%)</td>
<td>1805 (76%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading and/or contributing to angling blogs, internet discussion boards and websites</td>
<td>824 (58%)</td>
<td>342 (56%)</td>
<td>240 (67%)</td>
<td>1406 (59%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voluntary</strong></td>
<td>Contributing to environmental or aquatic habitat conservation projects</td>
<td>291 (20%)</td>
<td>232 (38%)</td>
<td>70 (20%)</td>
<td>593 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching and mentoring other anglers</td>
<td>282 (20%)</td>
<td>177 (29%)</td>
<td>71 (20%)</td>
<td>530 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attending angling club meetings or undertaking angling club business</td>
<td>609 (43%)</td>
<td>299 (49%)</td>
<td>135 (38%)</td>
<td>1043 (44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic</strong></td>
<td>Paid employment in an angling-related field</td>
<td>87 (6%)</td>
<td>69 (11%)</td>
<td>21 (6%)</td>
<td>177 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I do not take part in any of these activities</td>
<td>19 (1%)</td>
<td>8 (1%)</td>
<td>3 (1%)</td>
<td>30 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other (please specify in the text box below)</td>
<td>78 (5%)</td>
<td>51 (8%)</td>
<td>31 (9%)</td>
<td>160 (7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 3: Cross Tabulation of Types of Angling and Additional Activities Undertaken

16 A word cloud uses the size of words to signify their frequency/importance.
Respondents also spoke about contributing to programmes and initiatives that have the potential to deliver wider community and environmental benefits, such as pond development, running charity groups, environmental rehabilitation work and the mentoring of other anglers:

‘My friend who is disabled requires lots of help with mobility as well as some tasks such as setting up rods, mixing ground bait, some more difficult casting and help netting fish so I am part-mentor and part-helper.’
(Survey comment made by 62-year old male coarse angler)

1.2.5 Competition

Angling provides opportunities for structured contests as well as distinctive informal competition.

Like other sports, angling embraces local club, regional and national competitions. Organised competition helps to provide structure to the sport of angling and is a pathway for talent and skill development. Competition development is a growing area of work for the Angling Trust, and angling development agencies and projects find it very popular with young people. New, emerging forms of angling, such as ‘street fishing’, are specifically designed around competition because it is attractive to young people.

Some clubs are committed to providing as many competition opportunities for members as possible. For example, in 2009 Wakefield Angling Club – ‘one of the case study sites for this research’ – ran a general match programme for adult members from March to December, and supplemented this with separate match programmes for juniors/intermediates, veterans, ladies, disabled anglers, charity events, Monday evenings and a 3-day festival in August 17.

Part of the ADB’s funding is for the development of improving elite pathways and its work has involved:

• 158 anglers involved in three pilot regional talent programmes in 2011
• Developing a process for the selection and training of competition coaches
• An agreed link for selection from the talent pathway into the national youth teams
• 9 regional competitions and 3 super regional talent programmes scheduled in 2012/13

The data from our angling participation survey indicated that while formal competition was not the strongest motivation for joining a club, it was still deemed important. As Table 2 below shows, a total of 636 respondents (approximately 25%) ranked competition as either their 1st, 2nd or 3rd most important reason for joining an angling club.

Table 2: Ranking for Competition as Motivation for Joining Club

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Count of Anglers (n=2329)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, like other mass-participation activities such as cycling and walking (also formalised and codified into competition), much angling participation appears leisurely or recreational rather than as competitive sport.

**Angling’s Distinction as a Competitive Sport**

**Angling differs as a competitive sport in a number of respects, particularly in enabling accessible, integrated competition.**

**i) Integrated Competition**

Angling is one of the few sports where individuals with very different characteristics and abilities can genuinely compete on similar terms against each other. Short or tall, male or female, able-bodied or disabled, young or old – angling is a sport that truly is within the capabilities of many people. The reasons for this include:

- The simple physical mechanics of angling (which can be varied through the equipment used and the type of angling discipline practised)
- The role that environmental conditions, and chance, can play in catching a fish or not which can effectively ‘level the playing field’.

This is not to say that experience, skill level and elite training and development do not count in angling. However, because angling supports a ‘mixed’ profile of individuals participating alongside one another, there are legitimate opportunities for:

- Families to participate in sport together (i.e. as a unit)
- Competitions that involve males and females
- Participation involving able-bodied and disabled people
- Greater intergenerational interaction

An example of the integrated sociability offered through mixed participation is illustrated in the quote below:

‘Fishing with [my dad] gave me time to learn about him as a man, his values and morals etc….. Since that time I have taken my own children fishing, and now I take my grand-children too. Fishing gives us quality time together... Angling is a family event in my own circle, but it can also bring together people of many and varied backgrounds and cultures, able and less-able [bodied] people can mix and socialise on equal terms whilst fishing.’

(Online comment received 27th July, 2011)

**In Focus: Helping Mates get to Matches**

At Wakefield Angling Club, anglers over the age of 65 years participate in matches alongside anglers with a disability. This policy has enabled anglers with a disability to receive assistance from able-bodied anglers to transport and set up equipment. Six anglers were interviewed at one of these matches, four of whom were restricted by a mix of disabilities that included knee replacements, gastro-intestinal illness and heart ailments. One of the able-bodied anglers over 65 (and retired) explained his commitment to helping his peers:

‘One of the reasons I come is – as well as enjoying it – to give some of them [fellow anglers] a hand with the gear. If they’ve got bad breathing, they can soon knacker themselves up ... I enjoy fishing and I can help someone who might otherwise struggle.’

A similar response was made by a coarse angler in the general angling participation survey who, despite being over 60 years of age himself, assumed the role of an assistant to a fellow angler.
ii) Informal Competition

The challenge of catching fish, the leisure context of angling and the sometimes slow/fast nature of participation often mean that competition is more informal, involving friends and family.

‘It’s also nice to have competitions between friends and family for fun; [however] a lot of local/club matches I find are too serious and involve having to stay silent and get more bait for those hours than what I’d normally use in a month, and to me it’s not really enjoyable. Although, I do fish some [angling club matches] occasionally for something to do.’ (Survey comment made by 18 year-old male coarse angler.)

‘Angling is a way of life to me, not simply a sport or a competition, and all I ask is for the right of quiet enjoyment.’ (Survey comment made by 48 year-old male sea angler.)

Results from Sport England’s SQSE survey indicate that this view of angling as non-competitive is in fact widespread – it was reported that 74% of 1,469 respondents (481 general participants and 988 affiliated club members) participated in ‘non-competition social’ angling. Our interviews with anglers found this kind of ‘social angling’ often embraced informal competition amongst friends, against one’s self, or with a particular fish species. The informal competitive appeal of angling can be considered a driver of increasing sports participation – offering an alternative to hi-octane sports and appealing to those seeking relaxation, those suffering mental health issues, and young people disenfranchised or alienated by other sports.

In Focus: Formal and Informal Competition - Attracting Young People

Recognising the difference between formal and informal competition in angling is particularly important for increasing participation amongst young people.

On one hand formal club competitions and new forms of angling developing in continental Europe, like competitive Street Fishing, are attracting young people to the sport. The ADB report that clubs and schools find formal competitions engage some young people.

On the other hand some of our research has found that angling appeals to many young people precisely because it allows them to escape the overt competitiveness of traditional school sports. This distinction can be seen in angling clubs set up by young people themselves, such as Little Windsor Angling Club and Staffordshire Youth Anglers. Both clubs incorporate competitions into their activities, but they are keen to stress angling is primarily a social activity, a chance for friendly matches as opposed to what they consider to be the pressures of more serious training and competition in other angling clubs.

Because angling can appeal to both those seeking formal competition and elite pathways as well as those seeking more informal social experiences, it is important that clubs accommodate both types of angler.
iii) Other Distinctions

Other distinctions in terms of angling competition include:

- **The nature of the opposition**: This can be another team or individual, but they are not fundamental to participation, and for many participants angling competition is a contest with the fish and the elements.
- **Definitions of success**: Catching fish is an instantly gratifying demonstration of success. This can be particularly appealing to young people, especially those with low confidence in their own abilities (see Section 6).
- **Types of competition**: Alongside catching fish, casting competitions (for example at Highland Games) provides a skill challenge based on distance and accuracy akin to archery or target shooting.
- **Chance**: Because angling takes place in the natural environment and involves fish, it is subject to environmental influences, there is a level of unpredictability which makes it accessible to the non-expert.

1.2.6 Barriers to Participation

Some barriers to angling participation still need to be overcome.

Despite very high participation numbers, a number of barriers exist to prevent even more people taking up angling. These have been identified in other research\(^\text{20}\) and include:

- Not knowing what to do
- Not having equipment
- Not having someone to go fishing with
- Not being able to access fishing locations.

Such barriers can be overcome: for example the EA’s production and distribution of regional guides to fishing locations in 2008/09 led to a 12% increase in licence sales.

**Young people** face some particular barriers. In our survey of 219 young people, 96.3% said they would like to go fishing more often, but only 52.7% agreed that it was easy for them to go fishing when they wanted to. Table 3 below illustrates some of the most common barriers to angling participation identified in our Young Anglers’ survey and suggested remedies\(^\text{21}\).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Lack of junior angling clubs and coaching events.</td>
<td>Increase high quality provision of junior clubs and coaching events for non club members. (^\text{22})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Can’t travel to venue on their own, particularly when fisheries are located out of towns.</td>
<td>Local Authorities should improve access to local waters and make leasing of waters conditional on junior access. (^\text{23})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Clubs too dominated by match fishing and competitions.</td>
<td>Provide a diversity of club activities with formal competition and informal participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Poor disability provision and lack of toilet facilities (cited by girls in particular).</td>
<td>Develop accessible fisheries and provide access to toilets. Arrange mixed participation angling events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Non angling parents do not know how to take children fishing and fisheries are not always welcoming to family groups.</td>
<td>Encourage family friendly fisheries e.g. family tickets, fun days and coaching or parent packs. (^\text{24})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: The Top 5 Barriers to Young People’s Angling Participation

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21 For more detail of our Young People Angling Survey see Djohari, N (2010b) op cit.
**The cost of participation:** is an additional barrier to young people, particularly at the threshold between junior and adult ages. Reviewing the numbers of young people holding junior EA Rod licenses that were eligible to transfer to adult licenses in the upcoming 2009-10 season, we found only 34.4% renewed, amounting to a ‘drop-off’ of 65.6%. While the increase in EA rod license fees from £5 for junior to £25 for adults cannot alone explain the drop off, young people told us that it was the combined cost of Rod Licence fees, adult fees for club membership and adult day water charges that was prohibitive for those turning 16.

‘I believe that membership prices for people still in education should be the same price as a juniors because they do not work and therefore struggle to find the money they need. Another of my local clubs requested that because I am 16 I need to pay £30 instead of the £6 I paid last year.

(Survey respondent: Male, 16)

Reducing cost certainly has the potential to increase participation.

- The introduction of the £5 junior license fee in 2001 resulted in the dramatic increase of license sales to 12-16 yr olds from 30,000 to 110,000.
- The Angling Trust has sought to address cost as an issue by making junior membership free to ages 17 and under, and by introducing a reduced cost young adult membership fee for 18-21 year olds.

1.3 Issues and Recommendations

1.3.1 Physical Activity

The benefits from physical activity in angling need to be better understood, measured in more sophisticated and nuanced ways, and evaluated in terms relative to those taking part. The ‘blanket’ means by which sports are judged to qualify for funding, i.e. based on short, intensive participation (the ‘3x30minutes’ assessment), is simply inappropriate for angling (as well as other outdoor activities including sailing, mountaineering and canoeing), where participation is usually for longer duration but often less frequency. Some assessments (such as Pretty et al) suggest that the long duration of angling participation results in higher levels of calorie burn than other outdoor activities.

1.3.2 Participation Figures and Funding

Developments in the organisational structures that support angling participation – especially the changing role of the EA and a new strategic plan for Sport England in 2012 – suggest that some uncertain times lie ahead. Currently, angling is ranked at 29 in terms of sports funding (0.4% of available funding) yet Sport England’s calculations place angling as:

- The 6th highest monthly participation sport (970,000)
- 16th in weekly participation at moderate intensity (138,000)
- Having the 3rd most satisfied participants in all sports

More accurate and appropriate ways of determining participation levels, duration and benefits that reflect the distinction that angling offers, should inform future funding decisions. Angling should remain within the funding framework of sports participation as it offers many of the same benefits and routes as other sports.

In Scotland, angling is somewhat better placed with the ADBoS having secured funding from Sport Scotland to 2015.

However, all angling governing bodies also need to seek to broaden the base on which participation development is funded. Utilising the outcomes and findings of this research, which highlights the range of social and community benefits angling can deliver, should help inform those new approaches.

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25 Djohari, N. (2010b) op cit
26 Mawle, G presentation to ADB workshop, Strelley Hall, Nottingham December 15th 2011.
1.3.3 Full Benefits of Participation Unrecognised

Whilst angling delivers key sports participation outcomes, by analysing angling participation within a rigid sports/exercise framework, many of the benefits that come from participation are unrecognised within formal funding structures and assessments. Our research suggests that a broader notion of what constitutes ‘participation’ is required of the full range and extent of social benefits from a sport such as angling are to be understood.

In order to help achieve this however, angling needs to be better at accounting for participation; at monitoring and evaluating impact and at demonstrating how it meets sports based outcomes.

1.3.4 Young People

The fluctuating nature of angling participation – an angler’s ‘career’ – in which participation most frequently begins young, may dip between the ages of 18–40 years of age, then return later in life, emphasises the importance of an early introduction. With severe financial challenges for young people and the government’s commitment to increase the leaving age from education and training to 18 by 2015, eliminating cost as a potential barrier to young people’s continued participation in angling needs to be a priority. Overcoming barriers for young people to participate is an essential component of securing future participation levels.