

Fishing for Answers:

Final Report of the Social and Community Benefits of Angling Project

Conclusions

Dr Adam Brown
Dr Natalie Djohari
Dr Paul Stolk

Substance
January 2012

The full report is available at:
www.resources.anglingresearch.org.uk

Concluding Comments and Summary Recommendations

The Social and Community Benefits of Angling research has generated a huge amount of evidence about the positive roles that anglers and angling can play in people's lives.

In doing so, and in line with the aims of the research funding, we have also sought to make recommendations about how these benefits can be increased and how practice and policy can be developed to support that.

The merger of the Angling Trust and Angling Development Board in England and Wales and its development of a National Angling Participation Action Plan (NAPAP) along with the expanding and diversifying work of the Angling Development Board of Scotland demonstrate that angling has significantly improved its governance and delivery in recent years.

In part this process has been informed by a greater understanding of the social benefits that angling can deliver, something this research has sought to support.

This research provides a framework for the ongoing development of angling and its social and community benefits in six outcome areas:

1. Sports Participation
2. Health and Well-being
3. The Natural Environment
4. Community Development
5. Rural Communities and Tourism
6. Young People

In this final section we provide a summary of key recommendations in those areas.

Summary of Recommendations

1. Participation

There needs to be **more appropriate ways of determining participation levels** in angling that reflect the particularities of the activity (duration, frequency) along with appropriate levels of sport development funding to match.

Sports councils and funding agencies need to have a **more nuanced and sophisticated measurement of physical activity** as it relates to angling in order to account for the huge variation in activity levels across diverse angling practices. This needs to reflect how angling activity is relative to physical ability, and as a result contributes to getting people of all ages and abilities more physically active.

Angling participation needs to be better understood, beyond that generated by a rigid sport development framework, in order to embrace the multi-faceted range of (beneficial) activities that extend beyond the act of catching fish itself.

Angling governing bodies, national and local policymakers need to work to **overcome the barriers to angling participation**. This is particularly so in relation to overcoming cost barriers for young people.

2. Health and Well-Being

Angling governing bodies and development agencies need to work with fishery owners, environmental agencies and local authorities to **develop facilities that are accessible** so that people of all abilities and ages can access the health and well-being benefit of angling participation. This should include access to centralised fisheries near to population centres.

The health departments of UK and devolved governments need to work with angling governing bodies to **understand the unique health and well-being benefits** angling can bring.

Angling governing bodies and regional and local organisations should **champion the health and well-being benefits of angling** more effectively and lead an approach to health policymakers and professionals. This should include work with national mental and physical health charities and agencies such as Mind and the Stroke Association.

Regional and county based angling managers should **develop networks** involving angling clubs and charities along with locally based health agencies and local authorities.

There is a need to develop **more robust health based research**, particularly around the mental health benefits of angling.

3. Natural Environment

Angling organisations need to **coordinate and further develop approaches** that involve anglers in environmental education, improvement, monitoring and access. This could include extending the work of rivers trusts and the development of a database of projects delivering this sort of work

This needs to be supported by **better evaluation, reporting and publicising** of the outcomes of angling's contribution in this area.

New institutional relationships offer some exciting new opportunities for both environmental protection agencies and angling. This is particularly so in England where the role of the Environment Agency in relation to angling promotion and regulation is changing.

The NAPAP (in England and Wales) and the angling governing bodies in Scotland need to make links between the work of environmentally orientated angling-related bodies (Rivers Trusts, Wild Trout Trust etc.) and projects focused on **education and young people**.

There is a need for a closer, more co-operative and transparent relationship between **marine protection agencies and sea angling** organisations.

4. Communities

New national and local policy relationships brought about as part of the **'big society'** agenda offer distinct opportunities for angling to develop its work within local communities.

In particular this includes opportunities for angling clubs and projects to develop their role in **developing, owning and managing local waters**.

At a national level angling governing bodies should work with organisations such as the Local Government Association, Locality and government departments to **promote the beneficial role that angling can play in local communities**, highlighting good practice that this research has described.

Local authorities need to work with angling organisations in their areas in order that the significant health, environmental and community benefits of properly managed and run local waters and coasts can be realised.

In order to take advantage of new opportunities in relation to localism and the changing role of local authorities, there is a need for **angling bodies to work with national third sector agencies** such as Coops UK, Social Enterprise Network and the Charities Evaluation Service to provide advice, training and guidance to local angling organisations about appropriate charitable, co-operative and social enterprise business models.

National and regional **programmes of angling volunteering** should be developed building on the extensive volunteering that already takes place, with a particular focus on delivering benefits for both young people and older age groups.

5. Rural Communities

National tourism agencies in the UK should work with angling governing bodies to promote and **develop the benefits of angling based tourism**, with a particular focus on rural areas.

There is a need to work with **regional development agencies and local authorities** to promote angling tourism in order that the significant economic benefits of angling tourism can be more widely felt.

This work should include:

- Development of information technology to support angling tourism
- Business clustering
- Development of local festivals and attractions
- Angling passport schemes

Angling tourism development should be undertaken in conjunction with **sustainable management systems to encourage balanced, broad-based but community-focused economic growth**. To support this there is a need to:

- Develop local capacity to monitor angler numbers and feedback properly
- Develop ongoing data collection to better understand the visiting angler market, and angler experience
- Explore ways in which social research can be delivered alongside natural sciences
- Involve all stakeholders in the local community

6. Young People

Angling needs to **promote the excellent work of angling based youth inclusion projects (AYIPs)** in which the UK is a leader in the field.

This should include:

- Providing **centralised, online information** explaining the work of AYIPs and contact details of projects to assist those seeking this type of service in their area.
- Assisting angling projects to **establish links with education, youth justice, and wider youth services** and charities outside of angling, at local, regional and national level.
- Development of **consistent approaches to monitoring and evaluation**, reporting and best practice guidance with greater clarity and guidance on key differences and expected standards of delivery.

Education policymakers and practitioners need to work with angling to coordinate and develop a more coherent offer in terms of **angling-related educational qualifications and attainment**.

Demonstrating Outcomes

This project has provided a wealth of evidence about the positive role that angling can play in social and community development. If angling is to realise its potential in the six outcome areas outlined then it needs to convince non-angling policymakers and practitioners on an ongoing basis about its delivery and impact.

This will require an agreed, more unified and robust research, monitoring and evaluation framework and the tools to undertake that task. The research that this project has delivered provides a firm basis on which such a framework can be implemented and Substance will work with the angling governing bodies and their partners to develop and implement it.

