

Fishing for Answers:

Final Report of the Social and Community Benefits of Angling Project

Section 4: Angling and Local Communities

Dr Adam Brown
Dr Natalie Djohari
Dr Paul Stolk

Substance
January 2012

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

4. Angling and Local Community Development

In Brief

This section describes the positive role that angling and anglers can play in local communities in relation to:

- Empowering people to be active citizens through the development of new or renovated community facilities
- Creating opportunities for greater cohesion and integration within communities

4.1 Introduction and Context

Much of the focus of national and local policy over the last decade has been concerned with ways of improving the lives of people within their local area. This has included drives to develop community cohesion, initiatives to give communities the right to buy land (such as the Scottish Land Reform Act 2004) and new legislation to give communities a greater role in owning and running facilities and services (epitomised by the Localism Bill in England).

More recently, the 'big society' agenda has come to represent this policy focus and has also been used to formalise efforts around the promotion of volunteering, the introduction of a changing role for key non-governmental agencies, and a desire to increase the role of 'third sector' organisations (co-operatives, charities and social enterprises).

Our research has found a number of ways in which angling is contributing to this agenda. There are opportunities for angling to extend the community benefit from activities like volunteering, for angling organisations to take on new roles, as well as for new partnerships between local authorities, angling and the Third Sector. In 2011, an Interim Report from our research, *Making the Most of Community Waters: Localism, Health and Angling*¹⁰⁵, set out some of the more detailed evidence about how angling can contribute to local agendas.



¹⁰⁵ Brown, A., Djohari, N. and Stolk, P. (2011) *Making the Most of Community Waters: Localism, Health and Angling*, Manchester: Substance. http://resources.anglingresearch.org.uk/sites/resources.anglingresearch.org.uk/files/Making_the_most_of_community_waters.pdf

In Focus: The Localism Agenda

The emergence of the 'localism' policy agenda in 2010 and new priorities in public health provide possibilities for local angling clubs, associations, groups and projects to play a wider, positive role in local communities. This policy initiative is part of a wider drive to:

- Encourage decentralisation
- Create greater local involvement in the delivery of 'public services'
- 'Empower communities' to improve and increase the roles of social enterprises, co-operatives and 'civil society organisations'
- Encourage civil society organisations to increase 'citizen involvement', especially volunteering, and owning and running community assets.

In England, the Localism Bill includes provisions to encourage communities to take over failing facilities that are otherwise likely to close, or land and buildings that are already unused or derelict and which could be put to better use by the community in which they are based.¹⁰⁶

The Bill will also enable community interest groups (CIGs) to nominate land or buildings to be registered by the local authority as 'Assets of Community Value' (ACV) and potentially bid for them.

These new provisions open a way for properly constituted community groups to own and manage local community assets. This has the potential to include local waters currently owned by local authorities or privately. Given that many Local Authorities already lease the rights to fish on local waters to local angling organisations, there may be new opportunities for angling and community organisations to play a greater role, in partnership with Local Authorities, in running or even owning local assets¹⁰⁷.

4.2 The Contribution of Angling to Community Development

Angling can be a means to empower people to become active citizens and bring people from different backgrounds together.

Angling contributes to community development in two broad ways:

- i) As a means to **empower people to become active citizens** who are involved in improving their local areas – developing, owning and managing facilities for community use, and working with local authorities.
- ii) As a means to **bring local people together** and increase their participation in community life through the creation of opportunities for community interaction and participation.

In doing this, angling organisations and individuals can play an important role in changing **spaces into places**; increasing access to, changing perceptions of, and encouraging stewardship for local resources. The adoption of new organisational structures may be needed to maximise these opportunities.

4.2.1 Empowering Communities through Community Assets

In its broadest sense 'community assets' can be understood as those factors, resources and environments that people feel are valuable to maintaining their quality of life. They may be used in daily life to:

- Develop personal capabilities - such as use of leisure or cultural venues
- Build social capital – for example through club membership or volunteering
- Improve and maintain physical and mental health – through use of parks
- Facilitate access to other resources – e.g. through educational resources.

Many ponds, canals, stretches of river, lakes and reservoirs can be considered community assets. However, if they are to be of maximum benefit to communities, they need to be adequately maintained and accessible to a diverse range of users.

¹⁰⁶ House of Commons Library, 'Localism Bill: Local government and community empowerment' [Bill No. 126 of 2010-11] [Research Paper 11/02](http://www.parliament.uk/briefingpapers/commons/lib/research/rp2011/RP11-002.pdf), p48, available at: <http://www.parliament.uk/briefingpapers/commons/lib/research/rp2011/RP11-002.pdf>

¹⁰⁷ For more detail on how local authorities can work with angling organisations, see Brown et al (2011) op cit.

i) Developing New Community Facilities

Angling organisations have been instrumental in developing new facilities.

In the Breaking Barriers report on community cohesion (2010), it was noted that:

*'...poor urban architecture and decaying physical environments can exacerbate community conflict and create a lack of cohesion. Access to venues can provide an 'escape' from this environment and provide a neutral space for new interactions and bring people together from different areas, ethnicities and backgrounds.'*¹⁰⁸

Angling has played a particularly important role in relation to the construction of new ponds and new community facilities, often in conjunction with local authorities. In many instances this role has helped 'reclaim' former industrial landscapes, and contributed to urban regeneration. One example of this sort of contribution is **CAST in Nottingham**.¹⁰⁹ Founded in 2001, CAST is part of the Future Newstead community group that secured £433,140 of funding from the Big Lottery Fund's Village SOS project in order to transform 220 acres of land at the former colliery spoil heaps. The new development will see a sustainable, eco-sensitive Country Park established at the site as well as the construction of a visitor centre with classrooms, workshop facilities and angling lakes run by CAST.

CAST has successfully been using angling to engage disaffected young people: improving outcomes in education and encouraging young people to become actively involved in community improvement work. The Newstead site development is an extension of this work and has engaged young people and the local community in the creation of fishing platforms, planting, hedge maintenance and care of the lakes.

Anglers are often explicitly involved in the regeneration of sites for the wider benefit of their local communities, not just for anglers. In 2008, the **Staffordshire Youth Anglers (SYA)**¹¹⁰ began the conversion of a former railway embankment site at Carney Pools Fishery into a wildlife asset for use by local young people, schools and families. They were actively involved in the funding, planning and development of a wildlife pool, including the creation of disability friendly pathways, parking spaces, a pond-dipping platform and extensive replanting. The site, now known as Railway Meadows Wildlife Ponds, incorporates natural seating areas, a sensory garden, and the creation of another wildlife pond, making it a much-valued community asset, involving young people and the wider community in conservation, work parties and encouraging use by local schools.

ii) Improving Existing Local Assets

Angling organisations can also play an important role in improving local assets, most notably through habitat improvement works.

More common than creation of new assets, is the involvement of angling organisations and individual anglers in the improvement of water-based community assets. This contribution is particularly important for communities that lack adequate resources for site maintenance and/or where these sites are not prioritised for regeneration.

As already discussed in Section 3 of this report, anglers are involved in a diverse range of environmental improvement and maintenance work. In our survey of more than 2,400 anglers, 24.7% said they participated in environmental conservation work.¹¹¹ At local ponds and reservoirs, through to stretches of river, we have found angling to be a motivator for environmental improvement work that focuses on increasing public access and aesthetics, as well as increasing biodiversity and the quality of natural habitat.

One example of this is **Hemlington Lake in Middlesbrough**, located in the heart of a housing estate. The quality of the resource went into a steep decline around the turn of the century with fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour commonplace. The 'Friends of Hemlington Lake' (FHL) group formed by local residents worked with the local authority to create all-abilities paths around the lake, education boards, pond dipping kits for local schools/families to use, and sculptures by local artists.

108 Crabbe, T and Brown, A (2010) *Breaking Barriers: Community cohesion, sport, and organisational development*, London: Active Communities Network, p59.

109 For more details of our research visits see: http://www.resources.anglingresearch.org.uk/project_research_sites/site/7

110 http://www.resources.anglingresearch.org.uk/project_research_sites/site/8

111 Stolk, P. (2009) *Angling Participation. Interim Report*, Manchester: Substance http://resources.anglingresearch.org.uk/sites/resources.anglingresearch.org.uk/files/Research_Task_1_Angling_Participation.pdf

Central to this rejuvenation was the improvement of angling at the site, including disabled and junior angling provision which has helped reduce vandalism and provide a constructive activity for young people. Courses run by **Get Hooked on Fishing Teesside** help young people 'get to know' the local community, build relationships with FHL, instil environmental respect and provide young people with a fishing kit and a pass for free use of waters until they are 16 years old.

Developments are sensitive to wildlife and the environment and balance the needs of residents, anglers, model boaters and canoeists with the needs of wildlife. As one member of the Friends of Hemlington Lake remarked:

'Now you walk around [the lake] and residents say hello. You might find a carrier bag blowing around and it's picked up by people walking along. It's because people have seen the improvements and they're taking more pride in the lake itself and the area.' (Interview, 2010)

iii) Owning, Maintaining and Running Facilities

Angling organisations can help to initiate new forms of ownership and undertake maintenance of local assets.

Once facilities have been created they also need running and maintaining in order to be sustainable. The responsibility to maintain local assets can help broaden community involvement through both formal and informal 'ownership' of assets and involve the development of new 'third sector' angling organisations. This is particularly important in relation to both localism and 'big society' agendas where co-operatives, charities and social enterprises are seen as key delivery agencies for greater community management of local areas.

One example is the newly established social enterprise **Get Hooked Ealing**. In 2007, Northala Fields was developed into a country park with lakes using rubble from the demolition of Wembley Stadium. Following consultation with Get Hooked On Fishing and the Metropolitan Police, the local authority decided greater community benefit could be delivered through the development of a self-sustaining angling youth intervention project at the site.

In 2010, Get Hooked Ealing was established on-site. Following a business model approach designed by GHOF North East in Durham, the project seeks to be a self-sustaining social enterprise within three years. Project development has included:

- An environmentally sensitive visitors centre, which houses a café, toilet facilities, tackle shop, classroom and management office for GHOF
- The lease of the waters and management of the building to GHOF Ealing for 3 years, enabling the project to generate its own revenue
- Third party lease of the café securing maintenance costs for the entire building.

The establishment of a social enterprise in the GHOF model maximises the benefits of the local water by providing a thriving local fishery, resident junior angling club, and targeted youth intervention work involving angling and business management.

iv) Local Authority Partnerships

Much of the good practice identified by this research has involved partnerships between angling organisations and local authorities.

There are few local authorities in the UK that do not have access to rivers, waterways, or coastlines. Our interim report, Making the Most of Community Waters¹¹² highlighted how local authorities and angling organisations can work together to develop and improve community assets, and by doing so address local authority priorities such as:

- Urban regeneration and improvement to the physical environment
- Public health and well-being by creating access to green spaces¹¹³
- Civic involvement and community safety

There is significant mutual benefit that can be generated in co-operative work on community assets. We have identified three key approaches to successful joint working:

¹¹² Brown et al (2011) Op cit

¹¹³ J. Pretty, J. Peacock, R.Hine, M. Sellens, N. South, M.Griffin. (2007) 'Green exercise in the UK countryside: Effects on health and psychological well-being, and implications for policy and planning', in *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*. Volume 50 (2). p 211-231; Richard Louv (2005) *Last Child in the Woods: saving our children from Nature Deficit Disorder*, Algonquin, Chapel Hill N.C. Mind (2007) *Ecotherapy: The green agenda for mental health*. http://www.mind.org.uk/campaigns_and_issues/report_and_resources/835_ecotherapy

- i) **Local authority leadership:** Agreeing conditional leases for waters; providing free CRB checks; and investing in community ponds or piers.
- ii) **Development by a community group:** Involving local community groups in maintenance and development of local waters to access funds and assist communities to respond directly to their own needs.
- iii) **Establishment of a mutual, charity or social enterprise:** To help realise the full potential of local waters by developing co-operatives, social enterprises or charities to benefit local communities and embrace a range of interests.

In Focus: The Importance of Partnership - Hillingdon

The London Borough of Hillingdon stands out as an example of good practice in how Local Authorities can take the lead in encouraging more active use of community waters. Many of Hillingdon's waters had become neglected, prone to incidents of anti-social behaviour and were inaccessible to young anglers. It undertook a number of initiatives:

i) Development of a free and accessible family fishery

Transformation of the Little Britain Lake with volunteer help into a free, attractive community site. Improvements included clearing paths, creating disabled-friendly fishing pegs, re-planting of a picnic area, and installation of street lighting on the access road.

ii) Conditional leasing to encourage junior angling

Clubs renting council waters are now required to have a junior section as part of the renewal condition of their lease and are given free CRB checks and other advice/guidance.

iii) Provision of free family fishing events

The council launched a free Family Fishing Fun Day, which in 2010 attracted 1040 participants of all age and abilities.

iv) Encouraging wide use of angling facilities

Working with the support of Les Webber's Angling Projects, the council runs a scheme to assist local Scout groups achieve their angling badges. This involves classroom and bank side sessions, minibus provision and presentations by the Mayor. The council is also working with schools to run vocational courses on site maintenance, construction of new waters, fencing, path maintenance, and horticulture, as part of student training.

Hillingdon is successful because the council acts as the hub for a network of current and potential anglers, introducing those who would like to take up angling or those who can provide it. Lyn Summers, angling development coordinator, says:

'It's not as hard as people think, it's about getting stuck in and giving it a go and you'll find that people start to join in. People will start approaching you, like the Scouts, the local teachers. But it wouldn't be possible without the effort and commitment of people like Les Webber and the volunteers - we'd never find the volunteers we need within the council alone. So it's about building that base of volunteers.'



v) Providing Local Services

Angling organisations can deliver local services that help local authorities and agencies meet their community obligations.

Given reductions in local authority spending and moves to 'farm out' services to the third sector, angling organisations may be able to assist local authorities to deliver aspects of leisure, education, health and young people's services. As we discuss in Section 6 of this report, angling-based youth intervention projects are often incorporated into the delivery of alternative education provisions for young people.

Get Hooked On Fishing Liverpool have had a long standing relationship with both Stanley Park and Birkenhead Park, providing regular angling coaching events throughout the summer holidays. In Hastings, the **Fishing4u project** has been contracted as a provider of angling for the local council-run Active Hastings healthy lifestyle scheme.¹¹⁴

There is, however, greater scope for angling organisations to be involved in wider service provisions, particularly in relation to public health. In much the same way as local Wildlife Trusts offer conservation volunteering opportunities, many of the local angling clubs and river charities that hold regular conservation work parties and river cleans could be incorporated into wider 'green exercise' provisions.

4.2.2 Creating Integrated and Cohesive Communities

The way facilities are designed and used is vital to their role in creating integrated and cohesive communities.

The full value of angling organisations developing and running local assets can only be realised if the assets are utilised for wider community benefit. It is the **use of, and access to 'spaces' that constitute the means by which locations are transformed into 'places'** and subsequently attain special value and meaning within local communities.

Our research has shown that angling sites become recognised community assets when people are involved in the maintenance of the site and a spectrum of community members (including non-anglers) are able to access the site for diverse activities. Previous research by Substance has identified that the manner in which facilities are run is very important in determining their cohesive potential. The work suggested facilities needed to be:

- **Accessible** – affordable, available and 'open' in the broadest sense of the word
- **Comfortable** – a place in which people can feel at ease
- **Neutral** – not perceived as being provided for a particular constituency
- **Within reach** – locally situated or via good transport links
- **Positive in their contribution** – minimizing negative impacts to local residents
- **Connected** – working with local agencies and organisations to engage people
- **Professional** – ensuring delivery is of high quality.¹¹⁵

i) Working With and In Communities

By working with local communities angling-related organisations can help embrace wider community needs and involve local people.

For angling to realise its potential within local communities there is a need for angling organisations to develop organisational structures, facilities and activities that include non-angling local people. Sample approaches include:

- Creating or improving community facilities that are designed for multiple users
- Adopting new organisational structures to embrace different local interests
- Hold activities and events that attract a wider spectrum of the local population

The work of two very different organisations - the Wandle Trust and Get Hooked on Fishing in Billingham - are instructive in this regard because they show how wider community involvement can be generated using distinct approaches.

¹¹⁴ http://resources.anglingresearch.org.uk/project_research_sites/site/36

¹¹⁵ Crabbe, T and Brown, A (2010) *Breaking Barriers* op cit: 59

The Wandle Trust is a successful example of an organisation that began with angling interests to the fore, but has become much more associated with a broader community remit. It has changed considerably in terms of its size and the composition of its volunteers – river clean-up events have grown from a handful of anglers to typically attracting between 40-50 volunteers. According to the Trust, many of the volunteers are either non-anglers or have little knowledge of angling on the river.

Trust Director Dr Bella Davies explained that engaging non-anglers is both a deliberate and essential strategy:

'The Wandle Trust has a very, very community-oriented base/origin, and – rightly – completely recognises that to do anything in an urban area you need the complete support of the community, or at least as much as you can get. To do that, you need to have extensive consultation and involvement with people.'

Trustee Gideon Reeve identified that a key consideration for The Trust was to address the public perception of it as a community organisation, not one that only represents the interests of anglers:

'We didn't want to be seen as a glorified fishing club that was trying to feather its own nest ... I realised it is very good that we are closely associated with fishermen if they are the right kind of fishermen, such as the Wandle Piscators. In their constitution they state they are an environmental and community-based mixed fishing club. So there is no elitism, it caters to everybody, it is about the community.'

This balance of community and angling interests has been fundamental to the Wandle Trust's success.

GHOFT Teesside have been instrumental in assisting the development of Charlton's Pond, a local water situated in a housing estate in Billingham. Once a site for anti-social behaviour, it was re-established as a productive fishing venue through a grant secured by GHOF and the angling club with the support of the EA. Key characteristics make it stand out as an example of community engagement:

- **Location** in the urban environment making it accessible.
- A **'safe space'** where young people know members of the community, feel comfortable fishing on their own and form a network of informal surveillance.
- **Exit routes** are created for young people to the on-site angling club to enable them to access regular positive activity and GHOF's personal and social development support.
- **Inter generational and intra-community relationships** are developed
- **Junior matches become community 'rituals'** where the Saturday 'weigh in' becomes an all-community social event, and a public celebration of young people's achievements, including a 'community procession' around the pond.

The pond is used by record numbers of angling club members as well as local residents as a recreational space for walking, picnicking and watching the wildlife.

'It's the community engagement as much as anything. Once that's caught up, things seem to flow from there, the interest grows...Where you get a community working together, even if it's just starting from such basic recreational interests, they can go on from there.' (Interview with Jean O'Donnell, Councillor for south Billingham)

ii) Designing Assets for Multiple Uses

By creating assets that are used for non-angling purposes angling can assist community cohesion.

For water resources to assist community cohesion, they must be able to accommodate a variety of uses. Creating exclusive angling use does not allow a sense of wider community ownership to develop, nor does it permit opportunities for interaction between people. Multiple use that truly 'opens up' the asset needs to:

- Be based on design principles that ensure optimal use of space and resources.
- Involve formal and informal activities with 'targeted' and 'open-access' provision.

Albrighton Trust Moat and Gardens is an example of how angling-focused green space can help improve the quality of life for people with disabilities and special needs. Located near Telford, the Moat and Gardens is an initiative that aims 'to provide inclusive social, learning and recreational opportunities for people with disabilities'. The architect-designed site incorporates a network of wheelchair-friendly paths that enable access to a moat stocked with coarse fish species, seven large fishing platforms, a themed garden, and a resource and learning centre.

The Moat and Gardens serves a varied clientele, from young people with a physical or mental disability through to groups of the elderly or infirm. Significantly, however, angling is not the sole attraction of the site – there are 35 themed garden beds, a horticulture greenhouse, a small putting green, a boules pitch, and numerous picnic spaces – but it is central to the enjoyment of many visitors.

GHOFF North Lincolnshire have established a nature trail and pond-dipping area around the council-owned waters in Immingham. This includes a series of 'interpretation boards' that detail the insect, bird and plant life in the area. Local schools and families are encouraged to use the site as a space for their own environmental lessons.

iii) Making Assets Accessible

Local waters must be accessible to a range of people from different backgrounds.

Water-based community assets need to be accessible to people. This means not just physically accessible, but also accessible in terms of cost, location and being welcoming to people from different backgrounds.

In some ways salmon angling in Scotland might appear to be the most inaccessible type of fishing– often in remote locations, sometimes with limits on angler numbers, and frequently expensive. However, Stirling Council has shown how such barriers can be overcome.

In Focus: Stirling Council Salmon Angling

Stirling Council either owns or manages the fishing rights for salmon and sea trout on a four-mile stretch of the River Forth adjacent to the city (rated as the top producing beat in 2010), and two stretches of the River Teith near Callander. The Council has implemented a number of measures to create a facility accessible to the local community.

- **Resident Friendly Permits:** Season and roving permits to local residents at subsidised prices with further discounts for concessions specifically designed so that local residents are not priced out of access to this valuable community resource.
- **Conservation:** Promotion of fish conservation and responsible angling with tags provided for landed fish, encouragement of catch and release (in 2010 70% of caught fish were safely returned) and council run 'fish in the classroom' projects with local schools.
- **Sustainability:** Additional revenue generated through a range of fishery management services (fish surveys, river clean-ups, bank rehabilitation) for partner organisations.
- **Disabled Access:** Disabled platforms installed (Craigforth section of the River Forth (2001) and at the Geisher Pool on the River Teith (2010) for use by anglers and other community members; paths constructed to access the platforms providing benefit to other users such as children from the local nursery, bird-watchers and dog-walkers.



Increasing accessibility is also possible in even the most remote rural settings. The **Culag Community Woodland Trust**¹¹⁶ owns part of the Little Assynt estate in Assynt, North West Scotland. It has developed an all abilities path that circumnavigates two of the lochs on the estate, creating access for the first time for people with limited mobility. The path is used not just by local people but also visitors, and user groups include anglers, bird watchers and local schools.

¹¹⁶ www.culagwoods.org.uk

Other good practice we have identified includes the **Liverpool Parks Lake Scheme** which offers free fishing across 8 park waters upon registration for a permit. This makes fishing particularly accessible for young people in urban centres who have difficulty reaching out of town commercial fisheries and have little disposable income. Registration also strengthens the relationships and responsibilities between anglers and park managers.

iv) Developing Volunteering

Angling participation already involves huge numbers of volunteers – but this could be further developed.

Volunteering is an important part of both community development policy and practice, and can help to turn spaces into the kind of places people want to spend time in. Large numbers of anglers are involved in voluntary activities. At a local level we have seen numerous instances of angling organisations and projects delivering important work, based largely – if not entirely – on voluntary labour, taking on roles in club management, coaching and the organising of matches/angling events.

In our **angling participation survey**:

- 25% (n=593) of anglers surveyed volunteered to help with habitat improvement
- 22% (n=530) took part in teaching or coaching activities
- 44% (n=1043) took part in angling club business, such as club governance

Using local volunteers has been a feature of **Trout in the Town (TinTT)** projects. We conducted a survey of TinTT volunteers to determine the kind of activities they were getting involved in and the results are presented in the bar chart below. Anglers who have committed to TinTT projects are involved in environmental rehabilitation activities like clean-ups and removing invasive species; monitoring of invertebrate and fish populations; information sharing with community members; and young people's education.

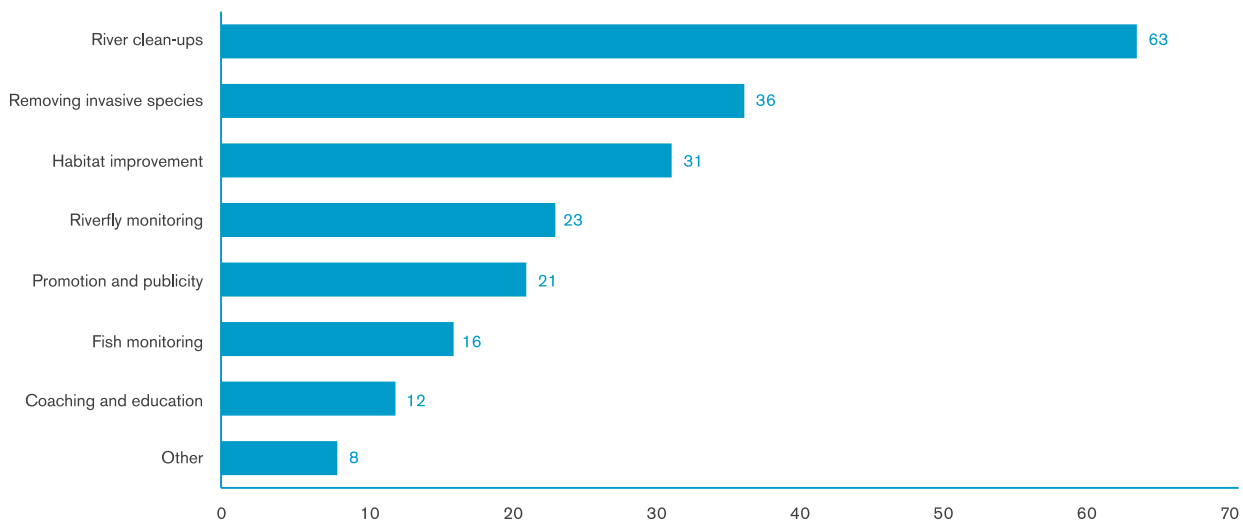


Chart 4: Participation by TinTT volunteers in project activities (n=71)

In **Stirling**, the salmon fishery profiled earlier in this section benefits from the dedication of a group of passionate volunteers, who assist on a range of river maintenance tasks. In some cases they conduct highly technical work like habitat surveys alongside Council and Forth Fisheries Trust staff. Several volunteers from the Forth Fisheries Angling Association maintain the small-scale hatchery that the Council uses as part of the Fish in the Classroom programme.

Angling organisations frequently rely upon significant amounts of volunteering in rural communities which supports the wider economic benefits that angling can bring through tourism. For instance in **Assynt** (see Section 5) a small number of individuals dedicate many hours to it voluntarily, and this is a vital contribution to the local community as a whole.

Angling based youth intervention projects such as **Les Webber's Angling Project** (London) and **Angling for Youth Development** (across Scotland) rely completely on volunteers for the delivery of their work. Volunteering opportunities are not limited to adults, and young people are also building skills and experience for angling-related volunteering.

In Focus: Young People Volunteering - The GHOF Liverpool peer mentors

Youth angling charity Get Hooked On Fishing (GHOF) use peer mentoring as part of their personal and social development programme, encouraging young people to regularly volunteer to teach other young people and members of the wider community to fish. There were 22 peer mentors between the ages of 13 and 17 registered with the GHOF Liverpool project for the period January 2010 to November 2010. The majority completed over 50 hours of volunteering, with one peer mentor totalling 147 volunteer hours.

In a year, GHOF Liverpool peer mentors have the opportunity to volunteer over the course of 9 weeks. This period includes school holidays (excluding the Christmas break and spring half term), where they assist in taster days and open sessions at local parks. To receive their V50 awards peer mentors averaged 22.2 hours a month, with the maximum being 65.3 hours a month. To give this contribution some context, the *2008-2009 Citizenship Survey: Volunteering and Charitable Giving Topic Report* found young people between the ages of 16-24 engaged in formal volunteering for an average of 7.4 hours in the four weeks prior to being surveyed.¹¹⁷

Among the 2010 cohort of GHOF peer mentors, two have since gone on to gain their angling coaching Level 1 qualification and now assist in the delivery of GHOF sessions in schools.

Given that current government policy is actively promoting volunteering (for example through the National Citizenship Service), angling should be well placed to develop:

- National volunteering schemes
- New partnerships with other agencies in youth, conservation and wildlife
- Support for training and management of volunteers at a local level
- An angling volunteer database on a local or regional basis

viii) Social Integration

Angling organisations and events can be the nexus around which people from different backgrounds can interact.

Ultimately, community cohesion is about people from different backgrounds mixing, working, living and playing together. Some angling projects have been particularly successful in being the nexus around which such integration can occur. This has been particularly notable in terms of inter-ethnic connections and intergenerational exchange.

There has been considerable concern expressed over recent years about people who are recent immigrants to the UK undertaking angling practices that are seen as contradictory to accepted practice. In particular, this concern has focused around East European and especially Polish anglers now living in Britain. Anglers from these backgrounds have been observed keeping coarse fish species (notably carp) rather than returning them, because that is accepted practice in their country of origin.

Although at times the media debate around this issue has verged on the xenophobic, there have been some innovative approaches taken by local and national angling bodies that suggest a much more positive way forward:

- When the practices of Polish anglers were identified as a 'problem' by other anglers, **Thames 21** helped to get the Polish anglers involved in their work, including taking up coaching roles. This led to better understanding and working together.
- **The Angling Trust's Building Bridges project**,¹¹⁸ funded by the EA, is being piloted in the South West and East of England to help educate migrant workers about acceptable angling practices. This has led to much improved communication and positive relationships between Eastern European and British anglers, and activities have included:
 - The distribution of free multi-lingual signs for fisheries
 - 21 educational articles published in the Eastern European Media
 - 11 angling clubs engaged in project activities
 - 3 educational meetings were organised
 - 3,000 multi-language leaflets distributed via tackle shops or angling clubs available to download from the Angling Trust website.

¹¹⁷ Department for Communities and Local Government (2010) *2008-2009 Citizenship Survey: Volunteering and Charitable Giving Topic Report*, London: DCLG.

¹¹⁸ www.anglingtrust.net/page.asp?section=709%A7ionTitle=Building+Bridges+with+Migrant+Anglers

Angling projects can also assist in bridging gaps between young people – often identified solely as a ‘problem’ in local and national media – and other members of the community. As part of **NACRO’s Reading Angling Project**, a group of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) were encouraged to design and deliver an angling coaching event for community members. Young people on the project identified elderly residents, many of whom were non anglers, as potential beneficiaries and invited them to participate in an angling taster day they had organised. These types of events provide opportunities for young people and community members to interact; and demonstrate to both young people themselves and the wider community that young people can be valuable, active members of society. Local waters are emerging as key sites for this type of community engagement.

Staging, promoting and getting involved in events are also good ways for angling organisations to play a role in community integration. **National Fishing Month (NFM)**¹¹⁹ has been a focus for involving national organisations such as the Angling Development Board and local clubs and fisheries, in the delivery of hundreds of angling events, including events for: British Blind Sport Participants; family intervention programmes; and black and minority ethnic communities.

4.3 Issues and Recommendations

4.3.1 New Organisational Relationships

At a national level, changes to the role of the EA and other agencies such as British Waterways present the opportunity for new strategic partnerships between angling, government and non governmental organisations. While these examples relate closely to environmental work (explored in detail in Section 3), other changes also related to the ‘big society’ agenda mean that there are new organisational relationships possible for the angling sector.

Changes in the provision of public health (with responsibilities moving from PCTs to doctors and local councils) and the delivery of local authority services offer commissioning possibilities at a more local level. In health, education, environment, sport and leisure and young people’s services, angling can help provide some of the answers to community development.

Although the localism agenda offers some new possibilities for angling’s role in local communities, national angling organisations need to help guide and inform local developments. Also local government spending cuts and a lack of resources mean that the capacity of angling organisations in relation to the ‘right to provide’ and ‘right to buy’ legislation in the UK needs to be addressed.

4.3.2 New Organisational Models

If angling organisations are to play a leading role in new models of community development, especially in relation to local asset development, then new organisational models need to be explored, understood and supported.

Angling clubs are most often formed as membership clubs, often without being legally constituted bodies. Others are more formally structured, especially if they own or lease significant amounts of waters. Some are formally constituted charities and a few are social enterprises, but this is the exception rather than the rule. However, the localism agenda emphasises the role that charities, co-operatives and social enterprises should play.

For angling organisations to take advantage of new opportunities in their locality around asset management or service delivery, there is a need for improved knowledge of different corporate structures. This could involve:

- Distribution of advice and support about different organisational structures
- Work at a national level by angling bodies to develop relationships with organisations such as Co-operatives UK to provide guidance and resources
- Work at a local level to adopt new organisational structures in order to take up new roles and facilitate wider community engagement.

¹¹⁹ www.nationalfishingmonth.com 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.

In Focus: New Partnerships - The Scottish Canal Project

The Scottish Federation for Coarse Anglers (SFCA) has struck a landmark deal with British Waterways that will now allow SFCA to offer free fishing to under 16s on the lowland canal system that runs across the central belt of Scotland. Gus Brindle chairman of the SFCA explains that it is their intention to establish coaches and Angling Induction Centres across the canal system to coordinate junior angling clubs, coaching and education.

To fish for free will require signing up for a free junior SFCA membership, and means young people are incorporated into the angling network from an early age where they will receive the training and support they need to become successful anglers. The Scottish canal system is an excellent resource as it passes through many deprived urban centres. Encouraging fishing access on these waters maximises local resources to provide a positive activity that will have a direct impact on young people and community well-being.

Taking the lead from SFCA and British Waterways it is important for local authorities and land owners to re-appraise their waters and consider whether they could support the well-being of young people and their local communities through angling provisions.

4.3.3 Local Authorities

Although our research has highlighted examples where local authorities work very positively with angling, at other times this has not been the case and on occasion some local authorities have appeared hostile towards angler use of facilities.

The Angling Trust has already supported some local angling groups in addressing local authority measures – for example lobbying to help reverse Rother council's proposed bylaw to restrict sea anglers¹²⁰. However there is a need to:

- i) Make sure local authorities and the wider community understand the community benefits delivered through angling so that they can make informed decisions about the use of local waters.
- ii) Develop guidance and advice on how to successfully manage local waters for wider community benefit – including information on how to encourage multiple use sites, manage user conflicts, and ensure accessibility to a broad section of residents.

Further guidance on how local authorities and angling can work positively together can be found in our interim report *Making the Most of Community Waters*¹²¹.

4.3.4 Maximising Angling's Potential

Although our research has considered a number of examples where angling is directly addressing local agendas, and where angling organisations are assisting in community asset and service development, much more could be done. This should include national angling organisations, working with partners to develop:

- Volunteering opportunities including work with the National Citizenship Service, Muck in 4Life, and green exercise initiatives.
- Resources and support for local organisations to adopt new organisational structures
- New relationships between the Angling Trust and Local Government Association, to publicise existing work and broaden angling's involvement with local authorities
- Identification of new funding streams, such as the new Coastal Communities Fund across the UK¹²² to develop national, regional and local projects in coastal areas.
- Best practice and practitioner guides, building on this research, in working with communities and working with local authorities
- Exploration of new ways of raising capital finance such as community shares schemes¹²³

At a regional level, the Angling Development Boards and County Angling Action Groups (CAAGs) can support local angling organisations to make links with local government, health services, and community organisations.

120 Angling Trust (2011) [Angling Trust Calls On All Councils To Follow Rother's Lead And Back Sea Angling](#), Media Release

121 Brown, A et al (2011) op cit.

122 http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/press_86_11.htm

123 www.communityshares.org.uk