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# **The Social & Community Benefits of Angling Research Project**

## Year 1 Summary Interim Report

### December 2009

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substance.



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# 1. Introduction—

## **1.1 Fishing in the Margins: The Research and Policy Context of Angling**

**'It's all about the margins, that's where the fish are feeding. It's not about lobbing it out into the middle, but understanding what's going on underneath.'**

*Angler in Assynt, May 2009*

### **1.1.1 Evidence Based Policy and Activities**

There has been an increasing emphasis on evidence based policy and practice in the UK and this is certainly so in relation to how activities that people undertake might deliver a range of social objectives. Although 'popular culture' – sport, culture, recreation – has historically had a relatively distant relationship to policymakers, research in these areas is now viewed as means of providing evidence of the impact that different cultural practices and industries can have on society..

Recent research, including work commissioned by the Environment Agency and the Scottish Executive, has presented angling in the UK as a significant recreational activity –in terms of participant *numbers*, *economic* impact and public *attitudes*<sup>1</sup>. Other research has begun to suggest that angling can be particularly beneficial for certain groups, including young people<sup>2</sup>.

Less prominent has been research into the social impacts of angling - a more robust understanding of the societal benefits that angling participation, development and organisations can have. These benefits include the effect of angling on people's active participation and physical activity, their social interaction and community cohesion, and on health and wellbeing, rural communities, young people, and the environment.

### **1.1.2 The 'Hidden' Nature of Angling**

That key knowledge gaps about the social impacts of angling exist is surprising given the extensive nature of participation - the most recent research suggests 8% of the population go fishing<sup>3</sup> - but it reflects the 'hidden' nature of angling in the UK and the lack of public and policy awareness about it.

Angling does not enjoy the high public and media profile of mass participation sports, such as football, cricket, cycling and rugby; its activity tends to take place away from the public gaze; and it has sat uncomfortably between different policy and funding concerns – sport and activity, recreation and environment.

In part this means that in terms of social science research, there is a tiny amount of research-based knowledge compared to other recreational activities of comparable size. Angling barely features at all within the disciplines of the sociology of sport (or indeed sociology at all) or leisure studies; and there are only a handful of studies that have attempted to explore the cultural aspects of angling, with virtually none in the UK.

### **1.1.3 National Stakeholders**

Recent years have seen major developments in the organisation of angling in the UK. In England and Wales, the formation of the Angling Trust brings together for the first time most of the governing bodies in angling. The Angling Trust is now recognised by Sport England and others as the representative body for angling. The formation of the Angling Development Board of Scotland and the appointment of a Business Development Manager funded by Sport Scotland is another very significant development for angling in the UK. As such, this research engages with and will seek to inform both these organisations.

### **1.1.4 Benefit to Society**

Some big claims are made about angling's potential societal benefit, including that:

- i. Angling participation is good for people – by, for example, providing health and well being benefits, relaxation, skills and in some cases physical activity
- ii. Angling can be good for local communities, for instance through angling club's work improving the environmental state of rivers and lakes
- iii. Angling is good for young people and can help address social problems such as youth offending whilst providing education and personal development; and
- iv. Angling is good for rural communities, providing income and jobs as well as visitors and tourism

<sup>1</sup> EA (2004) *Our Nations Fisheries: The migratory and freshwater fisheries of England and Wales – a snapshot*, Bristol: EA; Drew Associates (2004) *Research Into the Economic Contribution of Sea Angling*; Radford, A., Riddington, G., Anderson, J. (2004) *The Economic Impact of Game and Coarse Angling in Scotland*, Prepared for Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department; Radford, A. Riddington, G. and Gibson, H. (2009) *Economic Impact of Recreational Sea Angling in Scotland*, Edinburgh: Scottish Government

<sup>2</sup> Brown, A (2006) *Getting Hooked: Get Hooked on Fishing, Angling and Youth Inclusion*, Manchester: Substance

<sup>3</sup> [www.harrisinteractive.com](http://www.harrisinteractive.com)

## **1.2 The Social and Community Benefits of Angling Research Project**

*The Social and Community Benefits of Angling Research Project* is a major, three-year study that seeks to address some of these issues by generating new knowledge in key areas and by engaging policymakers, practitioners, anglers and communities in both the process and outcomes of the research.

The project has three principal Research Tasks:

**Research Task 1:** What constitutes angling participation in England and Scotland; and how does it deliver social and community development? This is being undertaken with a mixture of national quantitative and qualitative surveys and qualitative site based research.

**Research Task 2:** How can angling help young people, particularly those who are marginalised or socially excluded? This is being undertaken through a detailed case study of Get Hooked on Fishing as well as research into wider angling provision for young people.

**Research Task 3:** What role can angling play in rural communities and their development? This is being undertaken through case study research of Angling in Assynt, and area in Sutherland, North West Scotland.

The project also seeks to explore how we can effectively disseminate this new knowledge to a wide variety of audiences, engage stakeholders and effect progressive change in policy and practice. The project runs for three years from January 2009 until December 2011.

## **1.3 Project Governance**

### **1.3.1 Substance**

Substance are the sole responsible organisation for this research. Substance are an experienced social research cooperative working in the youth, sport and positive activities sector. Substance helps projects and organisations delivering personal, community and social development to improve and demonstrate impact and value.

### **1.3.2 The Research Team**

The research team for the Social and Community Benefits of Angling project are:

**Dr Adam Brown**

Substance Director and Project Manager

**Dr Paul Stolk**

Substance Researcher, Angling Participation Research

**Dr Natalie Djohari**

Substance Researcher, Angling and Young People Research

### **1.3.3 Project Advisory Group**

The project has an Advisory Group which is to ensure that it remains relevant to key national agendas and stakeholder interests. The Advisory Group project members are:

- Mark Lloyd, Chief Executive, Angling Trust

- Richard Wightman, National Angling Participation and Development Manager, Environment Agency
- Marion Lowe, Chief Executive Get Hooked on Fishing
- Jackie Sheldon, Senior Development Manager, Angling Development Board
- Dr. Liz Oughton, Principal Research Associate, Centre for Rural Economy, School of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Newcastle University
- Dr. Paul Gaskell, Trout in the Town Project, Wild Trout Trust
- Eric Dawes, Business Development Manager, Angling Development Board of Scotland
- Ian Robertson, Country Sports Tourism Group, Scotland
- Sport England have been invited to provide a representative.

### **1.3.4 Stakeholder Engagement**

The purpose of the project, is to generate research knowledge that effects social change for the benefit of communities concerned. It aims to do this in 2 principal ways:

- Provide knowledge to national policy makers, funders, commissioner and agencies related to angling in order that policy and practice might be better informed with regard to the positive roles that angling can play for individuals and communities.
- Provide specific knowledge and advice to the national organisations – the Angling Trust, Environment Agency and Angling Development Board of Scotland – as well as to Get Hooked On Fishing and community and angling organisations of Assynt.
- Inform anglers and the general public

### **1.3.5 Dissemination**

This is reflected in the active approach the project takes to dissemination and engagement of research partners.

- At the end of each year we will issue an Interim Report and in the first year that comprises this summary report and a report for each research element.
- The project will also hold national stakeholder events in Years 1 and 2.
- During the research, we will also publish blogs, comments and other findings via our project websites.
- The websites themselves provide ways in which angling organisations, anglers and others can interact with the project, access information and provide comment.
- At the end of Year 3 it will produce a Final Report and hold a conference.

### **1.3.6 Funder**

This project is funded by the Big Lottery Fund Research Programme.

### 1.3.6 Web Based Research

We have embraced online means of information provision and data collection as part of this project. This has included a project website - [www.anglingresearch.org.uk](http://www.anglingresearch.org.uk) - through which we are collecting survey data and information on young people's projects; as well as an Assynt-specific website utilising unique mapping tools [www.assynt.anglingresearch.org.uk](http://www.assynt.anglingresearch.org.uk). To date:

- 2655 unique visitors have visited the project website generating 8,256 page views (this does not include questionnaire users)
- 1,121 unique visitors have visited the Assynt website, generating 15,764 page views

We will be developing these sites further in 2010, including the provision of all Interim Reports, further findings from the research and new data gathering tools.

### 1.4 Status of This Report

This report forms part of the feedback from the first year of the project. It is an overall summary of work undertaken, findings and emerging issues. Alongside this report are three constituent Interim Reports that provide greater detail on the project findings and emerging issues:

- Research Task 1: Angling Participation Interim Report
- Research Task 2: Angling and Young People Interim Report
- Research Task 3: Angling and Rural Areas: the Assynt Angling Study Interim Report

It should be noted that this is an Interim Report only and provides initial feedback from our work in the first year. This will present some findings and also serves to highlight emerging issues and the focus for the project in the coming year.

### 1.5 Research Progress and Ongoing Work

We have made great progress in the first year. Given that the initial research data gathering period was the six months from May to October 2009, a phenomenal amount has been achieved in a short time, something reflected in the three more detailed reports outlined above which are available on our project website. We encourage readers to access those reports to see the full breadth and detail of work undertaken.

Highlights of work in the first year has included:

- Angling Participation: One of the largest national angling surveys undertaken in the UK , surveying nearly 2,500 anglers.
- Young People: 165 interviews and meetings; 250 hours of fieldwork; 53 field research visits to angling youth projects.
- Assynt: Development of a bespoke project website that includes unique mapping information and data gathering tool utilising Ordnance Survey based technology.

Whilst this report and its three constituent reports on participation, young people and Assynt, form an initial part of dissemination, we are also:

- Holding a national stakeholder dissemination event in December 2009
- Developing ways of displaying research material and further analysis of data online
- Developing blogs and other articles accessible via the project website
- Holding meetings and workshops with our Advisory Group, Get Hooked on Fishing and angling organisations in Assynt.



## 2. Research Task 1— Angling Participation

Research Task 1, Angling Participation, has been designed to address the shortfall in knowledge about angling participation in two key areas of investigation, namely:

- i. What constitutes angling participation in England and Scotland?
- ii. How does angling participation deliver social and community development?

To address these questions in a meaningful way, a mix of qualitative and quantitative data is being collected at a national level. This document is the first interim report of this element of the research project, and draws largely on quantitative (numerical) data. The report contains results and analysis derived from data collected through a national angling participation questionnaire survey of anglers in England and Scotland.

### 2.1 The Angler Participation Survey

The main features of the questionnaire used to survey anglers can be summarised as follows:

- The questionnaire contained 11 sections that measured general participation behaviours, participation details specific to coarse, game and sea angling, membership of clubs and organisations, motivations, future issues and demographic details;
- It was an 'open' questionnaire made available to any angler with access to the internet. Paper copies of the questionnaire were made available on request.;
- A publicity campaign about the questionnaire, drawing on a number of promotional channels and methods was employed in order to 'reach' as many English and Scottish anglers as possible; and
- 2,417 responses were collected between July 10, 2009 and October 31, 2009.

### 2.2 Principal Findings

#### 2.2.1 The Sample

Respondents were predominantly male (97.5%), with a mean age of 48.9 years. Game angling respondents were the oldest group in the sample, with approximately 30% over 59 years of age; About 10% of the sample fished predominantly in Scotland, the remainder in England. Mean household income of the sample was £51,137 per annum. The majority of the sample was represented in the £20,000-£29,999 and

£30,000-£39,999 categories; however, there were some quite high income levels and nearly 20% of game angling households earned more £70,000 per annum;

#### 2.2.2 What Constitutes Angling Participation?

Part of our remit is to understand more about what participation in angling involves and 'what makes an angler?'. On the whole, public perceptions of angling tend to be very limited, e.g. the ubiquitous image of a man sat under an umbrella with a rod. However, our research is suggesting that the range of types, styles and locations involving the act of fishing vary enormously; and that anglers take part in a huge range of associated activities. For instance:

- More than 75% of the sample bought/read angling books and magazines, prepared and maintained tackle and rigs or watched angling content on television or films. More than 50% the sample read or contributed to angling blogs, websites or discussion boards. Attendance at club meetings or undertaking club business was an activity for approximately 44% of the sample;
- A majority of respondents (59%, n=1,411) made overnight trips at least 25 miles away from home for the main purpose of angling; and
- The sample of questionnaire respondents included 1,050 Angling Trust members, largely due to the efforts made by the Trust to promote the research and questionnaire to its membership.

#### Word Cloud of Angling Activities



### 2.2.3 The Social Organisation of Participation

Although at times solitary, angling is also a social activity and one that involves a huge degree of social organisation. In an age when we are told about the decline in social capital and community organisations, angling seems to provide some contrary evidence.

- At various times respondents went fishing with friends (73%, n=1,737), alone (55%, n=1,324), with immediate family (41%) and with other angling club members (39%).
- Almost three-quarters of all respondents were angling club members (73.2%, n=1,704). For sea anglers, the most popular reason for joining a club 'was to be around like-minded individuals' (67%, n=229).

Even outside of fishing clubs, which people mostly join to access fishing, membership of other angling-related organisations encompassed 138 unique (non-club) organisations.

### 2.2.4 Motivations and Personal Benefits

A key interest of the project is to understand more about the personal benefits that anglers get from going fishing. This relates to national agendas around physical activity, participation and health and wellbeing, especially in 'green environments'.

- The many comments made by respondents about the importance of being close to nature and away from other people emphasised the benefits that such experiences provide, particularly rest and relaxation suggesting that angling might make contributions to health and well being.
- In terms of physical activity benefits, the majority (higher than 60%) of coarse and sea angling respondents classified their participation as 'moderate intensity' physical activity. Although self-rated, this is higher than Sport England's assessment of angling as low intensity physical activity;
- Over a third (34%) of game angling respondents viewed their participation as 'high intensity' physical activity. More detailed research into the physical activity involved in angling participation is needed to help understand this issue more; and
- In terms of motivations, the importance of having a shared experience reinforced earlier results about the social organisation of participation and suggest the potential angling has to be a conduit for community interaction.

Given the dominance in angling media of images of anglers with large fish, and for match anglers catching lots of fish, it is perhaps surprising that motivations for anglers around catching fish were lower than expected. Motivations such as catching big fish and lots of fish received more neutral responses (neither important nor unimportant) than any other rating. Respondents rated catching a specific type of fish higher in importance (average rating of 3.9 on a 6-point importance scale), while – with the exception of sea angling respondents – catching fish for food was rated lower in importance (average ratings of 1.3 for coarse angling respondents and 2.5 for game angling respondents).

### 2.2.5 Community Benefits from Participation

The survey indicated that a number wider community benefits might be associated with angling, something we are to explore in more detail through our qualitative work in the coming year. As noted earlier, angling has a strong club and organisation element to participation and this can be of benefit to communities by helping to connect people, by building relational networks, by enabling intergenerational socialisation and by providing routes to volunteering.

Angling offers physical and health benefits, as it is one of few activities that can be continued right through life. As some respondents commented, angling is also a good therapeutic activity for people suffering or recovering from health problems or to combat stress.

Nearly 25% - 593 respondents - indicated that they contributed to environmental or aquatic habitat conservation projects. Aside from the ecological benefits these projects deliver to host communities, some angling-lead conservation projects actively engage with community members and raise awareness and appreciation of local waterways. Angling participation requires a series of expenditures on equipment, travel, licenses and permits, literature, memberships and other items – all purchases that contribute to local economies.

### Example Quotes About Angling Experiences

When I am fishing I am not on this planet. My entire world just sinks with the lead and I switch off. Hearing nature's calls from dawn till dusk is like the start of life and the end of life. There is nothing like it and I have never found such peace when taking part in any other sport. (43-year old male)

When fishing I am consumed by the experience, to the extent that I do not think of anything else for the hours I am at the river/lake/sea. I am immersed in the experience and the natural world, relaxed and stress-free. (56-year old male)

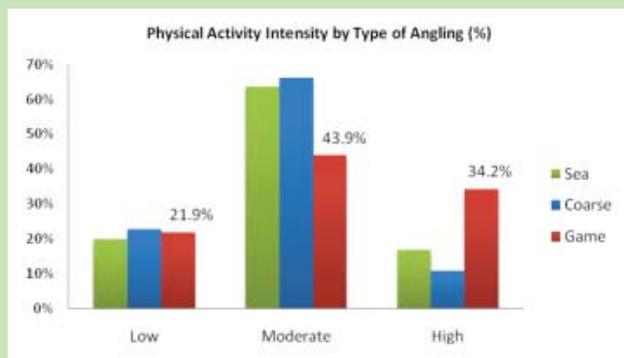
I like being close to nature, if you fish on your own with no disturbance you see a lot of animals/birds behaving naturally, which you don't see if there are a lot of people, noise, dogs or boats around. (52-year old male)

## Working up a Sweat?

### Angling as a Form of Physical Activity

Regardless of how it is classified, there can be little argument that angling has certain characteristics that make any generalised assessment highly problematic. For example, the three recognised types of angling (coarse/game/sea) can vary substantially in terms of the physical activity inherent to their practice. This variation occurs not only between, but within, each type. For example, the act of sea angling from a beach is likely to entail a much greater amount of physical activity (e.g. casting beyond the surf, walking up and down the sand) than sea angling from a boat. Furthermore, resources that host angling activity can have considerably different attributes (e.g. topography, facilities, weather), which in turn influence the intensity of physical activity required to participate.

The bar chart below displays how respondents assessed the intensity of physical activity associated with their participation in either sea, coarse or game angling. A comparable proportion of coarse, sea and game angling respondents (approximately 20%) classified their participation as low intensity. However, many more game angling respondents viewed their participation as highly intensive physical activity. High intensity physical activity was also a feature of the physical activity data collected from game anglers in Assynt, for specific figures refer to the Angling and Rural Areas interim report.



questionnaire respondents. Substance is exploring ways this might be achieved through online signposting and mapping initiatives.

- Increasing opportunities for young people to participate in angling was widely viewed by respondents as issue worth supporting. However, the same cannot be said for some other social groups. Increasing angling participation opportunities for minority ethnic groups was clearly rated the lowest in importance, in contrast to the work of some angling agencies and suggesting the need for education and explanation on this matter.
- There was little compelling evidence that respondents supported either a rod licence (applicable to England and Wales) fee increase or decrease, suggesting the current fee

is about right in terms of price. However, some respondents commented on what they perceive to be a lack of transparency and accountability around licence fee revenue.

- Both coarse and sea angling respondents were slightly stronger than coarse angling respondents in their support of a relaxation of the restrictiveness of rights to fish waters. Opening up waters to new users fosters a more egalitarian approach to participation, nevertheless there are legitimate questions around the capacity of natural and social environments to cope with an increase in angling demand.

## 2.3 Research Priorities for 2010

In addition to the further analysis and dissemination of findings from the angler questionnaire, the next phase of angling participation research adopts a more qualitative, site-based focus. Twelve angling sites and initiatives in England and Scotland have been identified as being as representative as possible of the varieties of angling participation that exist. Over the next year, a number of visits will be made to each of the sites in order to conduct personal interviews with anglers and key stakeholders, to observe events and angler practices, and to share knowledge.

The criteria and questions that directed the first phase of investigation will remain central to the research agenda of the project - namely the personal and social benefits that the activity generates. However, a number of key issues/questions have emerged from the analysis of the questionnaire data that will also be explored over the next 12 months.

These include (but are not exclusive to):

- How does angling contribute to key national agendas around health and well being, community cohesion and interaction, promoting volunteering and environmental improvement?
- Beyond the act of 'going angling', what personal investments/commitments do anglers make in order to contribute to angling activities? Why do they make these investments/commitments and what benefits do they and others get from them?
- How does angling participation facilitate both relaxing and physically/mentally challenging moments, and restful as well as exciting moments, within the confines of a single experience? Does this characteristic explain why angling appeals to such a broad spectrum of ages and does it generate benefits for people in terms of health and well being?
- What is the future of the angling club as a conduit for participation?
- What role can angling stakeholders play in the development of a sense of community attachment to a waterway or aquatic resource?



## 3. Research Task 2— Angling and Young People

Research Task 2, Angling and Young People, is designed to investigate the role that angling can play as an activity, engagement tool and personal development tool for young people. With a particular focus on socially excluded young people, we are investigating this issue in both England and Scotland.

Building on a previous study by Substance on Get Hooked on Fishing the initial research and constituent interim report provides

- A framework for understanding the role of angling as it relates to intervention with socially excluded young people;
- An initial policy review; and
- An identification of the range of activities offered through angling.

This element of the project has been based on site visits and interviews with young people and organisations delivering angling based interventions, as well as those clients/partners commissioning such work.

### **3.1 Approach and Methods**

The research is focused around an action research approach with one organisation in particular, the Get Hooked On Fishing Charitable Trust (GHOF) which serves as the principal case study. GHOF has over nine years experience in engaging some of the most hard to reach young people in multiple projects established across England and recently in Scotland. As such much of our learning has been based on interviews, observations and visits at Get Hooked projects and we have and will continue to feed back this learning to GHOF. In addition, research has been undertaken with nine other angling inclusion projects across England and Scotland and this has been further supplemented by interviews and visits to angling clubs, schools, councils and community ponds.

A key aim of this research period was to begin to identify the range of angling intervention activities currently being employed. This has included: informal and semi-structured interviews with project coordinators; observation of delivery sessions; interviews with parents, young people, teachers, youth workers or other clients and partners engaged. These multiple perspectives in combination with our own observations are building a complex picture of how and why angling is used as a tool for intervention with young people.

A great deal of additional taped interviews, particularly with young people, has also been collected during this research stage that will be analysed and used to inform the following year's research phase.

This research addresses key national agendas in the UK about services for young people around issues of sport and activity, empowerment, education, and personal development.

### **3.2 Angling and Youth Policy and Practice**

Services for young people are expected to take a holistic approach to young people's needs, involve young people and their families in the shaping of decisions, and work in an integrated, cross agency approach. These are assessed against a range of outcomes outlined in *Every Child Matters* (in England and Wales) and *Getting it Right For Every Child* (in Scotland). In addition, *Aiming Higher for Young People*, the government's 10 year youth strategy aims to transform negative conceptions of young people and increase the delivery of positive activities that build young people's social and emotional skills.

While angling organisations are already orientating themselves in this direction, there is still a need to make explicit their contribution to specific policy outcomes.

- Angling is well placed to contribute to the government's educational strategies, working both in extended schools, delivering alternative educational provisions, and reducing the number of young people Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET).
- Angling also has the potential to contribute to the government's health and wellbeing strategies by being part of the 5 hours of physical activity offer, encouraging healthier lifestyle choices, providing activities within and developing green spaces that facilitate mental and emotional wellbeing, and delivering health and wellbeing education to some of the most hard to reach young people.

### **3.3 Angling as a Tool of Engagement**

Our research is highlighting how angling is an activity that is well suited as a tool of engagement for young people, including some of the most hard to reach young people. Skilled coordinators recognise this and use the 'buzz' of catching a fish to motivate young people's re-engagement with learning and assist them to develop the personal, social and emotional skills needed to thrive.

The vast nature of angling practices, also being highlighted in our participation research, allows for the delivery of flexible sessions that can be shaped to facilitate inter-generational engagement, peer bonding, confidence building, the recognition and celebration of achievement, engagement across social barriers, and can be adapted to both group and 1-2-1 work.

### **3.4 Angling and 'Places to Go and Things to Do'**

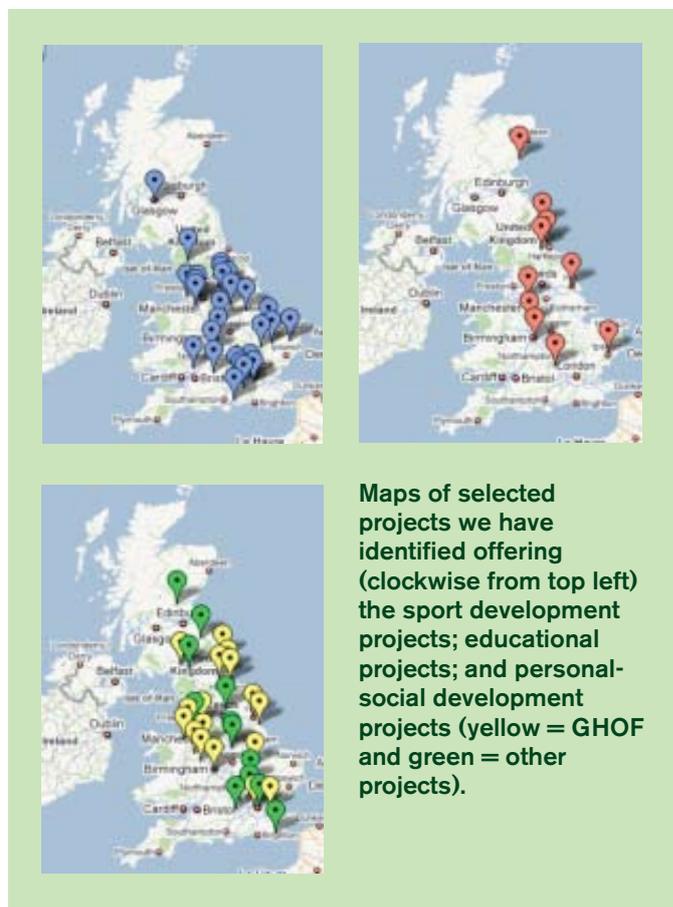
Providing 'Places to go' and 'things to do' has become a central plank of government youth strategies, especially within the Department for Children Schools and Families. Local Authorities in England and Wales have a statutory obligation to publicise comprehensive, accurate and accessible data on facilities and venues, as well as positive activities in their area. Angling has the potential to provide much in relation to this key government agenda.

- Young people's limited mobility, through lack of money, poor access to transportation or protective parenting means accessing local spaces is vital for young people's well being and development. However, young people often find themselves excluded from local centres. Angling interventions that seek to develop accessible waters and venues within community spaces can therefore have a positive impact on young people's lives, creating opportunities for them to not only take up angling as a recreational activity but also potentially to increase their participation in community life and develop a sense of belonging.
- Positive activities are those thought to facilitate young people's personal and social development. To be effective they need to be structured, with a clear goal or purpose, and engaged in over time. Angling is already contributing to the provision of positive activities, offering a diverse range of sessions that often go beyond fishing itself. Angling projects that engage with some of the most disaffected young people are enabling them to:
  - expand their supportive network
  - come into contact with wider members of the community
  - access services that can further assist their development.
- While there are many angling venues, projects and organisations offering young people places to go and things to do, this information remains fragmented, difficult to access and not necessarily orientated to young people's needs.

There is therefore great potential here for the collation and linking of information at a national level, as well as greater cooperation at the local level to ensure angling venues and activities are included in Local Authorities' statutory obligation to publish such information. Substance are currently exploring the development of the use of its Plings ([www.plings.net](http://www.plings.net)) tool to assist in this provision.

### **3.5 Typology of Angling Provision for Young People**

In our research into angling provision for young people, we have identified four distinctive approaches to delivery and outcomes. The categories are not mutually exclusive, but help provide a framework for understanding and assessing angling provision for young people.



### 3.5.1 The Sport Development Approach

Sport development is orientated toward taking a structured approach to providing safe, quality opportunities for young people to engage with angling and to develop pathways from initial participation to elite performance. This is the approach supported by sports councils in England and Scotland through the Angling Development Boards in both countries. It contributes to creating things to do and places to go, provides opportunities for physical activity and supports angling participation development more broadly. However, our initial work suggests that a 'pure' sports development approach does not realise the full value of angling in terms of its potential personal and social developmental outcomes for young people. Consequently care needs to be taken to avoid too narrow a focus on sports development that might marginalise other ways in which angling can benefit young people.

### 3.5.2 The Diversionary Approach

This is shaped by a perspective that if young people are engaged in a constructive recreational activity, they are not then involved in anti-social behaviour or crime. As a result the diversionary approach tends to result in more short term provision, directed at crime 'hotspots' and delivered during through the youth justice system, often in the school holidays. However, we have found that most angling intervention work goes well beyond mere temporary diversion, and can affect behavioural change amongst young people who are excluded from school, engaged in anti-social behaviour, or NEET. This is most effectively achieved through long term personal and social development work. It is important, therefore, to adequately communicate the wider work that angling organisations do, beyond diversion, in order to secure sustained funding and raise angling's profile.

### 3.5.3 The Educational Approach

There are a wide range of educational approaches evident from our research from approaches to engage young people in the curriculum, provide opportunities for experiential learning outside of the classroom, to delivery of angling-related qualifications. Whilst qualifications are vital, concentrating on these 'outcomes' alone can at times obscure other educational developmental outcomes that also occurs as part of some angling interventions. In particular, engagement in angling courses can be orientated towards:

- building young people's confidence
- tailoring courses to suit their wider developmental needs;
- raising aspirations to go on to further education, employment or training; and
- strengthening parent-child relationships.

As a consequence it is clear that a greater degree of communication is required to express these outcomes and signpost the full extent of ways in which angling contributes to the educational agenda.

### Get Hooked on Green Learning

As providers of outdoor learning experiences, the potential for angling to contribute to quality outdoor, green engagement is vast. Two GHOF examples highlight what can be achieved.

GHOF Easington has been working with peer mentors drawn from Easington Community Science College to deliver environmental education days to children from the local primary schools. This has involved beach litter picking, rock pooling, fishing and will culminate in a collage drawing together everything they have learnt.

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

### 3.5.4 The Personal and Social Development Approach

This approach appears to result in the most meaningful engagement with the hardest to reach young people. It is characterised by long term engagement that seeks to build young people's social and emotional skills in order to enable them to cope with difficult situations. Such engagement is facilitated by the creation of supportive relationships that provide young people with 'safe spaces' where they can develop a sense of belonging, and mobilize a supportive network when needed. In relation to angling projects this approach results in a delivery focus that seeks to develop competent young people rather than competent anglers. The Personal and Social Development Approach has great potential to engage and transform outcomes for some of the most disadvantaged young people. However this type of engagement is only possible through sustained, long term engagement. Commissioners and funders therefore need to recognise and make allowances for the achievement of these long term outcomes.



Policy / Funding	DCMS/ Sport England	Home Office, Police/Youth justice system	DCSF Alternative education/ extended schools Youth Task Force	DCSF 10 Year Youth Strategy
Delivery	Angling Clubs and ADB/AT	Police, Fire service, YOT, Councils.	Schools, Colleges, angling projects	GHOF and some angling projects
Approach	Progression and development via matches, clubs and training. Structured events. Involvement of coaches.	Temporary, activity sessions. Often targeted to specific 'hot spot' areas and young people. Aim is temporary diversion but often with a belief activity could be taken up beyond the session.	Attainment of qualifications. Re-engagement with learning. Aim to improve truancy and keep young people from exclusion. Recognise and award personal and social development. (ASDAN) Gateways to further learning or employment	Personal and social development. Use and development of peer mentors. Focus on social skills, responsibility, and confidence. Gateways to employment, training, further development.



### 3.6 Angling and Developmental Approaches

Our research has a particular focus on socially excluded young people. Outcomes for disaffected young people are shaped not only by approach but also by personnel and organisational styles. Get Hooked On Fishing have pioneered developmental work for young people in angling, but this is also being taken up by other projects and agencies. Our research with GHOF but also other organisations has begun to identify some of the approaches for successfully undertaking this sort of work.

- Angling intervention projects utilise independent venues, community partnerships and non-venue based approaches. While aspirations amongst angling projects tend towards securing their own site, there are many advantages in alternative models.
- In particular learning from partnership and non-venue based models show how such delivery can facilitate greater community engagement, develop young people's sense of belonging, and develop assets that have a benefit beyond young people.
- A clear advantage of project-owned venues - such as GHOF North East's centre in Durham - is the potential to have more control over delivery, widening young people's engagement to site maintenance and vocational experience, developing their sense of ownership and allowing for greater influence over site decisions.

Our constituent report on angling and young people outlines a number of examples of these different approaches. However, there is also a need to investigate further how coaching qualifications and other skills training needs to be adapted for more developmental outcomes.

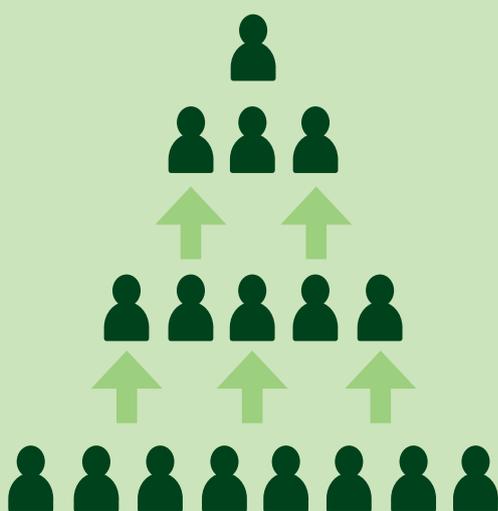
### 3.7 Emerging Issues

Government policies make clear that all organisations working with young people should empower them to have a voice in the services affecting them. In the next stage of this project we will explore how angling organisations can meet and demonstrate the different outcomes outlined in our report as well as develop more extensive means for young people to participate in the shaping of activities, services and projects. Exploring emerging best practices around 'participation', 'empowerment' and 'ownership' - and how these might be monitored and evaluated more effectively - is therefore a key priority for the next research stage.

We will also continue to work closely with GHOF to both illustrate these issues as well as to provide feedback and advice in support of their ongoing organisational and delivery development.

### GHOF Peer Mentors

The Peer Mentor scheme is a core component of the GHOF approach and has been developed into a series of modules that build young people's capabilities.



#### Module 3

Empowerment, Achievement, progress and behavioural change are recognised.  
Relationships strengthened through a residential trip.

#### Module 2

Becoming a peer mentor.  
Building skills such as communication, patience and self-confidence.  
Taking on responsibility and modifying behaviour in awareness of how they are seen in public.  
Building up long term engagement.

#### Module 1

Initial point of engagement  
Introducing basic angling skills, safety and care for the environment.  
Establishing angling as a 'hook'  
Introducing potential role models

The aim of the peer mentoring system is to help develop personal, social and emotional skills for some of the most excluded/marginalised young people. As a consequence GHOF staff identify potential peer mentors amongst those they believe will benefit most from the experience. Progression through modules is therefore encouraged in young people who show a motivating interest in angling, respond well to coordinators, and show a willingness to help others.

Long term engagement allows coordinators to work more consistently to influence young people's personal and social development. The peer mentor scheme facilitates this not only through their stepped module work but also in encouraging peer mentors to stay on and assist long after modules have ended. This type of consistent engagement can provide socially marginalised young people with a supportive network and an important sense of belonging.



## 4.

# Research Task 3— Angling and Rural Areas The Assynt Angling Study

Research Task 3 focuses on Angling and Rural Areas and it is based on a detailed case study of angling in Assynt, a district of Sutherland in the far North West of Scotland. The study addresses a number of key issues in relation to the development of angling for wider community benefit in rural areas, namely:

- What role does and can angling play in rural communities?
- How can rural communities and groups benefit from angling?
- What is the role of angling tourism and how can community benefits be increased?
- How can research help organisational development around angling?

The purpose of this element of the research is fourfold:

- i. To inform the wider project about the positive role angling can play in communities.
- ii. To inform the local community and angling organisations about angling in the Assynt area.
- iii. To help improve benefits from angling tourism in the area.
- iv. To understand the individual benefits anglers receive or perceive from angling.

### 4.1 The Assynt Context

Assynt is remote rural area and a fascinating context to explore these issues for a number of reasons. These include,

- Its rich history, including its status as an angling destination dating back centuries.
- Its varied land and angling ownership structure which includes several different forms of collective land ownership as well as more traditional ownership forms.
- Specific initiatives that have sought to promote and protect angling in Assynt which provide an interesting context for the research.
- A range of new and ongoing developments in which to situate angling research.
- A range of social issues - housing, employment, the retention of young people, crofting/farming - that have important resonance elsewhere.

Assynt also has a fabulously wealthy angling resource, including one of Europe's premier wild brown trout fisheries with literally hundreds of lochs and lochans; salmon and sea trout fishing; rarer fish such as char and ferox; and sea fish. This angling offer is set in a wild and dramatic landscape, with landmark mountains, hillsides and water.

### 4.2 Research Approach

We have adopted a multi-method approach to this research combining both qualitative and quantitative methods as well as action research elements in which we have developed new tools (notably via a bespoke project website). This has involved:

- i) Review of historical literature and documents and wider research literature.
- ii) Qualitative interviews with those involved in local angling and community organisations.
- iii) Qualitative interviews with anglers.
- iv) An online questionnaire survey.
- v) A postcode survey of visiting anglers.
- vi) An online mapping and data gathering tool as well as other online data collection on the project website.

We have aimed to take a responsible approach to our research. This included consultation with local organisations at all stages of the research and agreement with them on the approach being taken. We are extremely grateful for the cooperation and input of a large number of people in the undertaking of this research.

## The Organisation of Angling in Assynt

We have conducted interviews and consultation with all the principal angling-related organisations in Assynt. This has helped inform the research of the varied approaches taken to the organisation of angling in the area and its existing and potential contribution to the wider community.

### *The Assynt Crofters' Trust*

The Assynt Crofters' Trust (ACT) is a cooperative organisation of crofters that owns the North Assynt Estate consisting of 21,000 acres. The ACT made history in 1993 when they won a long battle to buy the land on which they lived and worked, undertaking the first ever crofters' buy-out. The ACT owns the rights to fish on around 200 lochs and representatives reported that angling is of key strategic importance as it the single largest source of external income (i.e. excluding rentals) to the Trust, earning around £5000 per year. The ACT is seeking to increase revenue from angling, whilst 'keeping it wild'.

### *The Assynt Angling Association (known as the Assynt Angling Group)*

Assynt Angling Group is a collection of local organisations and landowners that have come together to jointly organise and market angling on several hundred lochs. It earns around £7,000 from the sale of permits, distributes these to constituent organisations and landowners and oversees the provision and upkeep of over 20 boats. The AAG has been involved in both recent angling based tourism promotion and the Assynt and Coigach Brown Trout Protection Order.

*The Assynt Angling Club* is a local angling membership organisation and is involved in work with local residents and young people to develop and promote angling in the area.

*The Assynt Foundation* is a community body that bought the 44,000 acre Drumrunie and Glencanisp estate to bring it under collective local ownership. Although its earning from angling is not significant, it sees angling as important in order to generate visitors, engage local people and encourage people to stay in Assynt.

*The Culag Community Woodland Trust* owns the lochs on the little Assynt Estate and has developed an innovative all abilities path to two of its lochs as well as providing wheelchair-friendly boats.

*The Assynt Estate* is owned by the Vestey family, the landowner since the 1930s in the area. It owns the rights to the rights to salmon and sea trout fishing on the Rivers Inver and Kirkaig and permits for these are sold via the Inverlodge Hotel with preference given to hotel residents.

### *Other Organisations*

Alongside the relatively new development of a rainbow trout fishery - the Lagg Fishery - there are also a number of other community-based organisations which have a relationship to angling development. These include: West Sutherland Fisheries Trust, Assynt Tourism Group, Assynt Ranger Service, Historic Assynt and Assynt Historical Society.

Together these organisations represent a rich and diverse social organisation in the area as well as a significant degree of community commitment and engagement related to angling.



### 4.3 Interim Findings

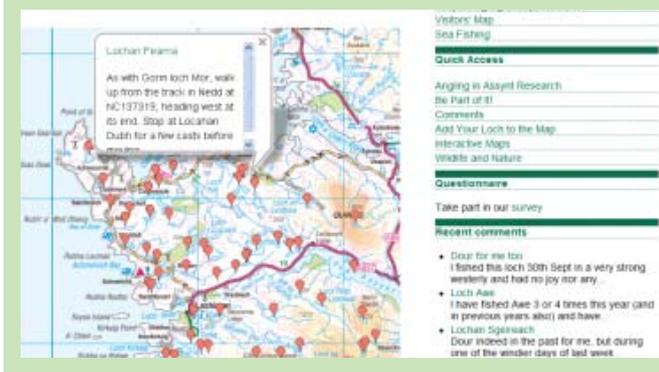
#### 4.3.1 Online Data Gathering and Tools

We developed a bespoke project website, [www.assynt.anglingresearch.org.uk](http://www.assynt.anglingresearch.org.uk) in order to both publicise the research as well as provide information and online tools in order to generate research data. In just a few months, this site has been accessed by 1,121 unique visitors and generated 15,764 page views<sup>4</sup>. The site includes a unique interactive mapping tool developed by Substance using Ordnance Survey OpenSpace software that has been widely praised<sup>5</sup>. This pilots the provision of interactive information on 75 lochs, as well as salmon and sea trout fishing and sea fishing in order to:

- Allow visiting anglers to access information on local fishing opportunities in new and comprehensive ways.
- Test the effectiveness of such provision in generating angling tourism and information for local organisations.
- Feedback comments on lochs fished, generating fishing information that to date has not been available for local organisations.

We reached agreement to provide a PC in the Lochinver Visitor Centre so visitors could access the information and tools locally and, although there have been some teething problems with this, feedback from local organisations has been very positive.

**Image showing the interactive Assynt Angling Map**  
[www.assynt.anglingresearch.org.uk](http://www.assynt.anglingresearch.org.uk)



#### 4.3.2 Questionnaire and Postcode Survey

We piloted an open, online questionnaire for visiting anglers which has generated new information about who fishes in Assynt (generally middle aged or older people); their visits and spending (an average of £580); their catch returns; and their motivations and benefits. Although essentially a pilot phase which will be developed further in 2010, this is the first time this sort of information on visiting anglers has been provided, which will inform feedback to local organisations. This was supplemented by a Postcode Survey which provides the first ever information about where anglers come from to visit Assynt.

**Table Showing Average Spending per Angler in Assynt**

Type of Expenditure	Average Speed
Accommodation	£314.98
Permits	£37.82
Tackle	£8.50
Food Shopping	£87.22
Eating Out	£84.26
Drinking Out	£18.88
Other	£31.22
<b>Total</b>	<b>£582.93</b>

**Map Showing Distribution of Origins of Visiting Anglers to Assynt**



<sup>4</sup> Data from Google Analytics.

<sup>5</sup> New users harness the power of OS OpenSpace <http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/media/news/2009/october/osopenspace.html>

### 4.3.3 Qualitative Interviews

We also have begun a series of qualitative interviews with anglers that will be ongoing throughout 2010. This work emphasises that: many anglers undertake repeat visits to the area; the angling experience is focused on wild brown trout fishing but motivations also include scenery, landscape, wildlife and flora and fauna; and that angling opportunities include both significant physical activity (twice the average suggested in our national survey of anglers) as well as provision for accessible means for participation. The wild nature of the fishing and the ability to go fishing and not come into social contact with other anglers are things that anglers value most.

'Word Cloud' Showing 'The Best Things About Your Visit to Assynt'



## 4.4 Emerging Issues

### 4.4.1 Angling Organisations and Community Benefit

It is clear that angling has a close relationship to wider community development in Assynt. It is a key source of income for both angling specific organisations as well as bringing income to the community through angling tourism. Organisations that benefit from angling in Assynt include collective ownership of land and resources. This means that there is a direct relationship between visiting angler numbers and the benefit the community receives.

It is important to also recognise the important role that angling plays within the community of Assynt, as one way in which people connect to the land and environment and in terms of the contribution that local people make to its sustenance and development. This includes an enormous amount of voluntary effort from local people in maintaining angling and it forms part of the 'fabric of community' in Assynt in very important ways.

### 4.4.2 Angling Development, Tourism and Angling 'Pressure'

There is clearly a balance to be struck between increasing angling numbers, and therefore generating wider community benefit, and maintaining the delicate ecological balance and natural resources in the area. There is concern among some visitors that 'too many anglers' will mean that the 'special' nature of angling in Assynt will be lost. This is mostly in relation to the remote and 'isolated' experience many value. However, there is also unanimity amongst those involved in angling locally that the area could increase numbers of anglers - and therefore local income and benefit - without adversely affecting its uniqueness.

### 4.4.3 Angling Promotion, Services and Information

Linked to this, there is a dearth of information about visiting anglers in Assynt which this study starts to address. None of the trout angling organisations receive catch returns from visitors or locals; and little is known about the real economic impact of angling in Assynt. Assynt provides a wide range of angling opportunities, including both difficult to access and easily accessible lochs but little is known about who accesses these.

The web based mapping tool we have developed is one means by which data about 'what is going on' can be generated. Further survey work, questionnaires and other data gathering in this project will also seek to address this issue. A number of people have said that the provision of new services would help increase angling participation, especially to newcomers and the young. This might include tuition and guiding services, something that could aid local employment. There are also a series of other local developments the research will seek to inform., for example latent demand exists for more information and boat trip services in relation to sea angling, and we will explore the feasibility of this in future research.

## 4.5 Ongoing Research

We will be undertaking further development of the research website site in the coming months in light of useful feedback we have had. We will also:

- Interview a greater number of visiting anglers;
- Improve postcode and angler email collection;
- Improve catch information and tools;
- Undertake a more robust economic analysis of the impact of angling;
- Improve website usage; and
- Conduct more work with non angling visitors.

## 5. Concluding Comments

The report represents just the initial period of this three-year research project. As such it should be viewed as work in progress and we have indicated a number of areas where we will focus research in the coming years. However, even from this initial period, there are some significant findings and preliminary results relating to the core theme of the project, namely identifying social and community benefits of angling in relation to participation, young people and rural areas.

It is emerging that:

- From our participation survey and Assynt research, angling participation has benefits for individuals particularly in relation to active participation and health and well being;
- Anglers and angling organisations contribute in a number of ways to community development - as a site for social interaction, volunteering and environmental improvement;
- Angling can help address important national agendas around young people's development, notably in terms of sport development, education and personal development;
- Organisations such as Get Hooked On Fishing provide innovative ways in which angling can help socially disadvantaged young people in particular; and
- Angling can play an important role in rural communities, as evidenced by our initial work in Assynt. This includes as a generator of external income and visitors as well as a form of social cohesion locally.

Our research has embraced a range of approaches and ways of displaying complex data. We will develop these further as the project progresses. We encourage readers to see the three individual reports relating to the individual research tasks on Angling Participation, Angling and Young People and Angling and Rural Areas.

### Community Benefits of Angling Comments from Our Survey

There were a number of instances where respondents spoke about contributing to programmes and initiatives with the potential to have wider community and environmental benefits. Examples of such comments appear below:

I have created a number of lakes and ponds as environmental projects of my own account.  
*55-year old male*

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.  
*62-year old male*

[I am involved with] running a charity for adults with mental health problems.  
*32-year old male*

[I contribute to] work parties for club waters - river and lake.  
*50-year old male*



[www.anglingresearch.org.uk](http://www.anglingresearch.org.uk)  
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