

Making the Most of Community Waters

Localism, Health and Angling



A guide to maximising the social benefits of
community waters

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This guide has been produced as part of The Social and Community Benefits of Angling Research Project. The project is funded by the Big Lottery Fund to provide new knowledge on the benefits of angling related activities.¹ The content of this guide highlights some of the findings of the research relating to Local Authorities and identifies good practice for maximising the social and community benefits of local waters.

The emergence of the 'localism' policy agenda and new priorities in public health provides possibilities for angling to play a wider, positive role in local communities. This guide reviews recent policy changes, before moving on to look at examples of good practice. It ends with a series of recommendations for making the most of community waters.

1. New Policy Contexts

1.1 The Localism Policy Agenda

One of the main policy changes affecting the role of Local Authorities, their delivery of services and the use of local assets is the 'localism agenda' and in particular the Localism Bill. In terms of angling, the localism agenda creates new opportunities for local angling clubs, associations, groups and projects.

This policy initiative is part of a wider drive by the Coalition Government to:

- Encourage decentralisation, transparency and new finance in public service delivery
- Create greater local involvement in the delivery of 'public services'
- 'Empower communities' to improve and increase the roles of social enterprises, cooperatives and 'civil society organisations' (charities, community

¹ This guide was developed from the findings of a three year investigation spanning participation in angling across England and Scotland. It included observational site visits, surveys and interviews with adults, young people, local community members, Local Authorities, police and social care services. It consulted with nearly 700 people, 245 organisations, and received data submitted by 3,132 individuals online.

organisations, cooperatives and social enterprises)

- Encourage civil society organisations to increase 'citizen involvement', especially volunteering
- Create greater social, environmental and economic value in localities
- Increase levels of giving and mutual support in our society

These aims have been posited within the government's wider brief to 'decentralise' power and empower 'communities':

'The government believes that it is time for a fundamental shift of power from Westminster to people. We will promote decentralisation and democratic engagement, and we will end the era of top-down government by giving new powers to local councils, communities, neighbourhoods and individuals. We will introduce new powers and opportunities to help communities save local facilities and services threatened with closure, and give communities the right to bid to take over local state-run services.'²

As part of this, the *Coalition Programme for Government* is committed to:

- Give communities the right to bid to take over local state-run services
- Introduce new powers for communities to save local facilities and services threatened with closure
- Support the creation and expansion of mutuals, cooperatives, charities and social enterprises
- Give communities the time to bid to buy and manage assets that would otherwise close down

The Government uses the term 'differently or better' to describe the kinds of approaches they expect to encourage through new policies, including innovation, social/community value and responsiveness. This approach has been criticised as being difficult to implement at a time of cuts³, based on a belief that the 'third sector' can deliver

² The Coalition Government (2010) [Our Programme for Government](#)

³ Phillip Blond 'Big Society 'under pressure' [Guardian Online](#) 24th January 2011

‘more for less’⁴ and is a ‘shorthand for cheaper’.

Cost saving is certainly a key element of the government’s approach: ‘introducing a community right to challenge will...help local public bodies make savings’.⁵ Nonetheless, the approach also seems to offer distinct possibilities for Local Authorities and angling organisations in the management of community-owned waters.

At the time of writing the principal way that the aims of the localism agenda have been pursued is through the introduction of the Localism Bill.

1.2 The Localism Bill

The Localism Bill was introduced before Parliament in December 2010. The Bill is expected to receive Royal Assent in autumn 2011, with the main elements coming into force in April 2012. In relation to the role of still waters and watercourses in local areas, it is the ‘right to provide’ and especially the ‘right to buy’ aspects of the Localism Bill that are most relevant.

The Bill’s stated aim is to create a means by which communities can identify and list assets of community value, and have the right to buy those assets and run services. This emergent legislation offers potential new roles for local angling organisations and community groups.

1.2.1 Provisions

The Parliamentary research paper relating to the Localism Bill uses examples to illustrate how the provisions of the Bill could be applied in practice. Examples include communities being able 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.⁶

⁴ Stephen Bubb speech to Acevo 27 May 2010 ‘Big Society from romanticism to reality’, available at <http://www.acevo.org.uk/Document.Doc?id=682> and Public Finance 23rd September 2010

<http://www.publicfinance.co.uk/features/2010/09/the-big-issue/>

⁵ DCLG Impact Assessment: 11

⁶ House of Commons Library, ‘Localism Bill: Local government and community empowerment’ [Bill No. 126

The Bill will enable a ‘community nomination’ to Local Authorities to have land and/or buildings registered as being ‘Assets of Community Value’ (ACV). Nominations can be made by Parish Councils, local residents or community organisations – referred to as Community Interest Groups (CIGs).

Where property is held by the Local Authority, CIGs will be able to apply to run those assets. Where property is privately held, it may be entered on to the list of ACVs and the owner will not be allowed to dispose of that land or building without first notifying the Local Authority of its intention to do so. At this stage, a CIG can make a written request to be treated as a potential bidder for the ACV.

It should be noted that, at present:

- ACVs can be designated land or buildings, but not services or businesses (although these may also be acquired or may be integral)
- The nomination is to be made by a community interest group (CIG) via the Local Authority who will have some discretion as to what they accept, or not, as an ACV

The process is outlined in the Bill as follows:

- i. A CIG (with an appropriate amount of local support) will nominate an asset to its Local Authority
- ii. If the Local Authority accepts it as an ACV, then it must list it as such for a period of five years as well as publish it and inform the owner that it has been listed
- iii. An owner may appeal (although this process and the basis on which appeals are made are not clear)
- iv. A owner who wishes to sell is then prevented from doing so in the normal way but must submit it to a procedure to give the CIG a ‘window of opportunity’ - once an asset comes up for sale - to organise and fundraise so that they can bid for the asset.

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>

These new provisions open a way for social enterprises, cooperatives and 'civil society' organisations to manage local community assets, which could include local waters. The Bill creates a framework in which local angling organisations could list local waters as community assets and angling organisations as CIGs.

Given that many Local Authorities already lease the rights to fishing on local waters to local angling organisations there may be real opportunities here for angling and community organisations to play a greater role, in partnership with Local Authorities, in running and even owning local assets.

For example, during our research we attended discussions between Stockport Council, the Environment Agency, local angling groups and residents' associations over the potential management of park waters. Stockport Council and the Environment Agency recognised clear advantages in shifting management of these waters to community groups; however they also expressed a number of key concerns. Most pressing of the concerns was the desire to ensure that access would not be restricted by giving waters to private angling clubs. It was important that angling clubs managed the waters in conjunction with resident and other groups for the benefit of the local community. Therefore the management of community waters must be underpinned by recognition of their value as a community asset with wider benefit for residents.

1.2.2 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 a libraries, sports centre, adult education centres that can be used to develop skills or self-esteem
- Build social capital - through volunteering groups, drop in centres or village halls that provide opportunities to establish supportive

relationships, join social networks and develop a sense of belonging

- Improve and maintain physical and mental health – through use of swimming pools, parks and green spaces,
- Facilitate access to other resources - such as public toilets or a rural bus service that keep people mobile, connected and able to access other resources.

Alongside the new opportunities of the Localism Bill will be new obligations. Any CIG running a local asset will have to ensure that they are doing so for the benefit of the wider community, not just their members. Furthermore, the CIG will have to deliver, and demonstrate, the value that they are bringing.

Those responsible for community assets such as local waters will therefore have to realise and unlock the potential of those assets.

It is the way that community assets are used that makes them valuable to people and communities. Maximising the benefits of community assets therefore requires asking two important questions:

- **Who uses the asset?** – How can access be increased so that a wider range of people can benefit?
- **What is the asset used for?** – Can current activities/uses be diversified further to deliver a wider range of benefits?

1.3 Public Health

The other key policy agenda for Local Authorities regards public health. The Public Health white paper *Healthy Lives, Healthy People* clearly sets out that Local Authorities will have responsibility for improving the public health and well-being of local people. It promotes a 'coherent approach' that combines an emphasis on physical and mental health, wellbeing and resilience across the life course. Central to Local Authorities' role will be tackling health inequalities by encouraging healthy lifestyles and developing local strategies that address the broader social determinants of health and wellbeing.

The Marmot review and government health agendas⁷ draw attention to three key areas important for healthy, sustainable communities.

- i. **Developing people's own capabilities and control over their lives.** This includes developing social and emotional skills - such as perseverance and self-esteem to help people make healthy life choices and develop 'resilience' to difficulties - as well as improving educational attainment and skill development that impact on life opportunities and health.
- ii. **Developing people's relationships within society.** Social isolation can be reduced through building social capital (bonds that link individuals to families, communities and networks). Social capital is a source of social support and provides a sense of connectedness that is vital to maintaining wellbeing and developing sustainable communities.
- iii. **Improving the environment people live in.** Access to quality local environment and green spaces, recreational activities and cultural facilities has been shown to improve health and wellbeing, making healthy life choices easier and encouraging the development of social capital.

Understanding health and wellbeing through this contextual lens recognises that people have a role to play in managing their own health and wellbeing. It recognises that provisions can be made to keep people 'well' before they need to rely more heavily on health services. Identifying and developing the capabilities, resources, and environments that allow people and communities to be resilient in the face of adversity is the first step towards securing public health and wellbeing.

⁷ See Department of Health (Nov 2010) *Healthy Lives Healthy People: Our strategy for public health in England* and HM Government (Feb 2011) *No Health Without Mental Health: A cross-government mental health outcomes strategy for people of all ages*.

2. Why Are Local Waters Important?

Green spaces have long been associated with improved physical and mental health, and wellbeing.⁸ Many communities have implemented successful programs that promote physical activity such as 'green gyms', and increasingly green spaces are being used as part of therapies to assist recovery and promote good mental health.⁹

Significantly, research has identified that green environments with access to water (blue-green environments) as are particularly effective in achieving outcomes around improved self-esteem and mood.¹⁰ However the beneficial value of many 'blue-green' spaces remains either unknown or under-utilised.

The total area of standing inland water is estimated as 675 km² in England, 125 km² in Wales and 1604 km² in Scotland.¹¹ This includes lakes, reservoirs, gravel pits, and ponds. Many more miles of river and canal systems criss-cross the British landscape. As a result, there are few Local Authorities in the UK that do not have access to rivers, waterways, or coastlines.

The community use of these waters varies considerably. In some areas waters are part of publicly accessible nature reserves, in others neglected parks. In many cases waters suitable for

⁸ 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.

⁹ Mind. 2007. Ecotherapy: The green agenda for mental health.

http://www.mind.org.uk/campaigns_and_issues/report_and_resources/835_ecotherapy

¹⁰ Pretty and J. Barton. (2010) What is the best dose of Green Exercise for Improving mental health? In *Environmental Science and Technology*, Vol 44 (10). p 3947-3955

¹¹ Foundation for Water Research. 2005. Water Framework Directive. Lakes and Reservoirs Overview. <http://www.pik-potsdam.de/news/events/alter-net/former-ss/2007/03-09.2007/straskrbova/literature/LakesReserv-WFD09-0.pdf>

angling are let to local angling clubs that may restrict public use, while in other areas anglers themselves have been excluded. In circumstances where the beneficial values of waters have been recognised, it is usually as a backdrop to community life, as a haven for wildlife and a 'space' through which to observe nature with limited interaction.

The use of local waters as a tool for facilitating social inclusion and promoting wellbeing is however, less well developed. As a result many waters are under-utilised resources that could be put to much greater use as part of strategies to improve public health and wellbeing, facilitate social inclusion and improve a range of outcomes for young people.

Rather than seeing the environment as a back drop to community life, this guide demonstrates the ways in which waters can be more actively put to work for the benefit of local communities and thereby realise their full potential as community assets.

3. Why is Angling Important?

"The lake itself has a natural function, it's a flood defence sink area, and if that's all it did the council would be happy. But the local residents see it as their green space, their access to the countryside. It still has the engineering function, but we can add value to that by getting kids involved in fishing. It gives us a tool to work with them." (Recreational Manager for Hemlington Lake)

The introduction of angling on community waters 'adds value' because of its ability to improve a wide range of health and wellbeing outcomes across the social demographic.

- **Angling is a socially inclusive activity.** Angling is accessible to a wide range of people, not being restricted by gender, age, disability, socio-economic status, or ethnicity. This makes it a useful tool for tackling health inequalities through the provision of a universally accessible offer. The socially inclusive nature of angling facilitates intergenerational engagement, strengthens opportunities to engage with people across social divides and provides a valuable opportunity for younger people with disabilities to engage and compete on an equal level with their peers.
- **Angling can reduce social isolation through community engagement.** Taking part in angling can be a way of bringing different members of the community together. This is particularly apparent in angling-related activities that encourage community interaction, such as volunteering at coaching/fun days, angling clubs and matches, as well as engagement in conservation work. As an important means of developing social capital, angling and related activities can be used to work successfully with both isolated elderly residents and excluded young people.
- **Angling can strengthen family relationships through family-orientated activities.** Our research has found that young people and their parents/carers enjoy the opportunity to spend quality time together through angling. This has been used to good effect in family intervention programmes, where the calming, quiet nature of the activity allows parents to see a different side to young people, to have the opportunity to talk about issues, and to bond over a shared endeavour. Developing family friendly angling facilities is important to encouraging and sustaining such practices.
- **Angling can reduce anti-social behaviour in neglected spaces.** The presence of anglers, community activities and a well maintained area can dissuade anti-social behaviour and reduce fear of crime. In particular, encouraging young people and community members to take part in conservation work and angling activities together can build a sense of ownership, civic pride and awareness of how anti-social behaviour impacts on local residents.
- **Angling can improve physical health.** Angling practice entails a range of physical activity, with low, medium and high levels of intensity dependent on the angling techniques

being used. This makes it particularly suited to encouraging the elderly, infirm or less able to become more physically active at their own pace.¹² Participation in angling also encourages active lifestyles through secondary activities such as walking/cycling to angling sites and engaging in aquatic conservation work and site maintenance.

- **Angling can improve mental health.** As an absorbing activity in green spaces, angling offers an opportunity for mental restoration and relaxation. Angling has been successfully used by organisations such as Mind as a form of 'ecotherapy' to manage mental distress¹³, and by intervention projects such as Get Hooked On Fishing¹⁴ that work with young people with ADHD and anxiety disorders.¹⁵
- **Angling can develop young people's resilience and coping strategies.** Our research has shown how young people can proactively use angling as a way to 'get away' from stresses, providing opportunities for peace, to calm anger, recharge, and even complete homework away from a busy household.¹⁶ As a result, projects successfully use angling to work with young carers and those experiencing difficulties at home. Encouraging angling use and increasing young people's access to local waters will have a positive effect on their ability to manage their own wellbeing.
- **Angling can encourage youth access to the benefits of green spaces.** Our research found that young people did not often make full use of green spaces because they felt there was 'nothing to do there'. Angling transforms young people's use of green spaces by encouraging an accessible, positive activity that can be engaged in alone or with friends, and has the potential to provide hours of engagement at low financial costs. In this way angling unlocks many of the public health and wellbeing benefits associated with active use of green spaces that would otherwise be underutilised.
- **Angling is a resource for targeted intervention work.** Organisations such as Get Hooked On Fishing (and others) have developed angling as a tool to successfully transform outcomes for disadvantaged young people. This approach involves working with youth offending teams, young people excluded from schools, those at risk of crime and anti-social behaviour, to those who have low confidence and self-esteem, or experience mental health disorders. Such programmes deliver 'added value' to angling on community waters.¹⁷
- **Angling is a resource for education and training.** Angling can be the catalyst for developing environmental information boards and pond dipping areas that increase the use of waters for education. Our research has found youth and community projects working alongside anglers using local ponds and watersides for vocational training, in subjects such as land management, construction (fishing platforms or fish refuges) through to horticulture, conservation or fishery management.
- **Angling can encourage 'active ageing'.** The public health white paper *Healthy Lives, Healthy People* encourages Local Authorities

¹² Stolk, P. 2010. Theme paper 3. Angling and Physical Activity. Substance.

http://resources.anglingresearch.org.uk/project_reports/int_eriim_reports_2010

¹³ Stolk, P. 2010 *Theme paper. Angling and Personal health and wellbeing*. Substance

http://resources.anglingresearch.org.uk/project_reports/int_eriim_reports_2010

¹⁴ UK wide intervention charity that uses fishing as a tool to engage and improve outcomes for young people.

www.ghof.org.uk

¹⁵ Djohari, N. 2010. *The 'Added Value' of angling intervention programmes*. Substance.

http://resources.anglingresearch.org.uk/project_reports/int_eriim_reports_2010

¹⁶ Djohari, N. 2010. *The wellbeing benefits of angling participation*. Substance

http://resources.anglingresearch.org.uk/project_reports/int_eriim_reports_2010

¹⁷ Djohari, N. 2010. *The 'Added Value' of angling intervention programmes*. Substance.

http://resources.anglingresearch.org.uk/project_reports/int_eriim_reports_2010

to design communities for ‘active ageing’¹⁸. When made safe and accessible, angling can play a role in these local strategies by encouraging older residents to regularly participate in increased physical activity and social interaction that reduce the isolation frequently associated with ageing.

- **Angling can facilitate inter-generational engagement.** In most communities, there are few opportunities for younger people and older residents to interact with each other. As a result both elderly residents and young people are often subject to negative stereotypes. Angling encourages the type of engagement that transforms negative attitudes and relationships, by enabling residents across generations to find common ground in shared interest.

However, for Local Authorities and local angling organisations to be able to work together to deliver these benefits, angling organisations may be required to adopt new practices. Angling organisations will need to be open, be supportive of objectives that increase public access to angling, and they will need to develop partnerships with other local organisations such as local residents’ associations, parks organisations, wildlife and conservation groups, youth or older people’s projects and other water users. Such action will require new ways of cooperating and management and may necessitate new organisational forms, such as cooperatives, social enterprise or charities. Despite the challenges these new arrangements may present, the potential and the benefit to local communities of such change could be significant.

4. Unlocking the Benefits of Community Waters: Examples of Good Practice

Across the country there are a range of models that allow local communities to make the most of community waters. These vary from simple steps that Local Authorities have taken to encourage

wider angling participation, to the development of charities and social enterprises that run and deliver projects benefiting local communities.

We have identified three key approaches which we wish to highlight that have delivered good practice:

- Local Authority lead.** There are basic steps that Local Authorities can take to promote angling. These include making use of Local Authority powers to put conditions on leasing and providing free CRB checks, through to regenerating community ponds, maintaining fishing access to piers and marinas, and supporting the development of coaching activities or family fun days. The Localism Bill offers new ways in which authorities can involve the local community in owning and managing community water based assets.
- Development by a community group.** The involvement of local community groups in the maintenance and development of local waters can open access to funds that would otherwise be beyond the reach of Local Authorities, can assist communities to respond directly to their own needs, and can increase social connectedness. Such groups should involve angling organisations and anglers alongside other stakeholders such as residents and other water users.
- Establishment of a mutual, charity or social enterprise.** The full potential of waters can often be best realised through the development of businesses or charities that benefit local communities. Social enterprises and mutuals have the potential to be self-sustaining, delivering a diverse range of professional services through the management of local waters. Cooperatives and Community Interest Companies have obligations to community benefit and can act as vehicles to ensure a range of stakeholder interests are accommodated.

On the following pages we look at four examples of good practice that we have researched during the project.

¹⁸The Department of Health. Nov 2010. *Healthy Lives Healthy People: Our strategy for public health in England*.

1. Putting the pieces together- The London Borough of 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.

As part of a borough-wide improvement scheme the local council decided to re-appraise the resources and facilities it had available. They recognised that Hillingdon had an abundance of waters, but many had become neglected, prone to incidents of anti-social behaviour and were inaccessible to young anglers.

To gauge the level of local interest in developing angling waters, the council hosted a two day family fishing fun day on Little Britain Lake in 2009. The response was overwhelming, attracting over 600 participants.

"I went along to shake a few hands and they were so short of CRB-checked volunteers that I ended up spending the day teaching small groups of kids to fish. I got to see the benefits first hand - there was a young lad in my group with learning difficulties, he was so quiet, didn't say a word. But as soon as he caught a fish, he was running up and down telling the others how he'd done it. His mum had never seen him so animated. Catching just bought him out of himself. So I thought, yes, let's give this a go, let's have a family fishery- a place where mum, dad and the kids can come for a few hours and do some fishing, and it will be free- no charge."
(Ray Puddifoot, Leader of Hillingdon Council)

A borough-wide strategy was put in place for developing angling provisions for young people and families. Key elements have included:



Young angler and volunteer at Little Britain Lake

- **Development of a free and accessible family fishery**

Our research has found young people struggle most to meet the cost of going fishing, so providing safe, accessible and free venues is an important way of enabling participation. The council has transformed Little Britain Lake into an attractive community site through clearing of paths, adding disabled friendly fishing pegs, maintenance and re-planting of a designated picnic area, and installation of street lighting on the access road. There are also plans to develop on-site toilet facilities. Members of the local community were encouraged to volunteer in as much of the site development as possible. Regular public use has now resulted in a decline of anti-social behaviour at the lake.

- **Conditional leasing to encourage the development of junior angling clubs**

Like many local councils, most of Hillingdon's waters are leased to angling clubs, but few of these clubs had dedicated junior sections or permitted junior fishing. As a result many young people and families struggled to find suitable provisions in the area. Addressing this, the clubs renting council waters are now required to have a junior section as part of the renewal condition of their lease. To assist the angling clubs to meet this requirement, the council are providing free CRB checks and advice/guidance on how to navigate issues such as insurance and health and safety policies.

Continued on following page.....

Borough of Hillingdon continued....

- **Provision of free family fishing events**

Following on from the success of the first Family Fishing Fun Day, the council has continued to provide this free event. The two day event in 2010 attracted **1040** fishing participants, across all age and ability ranges, with an estimated 22% from ethnic minority backgrounds. The high profile event was supported by renowned angling celebrities John Wilson and Keith Arthur, and over 50 volunteers from the local angling charity Les Webber's Angling Projects, local angling clubs and individual angling enthusiasts. A reliable base of volunteers has been established by encouraging angling clubs receiving free CRB checks to participate. The presence of these local clubs also gives young people and families the opportunity to meet club members and make the link to a club as a follow on from the event.



Fishing Fun day participant with certificate for successfully catching a fish

- **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 to get their angling badges. This involves classroom and bank side sessions and the provision of a minibus where needed. Badges are later awarded by the Mayor. The council has also been approached by schools running vocational courses wishing to contribute to site maintenance and development of further waters through construction work, fencing, path maintenance, and horticulture, as part of student training. An interschool angling competition has also been established.

Hillingdon is successful because the council serves as a network hub, introducing those who would like to take up angling to those who can provide it by making full use of council powers, such as conditional leasing. The council also adopted an inclusive approach from the start, encouraging conservation groups, anglers and residents to become involved in developments. Lyn Summers, coordinator of angling developments for the Borough, explains:

"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".

The volunteers themselves are clear, however, that none of this would be possible without the council taking the lead. They stress the importance of having that strategic, borough-wide support behind them.



2. Salmon Fishing for All: Stirling Council Fisheries on the River Forth and River Teith

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, and two stretches of the River Teith near Callander. Council involvement in local salmon fishing can be traced as far back as the 14th century, when salmon fishing rights for the River Forth were presented to the 'burgesses' of Stirling by King Robert II of Scotland on the 13th July, 1386. The sale of fishing permits to the public is, however, a more recent development.

Resident Friendly Permits: The Council offers season and roving permits to local residents at a subsidised price. A cumulative discount is also applicable for concession holders. In 2011 an adult season permit for a visitor was £255; the same permit for a resident was £175. Day permits for an adult ranged in price from £25 to £48 across the season.

Permit prices take into account the 'urbanised' setting of the River Forth fishery. As fishery manager David Jones pointed out, "it [the River Forth] doesn't have the beauty factor of other Scottish rivers like the Dee or the Spey, but what it's got is these [salmon fishing] beats right off the tide".

Fishing on the Council-run stretch of the River Forth is strategically positioned to provide 'first-crack' at salmon as they head upstream on the tide. In 2010 the River Forth was listed as the top-producing beat in Scotland, with 1,351 salmon and grilse. The Council-run stretch of the River Teith also features important salmon spawning grounds and consistently holds good numbers of sea trout. The Council's permit policy ensures that local residents are not priced out of access to this valuable community resource.

The fishery promotes fish conservation and responsible fishing. Anglers are issued with tags for landed fish, whilst the practice of catch and release is widely encouraged. In 2010 70% of caught fish were safely returned. The Council is aiming to operate its fisheries in full cost-recovery mode by the end of 2011. Revenue from permit sales is supplemented by additional income generated through a range of fishery management services (fish surveys, river clean-up and bank rehabilitation work) that are delivered for partner organisations. The Council also runs a fish in the classroom project with local schools.

Increasing Access: Disabled platforms have been installed on the Craigforth section of the River Forth (2001) and at the Geisher Pool on the River Teith (2010). These platforms are not for the exclusive use of anglers and other community members are encouraged to use them. Paths providing pedestrian access to these platforms have also been constructed including a 450m path on the River Teith and 2000m path on the River Forth. Like the platforms, the paths provide benefit to other members of the community and are regularly used by groups of children from the local nursery, bird-watchers and dog-walkers.

Volunteers: The fishery benefits from the dedication of a group of extremely passionate volunteers, who assist on a range of river maintenance tasks and, in some cases, the conduct of 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.



Launch of 2011 Stirling salmon fishing season
From Stirling Council Website:
(<http://www.stirling.gov.uk/index/leisure/countryside/fisheries/fisheriesnews/launch2011.htm>)

3. Community Led Development: The Friends of Hemlington Lake

“About 10 years ago the lake went into deep decline; we had cars, rubbish, bikes and all sorts. It was a shame to see it. So a few of the residents got together set up the ‘Friend of Hemlington lake’ to see what improvements we could make...now you walk around 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... (Friend of Hemlington Lake)



View of Hemlington Lake’s all ability fishing platforms

Hemlington Lake is located in the heart of a Middlesbrough estate and is surrounded by houses on all sides. In the past the site had become associated with anti-social behaviour. Working together with the Recreation Manager, the ‘Friends of Hemlington Lake’ have in recent years secured multiple funds not accessible to local councils. The funds have been used to develop the area in accordance with what residents want. Improvements have included an all-abilities paths round the lake, education boards that change with the seasons, pond dipping kits for local schools/families to use, and sculptures by local artists. A central initiative was the improvement of angling at the site. Working with the Environment Agency to ensure developments were sensitive to the resident water vole population, new locally built disabled friendly platforms were installed. Junior angling is promoted by offering regular angling courses as part of measures to reduce vandalism and provide a constructive activity for young people. The courses are run by angling charity Get Hooked on Fishing Teesside and serve a dual purpose:

- To educate and encourage the development of responsible young anglers
- To target and divert young people involved in anti-social behaviour into an activity that allows them to get to know the local community and instil environmental respect.

The course runs over multiple sessions and includes some classroom work in an onsite facility. On completion of the course young people get a fishing kit and a pass for free use of waters until they are 16. Providing angling courses in exchange for free access ensures that young people learn safe and responsible practice, are encouraged to respect the environment, and most importantly build a relationship with the ‘friends’ of Hemlington members, the recreational manager, and local residents, who frequently visit the coaches and young people on the course.

Both the Friends of Hemlington Lake and the recreational manager see the lake as an asset to be utilised rather than a place to be left ‘untouched’. All developments are sensitive to wildlife and the environment but are active in catering for the diverse needs of the local community; balancing anglers, model boaters and canoeists with the needs of wildlife and site aesthetics.

Local Authorities can support the development of these community groups by providing expertise and assistance with bid writing, understanding legislation and council processes, through to providing training or access to local networks. This requires a supportive infrastructure that is sympathetic to the aims of community organisations and recognises that voluntary groups are often limited by time constraints and may have variable levels of experience and expertise.

4. Encouraging Social Enterprise: Get Hooked Ealing

Northala Fields, in the heart of Ealing, London, opened in 2008, having been developed from derelict land with rubble from the demolition of Wembley stadium. The site includes fishing/model boating waters that are situated in front of the now iconic rubble hills. While initial plans were to lease the waters as a fishery, consultation with angling charity Get Hooked On Fishing (GHOF) and the Metropolitan Police identified that the benefits of this central community space could be maximised with the development of a self-sustaining angling intervention project. GHOF has multiple intervention projects across the country, providing both universal and targeted programs that use angling for personal and social development. They have a track record of success in the use of angling to re-engage young people in education and employment; build confidence and self-esteem amongst those with underlying social and emotional problems; and transform anti-social behaviour. Following the social enterprise model established by GHOF North East in Durham, the development process was designed to establish GHOF Ealing as a self-sustaining social enterprise within three years. Project development has included:

- Build of an environmentally sensitive visitors centre housing a café, toilet facilities, tackle shop, classroom and management office for GHOF.
- Lease of the waters and management of the building to GHOF Ealing for 3 years allowing the project to generate additional revenue from angling day tickets and tackle shop sales.
- The café is leased out to a third party that covers the maintenance costs of the entire building.

Having a resident charity as a project partner opened access to combined pots of capital and seed funding (remaining land refill funds from the Wembley development, and local council funds for development and special project funds) to create the much needed visitor centre.

The establishment of a social enterprise in the GHOF model maximises the potential benefits of local waters by providing a thriving local fishery, resident junior angling club, and targeted youth intervention work that will include classroom sessions, mentoring and volunteering opportunities in both angling and shop management.



New eco-friendly build in Northala Fields, housing the GHOF Ealing project

5. Recommendations for Maximising the Social and Community Benefits of Local Waters

Local Authorities are well placed to unlock the wider benefits of local waters for improved community health and wellbeing in conjunction with angling organisations and other community groups. Identifying waters as Assets of Community Value and angling groups as potential Community Interest Groups is one step among many for maximising the potential of local waters. Our recommendations include:

1. **Open access to angling waters in central locations.** Review local waters and identify where suitable angling facilities may be made more accessible to young people, families and older people and develop disability friendly access. In the case of sea angling, this should include maintenance of structures such as piers and jetties that can make angling safer and accessible to a wider range of participants. Good transport links are essential to enabling young people's participation. Hosting family fun days at these sites can also draw local attention to an underutilised resource.
2. **Introduce conditional leasing on public waters.** Leasing of public waters to angling clubs could include provisions of junior access and/or junior clubs, hosting of regular public access/taster days, hosting of regular public conservation volunteering activities and working with other community organisations.
3. **Reduce the cost of angling on public waters.** Young people in particular can find the cumulative cost of day ticket fishing too expensive. Encouraging use is best managed through one off seasonal payments, free access made conditional on attending a free orientation/fishing course, introducing an intermediary angling rate for 16-21yrs or extending the junior rates to 18yrs. Where resources are in high demand by tourist visitors local residents, particularly the elderly, will benefit from pricing structures sympathetic to local use.
4. **Encourage the use of waters by youth intervention programmes.** Invite youth intervention programmes to tender for leases, and provide free access to intervention programmes and school groups. Intervention programmes can only run where there are adequate facilities, such as the provision of toilets. Classroom facilities and on-site storage will also assist development.
5. **Support the development of community angling groups.** Providing assistance with CRB checks, navigation of local legislation, signposting to funding sources and assistance with bid writing, and/or networking opportunities, will help angling groups wishing to increase use of local waters. Angling needs must however be balanced with recognition of other aquatic user groups. Creating opportunities to share information and open dialogue between multiple users will help to reduce conflict and ensure multiple needs are taken into account.
6. **Initiate discussions on the identification of local waters as Assets of Community Value.** Identify local waters as potential Assets of Community Value suitable for transfer to community management or ownership. Initiate discussions with local angling groups, charities and community organisations over potential asset transfer. Work with interested groups to ensure they meet the requirements of becoming a Community Interest Group and are appropriately constituted and governed.
7. **Make asset transfer of local waters to CIG's conditional.** Build on the practice of conditional leasing to ensure that CIGs adopt good practices that maximise the community benefits of local waters (such as encouraging junior angling, increasing all-ability access, providing opportunities for volunteering and conservation). Place a responsibility on CIG's managing local waters to demonstrate their wider social impact.

Further practical suggestions are provided in the table below. To find out more about our research and access further findings and reports visit our Angling Research Resources website: <http://resources.anglingresearch.org.uk>

Practical suggestions for maximising the social and community benefits of local waters

Suggestion	Consideration	Action
Identify and list local waters as Assets of Community value	There are often many waters within communities, but not all of them will be of significance to local residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify available local waters, paying particular attention to current uses, who is able to access them, and the potential community benefits. Consult with local residents to understand the value they place on these waters for health, wellbeing, recreation and sense of community. Maintain community dialogue in order to monitor how asset use may change with time and to better mediate conflicts between users. List important local waters as Assets of Community Value.
Where appropriate recognise angling organisations as Community Interest Groups	For angling organisations to be considered a Community Interest Group they will need to meet a number of requirements. Local Authorities can provide guidance to ensure they meet these criteria and are committed to delivering wider community benefit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure CIG's are constituted correctly with appropriate structure and governance is in place. Make conditional the adoption of good practices to increase diversity in access and use of local waters. In particular the encouragement of young people, families, elderly and those with disabilities, as well as the provision of opportunities including volunteering/conservation. Require CIG's to demonstrate the social impact of their management of local waters.
Open up accessible central waters for junior angling	Young people rely on public transport to independently access angling sites. The spaces most valuable to them are local parks and fisheries that are close to residential areas and have good transport links.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review available fishing options in public parks that are more easily accessed. Develop safe and family friendly fishing spaces at these sites (with open aspects, close to facilities, safe platforms, wide paths). Establish conditional leasing on the most accessible angling waters to include provisions for junior access.
Offer free or significantly reduced young people's angling rates on local waters	Young people tell us the biggest barrier to angling participation is cost. Small amounts can accumulate into unmanageable costs over school holidays. Older teens also often struggle with the shift to full adult prices when they turn 16.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a registration scheme for free/reduced cost permits. This will allow for monitoring of use, send out further information on events/training/activities, build accountability and relationships. Build in coaching/water safety training into requirements for accessing free/reduced rate tickets, to encourage responsible use and educate young people on good practice. Introduce a single small charge for a fishing 'season' or summer holiday use that is often more manageable for young people than multiple day tickets.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce intermediary rates for 16 -18 yr olds or maintain junior prices until 18.
Encourage inclusive access	Fishing is an inclusive activity that all people can participate in regardless of underlying disabilities. All that is required are the right facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build disabled access fishing platforms, widen and level paths for all ability use. • Invite disabilities groups, schools, and charities to take part in open, all abilities activities, fun days, matches and coaching events.
Encourage intergenerational activities	Young people only venues can ensure young people get the space they need but minimises the benefits of interacting with wider members of the community through angling participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage angling club members, parents and local residents to volunteer to run junior clubs, matches and events. • Provide free CRB checks and assistance with navigating legal requirements. • Allow for adult fishing but stress the water is for community use, and community events and junior angling takes priority.
Encourage 'active ageing'	Engagement and participation in angling can reduce isolation, facilitate mental wellbeing, and increase physical activity amongst older people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target promotion of angling to elderly residents and invite them to a coaching/taster days. • Develop accessible, all ability friendly fishing platforms, paths and facilities.
Encourage family fishing	Younger children in particular enjoy angling for the opportunity to spend quality bonding time with parents/carers. However parents new to angling often need guidance on how to proceed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host family angling fun days and coaching sessions to introduce families to local waters and teach parents/carers how to fish safely and productively with their children. • Direct charities and family support services to the availability of free/low cost angling facilities for targeted family intervention/support work.
Encourage conservation activities and volunteering	Angling can encourage participation in a wide range of associated activities such as volunteering and conservation that can boost wellbeing, improve self-esteem and reduce social isolation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage conservation volunteering days to maintain fisheries and paths, build angling pegs and make fish refuges. Encourage clubs leasing waters to promote conservation volunteering days. • Promote volunteering opportunities for local residents at angling coaching/taster days. • Build partnerships with environmental groups and organisations such as the Environment Agency, Wildlife Trusts or British Waterways.

<p>Develop use of waters as an educational or training resource</p>	<p>Angling is a valuable resource for teaching social skills, self-esteem, as well as learning about the environment, civic responsibility and practical vocational skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build nature trails, pond dipping platforms, wildlife boards and information packs for local schools. • Encourage site use for vocational training, BTEC groups, and school projects. This could include activities such as horticultural work or environmental/habitat monitoring. • Incorporate classroom facilities in visitor centres or similar on site builds.
<p>Develop use of local waters for targeted angling intervention programmes</p>	<p>Angling can be used to successfully target and improve outcomes for the socially excluded making local waters a valuable resource for social care, public health, justice and education services. Programmes commonly work with young people excluded from school, NEET, engaged in anti-social behaviour, young carers, those with ADHD or anxiety problems, through to adults experiencing a range of physical and mental health difficulties.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer free/reduce cost use of angling waters for targeted angling based intervention work. • Encourage an angling charity/social enterprise to manage local waters for targeted intervention work and community access that specifically targets and integrates socially excluded groups. • Provide intervention projects with access to facilities such as toilets. Projects will also benefit from storage space for equipment, on site classroom facilities, or backroom office space. • Promote cross communication between angling intervention programmes and schools/alternative education networks, justice/youth offending teams and the local police, social care and youth services, and public health teams