

Be Inspired Go Fishing



Our strategy for getting people fishing on our waters

Canal & River Trust angling today

Millions of people make use of the canal waterways for boating, canoeing, walking or cycling along the towpath, enjoying the heritage, nature or one of the local pubs and restaurants. And of course, thousands of people fish on them. It is an activity that has existed on the canal network since Victorian times and is part of the overall heritage of the waterways. The Canal & River Trust is the largest single owner of coarse fishing rights in England & Wales, controlling fishing rights on more than 1500 miles of canal and over 40 feeder reservoirs¹.

Our objectives are to preserve, protect, operate and manage inland waterways for public benefit: for navigation, for walking on towpaths and for recreation or other leisure-time pursuits in the interest of the public's health and social welfare. We are proud that these uses have legal protection and government support².

Fishing rights on the canal network are leased (technically licensed) to approximately 350 angling clubs and associations. Total income is approximately £550k per annum from all licences and day membership. The day to day management of the angling activity is undertaken by the controlling angling clubs. They undertake activities such as sale of day memberships, coaching, enforcement of the club and national fishery rules, litter collections and act as the eyes and ears of the waterways reporting low water levels, illegal fishing activity, fish theft, vandalism and pollution. These activities contribute a significant public benefit.

Participation levels in angling on the canal network have declined significantly in the past twenty years. This is reflected in the number of clubs renting sections of waterway which peaked at 490 back in the early 1990's. Before the early 1990's, match and team fishing on the canals were particularly popular but after this, interest started to slowly decline. This is possibly due to changes in society and fashions in angling and possibly a growing interest in the waterways for a wider range of leisure activities. The increasing rise in popularity of lake fishing, particularly for carp, has contributed to this decline in canal and river fishing.

Whereas angling has been in decline, interest in boating has increased. The number of boat registrations in 1991/92 was 22,500 rising to 25,500 in 2000/01; by 2011/12 it was nearly 35,000. Our waterways provide attractive locations for a range of other leisure pursuits as well - walking, dog walking, cycling and just being by the water. Overall, annual visits to the waterways have increased from 275 million in 2010 to over 330m in 2012³. All these activities influence the ability of anglers to enjoy their passion and together with other factors affect decisions about the future of angling on the network.

¹ The Trust does not own the fishing rights on all canals including a few where land is in the Trust's ownership. Very few fishing rights on navigable rivers are owned or managed by the Trust.

² The statutory framework for our waterways provides that "the cruising waterways are to be principally available for cruising, fishing and other recreational purposes".

³ Inland Waterway Visit Survey 2012 – Annual report 2013



As part of the work to produce the National Angling Strategy⁴ in 2012, Substance⁵ was commissioned by the Angling Trust and funded by the Environment Agency to undertake two major surveys of angling in England and Wales. **The National Angling Survey**⁶ sought to generate information and views from as wide a population of anglers in England and Wales as possible.

The key elements were to:

- Provide data on the respondents and their angling participation;
- Understand more about the barriers they faced in going angling more often.



The **Angling Organisation Survey**⁷ was an in-depth survey of those involved in running, volunteering and working for angling organisations and organisations related to angling.

National Angling Survey

Over 29,000 anglers took part online in the National Angling Survey. Almost all anglers want to go fishing more often (94.2%) but lack of time due to work and family commitments was the biggest barrier for 59.5% (17,305) of anglers. The weather (7.9%), cost (6.8%) and health (4.2%) were other significant barriers.

Just under a quarter of anglers (23%, n=6,749) said more local fishing provision was the *most* important thing (something that would allow increased participation but taking up less time). Almost exactly the same number (n=6,745) said that cheaper access to fishing was most important.

National Organisation Survey

In terms of developing angling participation, angling organisations reported that the 'most important' area they needed help with was improving fish stocks (31%), improving access to facilities (19.7%), promoting local angling (16.2%) and help securing cheaper fishing (11.5%)

To get anglers to go fishing more often, 37.8% said that competitions were the 'most successful' approach, followed by coaching and casting (15.7%) and forming junior sections (12.9%).

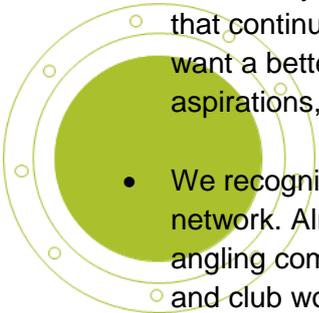
⁴ Full report at: www.anglingtrust.net/nationalanglingstrategy

⁵ Substance is a social research cooperative (www.substance.coop)

⁶ Full report at: www.resources.anglingresearch.org.uk/nationalanglingstrategy

⁷ Full report at: www.resources.anglingresearch.org.uk/nationalanglingstrategy

So, why is an angling strategy needed now?

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- We firmly believe there are mutual benefits in forging better relationships with existing anglers based on our joint interest in caring about the canal network, its values and history and contribution to society.
 - We also believe there are benefits in introducing a new band of people to angling. Some will begin to cherish the waterway and become the guardians of it in the future. All will benefit from the wellbeing, social and leisure benefits that angling has to offer.
 - Our surveys demonstrate that the waterways are a multi use, shared resource that continues to be available for people to enjoy whatever their passion but we want a better appreciation and awareness amongst different users of the aspirations, impacts and shared opportunities amongst them all.
 - We recognise the contribution that anglers and clubs already make to the network. Already there is an increasing amount of volunteering activity within the angling community ranging from volunteer bailiffing, litter picks, junior coaching and club working parties and now canal adoptions. However we believe that there is potential for more partnership working and improvements to the waterways from volunteering if we can develop and share a common purpose, develop relationships and work together for the long term. Anglers can become an army of local volunteers to help improve their patch and look after it in the future.
 - Angling can be the catalyst for empowering local people to become active citizens and it can bring people together, changing perceptions and encouraging care of their local environment. Around 50% of the population of England & Wales live within a 5 mile travelling distance of a canal and many canals run through urban areas. Therefore the potential pool of people who 'live on the doorstep' and the potential for angling is huge. Our aim is to get more of these people fishing, caring for the environment and supporting the Trust in its activities. We want to highlight and extend involvement of our waterways to individuals and groups to use angling to drive the personal and community benefits that we now know angling can provide.⁸

How have we put together this strategy

We have consulted extensively with over 300 angling clubs, associations and development agencies. We are grateful to the Environment Agency & Angling Trust for allowing us to reference and use the research work they undertook to formulate our own strategy. We are also grateful to members of our Angling Advisory Board who offered sensible and enthusiastic advice throughout.

⁸ Fishing for Answers – Final report of the Social and Community Benefits of Angling Project: Substance, 2012

What we are going to do in the future

The Trust's 'Shaping our future – Strategic priorities' document clearly sets out the aspirations for the future. These are:

- Canals and rivers open and accessible for everyone
- More people inspired to enjoy canals and rivers and support our work
- Financial security
- Delivering on charitable objectives
- Impact on scarce environmental resources minimised

The Trust established as a respected and trusted guardian of our canals and rivers. In addition to the above the Trust also has a set of charitable objectives⁹ which include a range of actions for public benefit.

We believe angling clubs and anglers can contribute to the achievement of these aspirations in a number of ways.

- Anglers have been and continue to be at the forefront of looking after the environment; reporting pollution, pushing for environmental improvements, controlling and managing angling activity to ensure the resource is managed sustainably for the future.
- Angling already has many links to the school curriculum and could do more
- Angling has been shown to improve people's lives – improve educational attainment, improve physical and mental health, reduce crime and antisocial behaviour, improve personal esteem and effectiveness

We are a new organisation with new ambitions to raise the profile of angling, to engage staff and volunteer within the organisation and with angling interests outside.

The new national angling strategy, **Fishing for Life**¹⁰ produced by the Angling Trust and the Environment Agency lists four specific objectives for angling to achieve. We will adopt these four objectives for our own strategy as they correlate strongly with our own strategic priorities and our charitable objectives. We will also invest in communication and education initiatives to ensure the profile and visibility of inland waterway angling improves. Our strategy will be focussed on the following areas;

- Getting the fishing habit
- Transforming and changing lives
- Creating community waters
- Hands up for the Environment

⁹ <http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/publication-scheme/legal-and-governance/legal-documents>

¹⁰ www.anglingtrust.net/nationalanglingstrategy



1. Getting the fishing habit

We want to increase the number of people visiting and using our waterways, and enjoying life enriching experiences. We can increase the use of the waterways by involving more young people in angling from an early age; we know that many current anglers started fishing at an early age, between 4 and 16 years old¹¹, usually introduced by a family member. With their relatively low day membership cost compared to other locations, closeness to centre of population and resulting low travel costs, canals are ideal venues to teach people how to fish, a skill and pastime that can be enjoyed for a lifetime. We need to encourage our customer clubs to do more to introduce more young people to angling and we will open discussions with them about how this can happen. We want our clubs to actively participate in National Fishing Month and Take a Friend Fishing, and develop approaches such as 'Dads & lads', buddy systems and family events. With towpaths also usually flat, they are ideal locations for people who are less able and being so close to centres of population provide excellent links to wider sectors of society.



¹¹ National Angling Survey, 2012

We want to be open to new ideas and ways of attracting new people into angling and then into using our waterways e.g. Street fishing¹². Our urban canals in Manchester, Birmingham, Leicester, Sheffield, Liverpool, London and Leeds are potentially well suited to this. We will work with the Angling Trust to identify pilot schemes to better understand how this approach will impact on the local environment, local people and leased fisheries nearby so as to avoid any concerns over short and long term impacts.

We will explore ways to find pathways to engage with young people, encourage existing clubs to run more matches and encourage take up of new forms of angling e.g. with kayaks.

We know that cost and having nowhere to fish locally are barriers to people starting and continuing in angling¹³ and that provision of good, safe access is one of the most important issues for developing participation.

- We will take opportunities created by our improvement and maintenance programmes to maintain and improve angling facilities and services which will be attractive to anglers and other waterway users including those that are less able.
- We will work through our Waterway Partnerships to progress projects important to the local community to identify where we may open up lengths suitable for improved access.
- We will look to maintain reasonable angling access compatible with our mooring policy. We will examine possibilities around bankside facilities which may only be available currently to boaters and raise awareness of them being more widely available for all users.

We need to increase the profile of angling with the public and within the Trust. Throughout the industry, there is a lack of readily available information on starting angling and places to go.

- We will provide information on angling in areas where the public congregate e.g. our museums and we will work with partners to provide opportunities for the public to try angling at events such as Open days e.g. Museums & Attractions open days, local and national waterway festivals.
- We will improve our website so that there is much more information available on places and how to go fishing, including for those parts of the network not in our ownership.
- We will work with others to identify the options for the establishment of a central resource which provides details of where to go fishing for new and experienced anglers alike. We can celebrate the value and benefits of angling and the wider network and activities through the establishment of an angling festival.

¹² Streetfishing is a phenomenon grown up in Europe which attracts young people into angling but also allows busy anglers to fit in fishing sessions between and after work. It attracts non-angling media and has a growing brand of associated gear and clothing.

¹³ National Angling Survey and National Organisation Survey



2. Transforming and changing lives

A research report by Substance¹⁴ identifies twelve reasons why angling is important to communities as it can achieve a wide range of health and wellbeing outcomes.

The added benefits of angling:

- A socially inclusive activity.
- Reduce social isolation through community engagement
- Strengthen family relationships through family-orientated activities
- Reduce anti-social behaviour in neglected spaces.
- Improve physical health
- Improve mental health
- Develop young people's resilience and coping strategies
- Encourage youth access to the benefits of green spaces.
- A resource for targeted intervention work.
- A resource for education and training.
- Encourage 'active ageing'.
- Facilitate inter-generational engagement

We are keen to realise these benefits for the communities who live and work on our waterways. We will establish partnerships with organisations which specialise in youth engagement and make our unlet canals available for them to use. We will also find opportunities to bring together our existing stakeholders of older generations with our younger audiences through angling activities.



Angling can encourage 'active ageing'

¹⁴ Making the Most of Community Waters - Localism, Health and Angling

3. Creating community waters

The research report by Substance¹⁵ identifies the opportunities for angling as a result of new Government policy relating to the localism agenda and new priorities in public health. Localism provides opportunities to:

- Empower communities
- Improve and increase the roles of social enterprises, cooperatives and civil society organisations (charities, community 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

“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.”

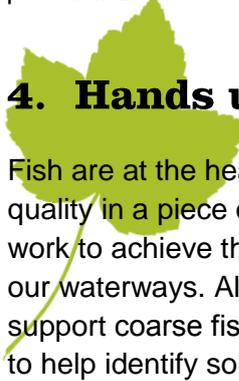
We can take the opportunities presented by this new Government agenda and our own aspirations to increase the length of canal let or managed by local community groups e.g. under other Canal Adoption scheme. We will need to develop our ideas and approach, identify suitable locations for a number of pilots and engage with partners with special skills and knowledge in this area. We will develop relationships with service providers about the opportunities we can take forward.

We will work with fisheries interests to develop local waterway access and ownership schemes for local areas e.g. Waterways Wanderers Birmingham, Manchester, London or in any urban area where some of the fishing rights are not let. This will include exploring opportunities with specialist angling society and clubs e.g. Lure Angling Society and the Pike Anglers Club of Great Britain.

In addition, the establishment of a regional & national competitions structure will have economic benefits locally for leasing clubs, pubs and restaurants, accommodation providers not only for the day of the events but for visiting anglers who come to practice fishing the venue. These events provide the opportunity to draw in other partnership groups and possible sponsorship. Some venues may be able to stage bigger international events providing opportunities to work with local tourist interests.



¹⁵ Making the Most of Community Waters - Localism, Health and Angling



4. Hands up for the environment

Fish are at the heart of angling and the environment. Fish are a key indicator of water quality in a piece of European legislation called the Water Framework Directive. We will work to achieve the targets set out in the directive to achieve good ecological potential for our waterways. Although virtually all the network has water quality of sufficient standard to support coarse fisheries, where it doesn't e.g. River Lee, we will work with other partners to help identify solutions and actions to take forward to improve the situation.

- We will use fish stocks from our reservoirs and from unfished lengths of canal to supplement stocks in lengths where evidence demonstrates they are below fish stock carrying capacity.
- We will continue to improve fish passage for eel, elver, and other migratory fish, and to a lesser extent coarse fish; working through a national partnership with the Environment Agency and the Rivers Trust movement to prioritise locations for action and identify funding sources (it will not be possible for us to meet all expectations on fish passage on our assets on through our resources alone).
- We will also endeavour to take opportunities to improve habitat and provide wetlands where we can as part of our on-going maintenance programme of works.

From time to time there will be issues around pollution and we will take steps to minimize any impact and take remedial action as soon as is practical in partnership with the Environment Agency and other partners. We will continue to protect fisheries resources during our routine engineering activities and by carrying out fish rescues when required.

The main issues impacting locally on angling relate to invasive species and improved understanding of the waterway environment. There are volunteer opportunities in this area. For example, clubs may be able to carry out Invasive plant distribution surveys in areas not covered by our inspections and control & management activities on the waters that they lease. In some instances clubs may in future take part in organised non native species control activities e.g. signal crayfish trapping at such locations as the Kennet & Avon, Oxford, and Grand Union Canal. Signal crayfish are an introduced species that are spreading rapidly, out competing native crayfish and damaging fisheries and the wider environment. We already allow clubs to undertake limited trapping at pegs while fishing but we are investigating the viability of more widespread controls which, if approved, would need the active involvement angling clubs to implement successfully.

In the past, volunteering effort from angling clubs has largely been confined to club committee and bailiffing activities as a result of perceived strict health & safety processes. Now, without compromising health & safety, the Trust has been able to establish a system of volunteering which provides more freedom for groups to take charge of their own local actions under guidance of the Trust. Furthermore, by adopting self certification processes, it will be possible for more tasks to be carried out unaided. We will encourage more volunteering opportunities involving anglers by developing innovative and attractive offers.

Zander are a non-native species that are present in around 250 miles of canal, dominating fish stocks and spreading further from their existing distribution. The result is a loss of amenity, income and participation opportunities. We need to manage the fishery e.g. take opportunities for a predator club to run the fishery, or find novel ways of limiting their distribution and controlling their numbers.

Angling can take a lead and be seen at the forefront of delivering environmental improvements on these key issues affecting canal fishing. We will provide support in gaining the necessary approvals, the equipment to carry out the tasks. We will look for funding from new sources e.g. Awards for All to help deliver this work.

Education

Good fishing relies on having healthy fish populations; fish stocks in the network are comprised of coarse fish that are well suitable to the water quality. They provide the food for otters, kingfishers, cormorants, herons and other predators including other fish such as pike and zander. But this activity goes generally unnoticed. We need to change the view that out of sight is out of mind and link what is underwater to the local natural environment and something that we need to look after. We want to build awareness in children and young people about what our environment holds to help deliver our charitable objectives of promoting and facilitating learning and education. Angling can be a first introduction to the natural environment and research has recorded that exposure at an early age provides long lasting benefits into later life.¹⁶ Our new learning programme called **Canal & River Explorers** will make these links between the natural food chain and wider environmental conditions.

Waterways are shared spaces, therefore the Trust and our partners will endeavour to create a mutual understanding of the needs of the various customer groups, thus minimizing conflict.

Delivery

Partnership

We anticipate much of this strategy will be delivered in partnership with others, and in particular by building stronger and better relationships with our angling clubs. Developing a new type of relationship will be essential to the future of inland waterway angling. We want our clubs to be partners in how we take forward this strategy for the long term. We will provide support, resources where we can and leadership through our national and local teams, and 13 Waterway Partnerships.

We recognise that partnerships and new ways of working will take time to become embedded and be the norm. We will work hard to take our new messages to our own staff and our partners through our existing structure and networks.



¹⁶ Stephen Moss, 2012, Natural Childhood, National Trust

Resources

We will look at sources of funding identified in the national angling strategy¹⁷; Fishing for Life, as well as sources not previously tested e.g. the Sport England Small Grants Programme.

We know that by working in partnership we can bring in new sources of funding not previously available. We will work closely with our Partnership Groups on identifying projects to bring forward for fundraising appeals and other funding opportunities. We recognise we will not be able to achieve everything all at once but that a phased approach will be necessary over a number of years.

We will recruit and employ a dedicated Angling Development Manager to take forward this strategy and develop a short and medium term action plan to develop partnerships, seek funding and establish at least one flagship project in each waterway area.

Communication

We know we need to work hard and with others to make the convincing arguments for the benefits of angling as a whole. We will tell what is good and enjoyable about angling, the work anglers do and the benefits angling provides. We will generate positive news stories of events, people and fishing news to demonstrate successes and benefits, and the fun people have using the canals. This will need angling clubs to let us know what they are doing and have planned – the establishment of a calendar of events across all users would be a useful starting point in raising awareness and avoiding potential conflicts. We will work with the media to raise the profile of canals. Only then will the benefits for young people and local communities really shine through.

But what we also want to achieve through this strategy is a new feel for how people, including anglers, look and use the canals. We want them to care for them, nurture and cherish them. As part of this we want to be able to talk directly with our individual angling customers. We will examine ways in which this can happen e.g. through social networking, linking clubs and CRT websites. We will also produce a Fisheries and Angling Newsletter for our clubs and anglers.

A new organisation provides opportunities for new approaches. The actions we describe can only be delivered if the angling community is involved in shaping how we work across all our activities, to be outward looking, to increase dialogue with other users to raise awareness and avoid potential conflicts. We will strive to ensure that angling matters are properly considered and discussed at forums such as the trust Council and Waterway Partnerships and that the angling community are represented and heard.

We will continue to use the experience, knowledge and advice provided by our National Angling Advisory group in guiding our actions and providing feedback as a critical friend.



¹⁷ Fishing for life, page 26