

fishing for the future

Angling in 2015

Our plan to increase participation



We are the Environment Agency. It's our job to look after your environment and make it a **better place** – for you, and for future generations.

Your environment is the air you breathe, the water you drink and the ground you walk on. Working with business, Government and society as a whole, we are making your environment cleaner and healthier.

The Environment Agency. Out there, making your environment a better place.

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March 2006



Foreword

Angling is good for our health, the economy and the environment. Last year more than 4 million people went fishing. We want to increase this number and the benefits it can bring.

I am pleased to introduce our strategic plan. It shows how we want to develop angling opportunities, let more people know about angling and encourage them to take up the sport. This plan is part of our overall fisheries strategy '*Better fisheries for our nations*' and our strategy for water-related sports and recreation.

We listened to a wide range of views from the world of angling when we were putting this plan together. We used this advice to shape our role and develop opportunities to work together. We want to work with individuals, groups and organisations to champion angling and increase the popularity and success of the sport over the next ten years.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dafydd Evans', written over a horizontal line.

Dafydd Evans
Head of Fisheries

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The Plan

“Our vision for angling”

Everyone will have the opportunity to enjoy a high quality environment, now and for future generations. More people will care for, use, appreciate and enjoy their environment.

While our overall fisheries strategy – Better fisheries for our nations – and recreation strategy set out how we are contributing to that vision, this document looks specifically at making more people aware of angling and getting more people from different backgrounds to take up the sport.

Our aim

We want to make fisheries more valuable within England and Wales. One of the ways we will do this is by increasing the contribution angling makes to society, the economy and the environment. To do this, we need more chances for more people to fish and we need our fisheries to perform better.

Specific results we want to see

By 2015, we want to make significant progress towards achieving the following three important results.

There are more fishing opportunities on rivers, lakes and canals and more information is available about them.

More people, from a wider range of backgrounds, go fishing.

Our fisheries perform better and angling keeps growing.

Our role in fisheries

To get the results we want, we need to make sure people understand our role better.

The Environment Act (1995) says we must: ‘maintain improve and develop salmon and freshwater fisheries’. More recent Government guidance says we must do this in a way that enhances the social and economic benefits from fishing.

The Environment Act also states that we must promote recreation on or near inland and coastal waters and its associated land.

The importance of angling

Our figures show that more than 4 million people, over 12 years old, in England and Wales went angling last year. This has led to 20,000 jobs in support industries and a total spending of up to £2.75 billion each year on the sport.

Angling is proving to be good for self-esteem and well-being. We have supported several projects that have shown that an interest in angling can also be a powerful and cost-effective way of tackling anti-social behaviour, educational under-achievement and youth crime.

As well as bringing important environmental benefits, our work in developing angling creates significant contributions to the Governments’ social and economic priorities. That is why in 2002, following an independent review of fisheries policy and legislation, the Governments of England and Wales significantly strengthened our role in developing angling.

In Wales, the Assembly Government contributes to a £2.5million, three year, EU Objective 1 funded project aimed at developing angling. This also leads to great opportunities for the countryside and tourism.

Benefits, opportunities and pressures – what our research tells us about angling.

Participation

- 2.6 million (6%) of the 43 million people aged over 12 in England and Wales went fishing in freshwaters in the last year. 1.5 million people fished just in the sea. With over 4 million people fishing last year, it is probably the nation's favourite outdoor participation sport. Even more people fish less frequently, with 20% (8.3 million) having been freshwater fishing in the last 10 years.
- About as many people again would like to try or return to angling if it were easier for them.
- People tell us that:
 - having someone to fish with,
 - knowing where to go
 - and being able to borrow fishing tackleare the three key developments that will make it easier for them to take-up fishing.
- People from a very wide range of socio-economic groups go fishing and it is a favoured sport among people with disabilities. However, few women or people from black and minority ethnic groups take up the sport compared to the general population.



Social, economic and environmental benefits

- Estimates suggest that the annual economic activity associated with angling is up to £2.75 billion, employing around 20,000 people either full or part-time.
- Truancy rates and anti-social behaviour have fallen greatly, while self-esteem and educational achievement have gone up significantly among young people who have taken part in specialist angling projects. Smaller scale projects with people with physical and mental disabilities are now achieving the same impressive results.
- Four million anglers make up an important interest group for a better and protected environment.

Countryside Live

Together with the Joint Angling Development Board (JADB), we contribute to angling activities at events, which aim to give children from deprived towns and cities a chance to experience the countryside. The Countryside Foundation for Education organises these events and Local Education Authorities organise school trips to them. Children can take part in a wide range of activities, but angling is usually the most popular choice for both boys and girls alike, irrespective of their background. After some tuition, most find it hard to stop fishing at the end of the session.

Often these children have little awareness of their environment – some of them cannot even recognise a chicken feather being used to make trout flies when they first come along. Pond dipping and close up contact with fish help give them a basic understanding of how important a clean environment is.



Angling opportunity

- Urban development has meant that the opportunity to fish has been lost on over 250,000 ponds. However, there are new opportunities thanks to the restoration of hundreds of kilometres of once-polluted urban rivers and canals. The main problems left to solve will be of access and establishing these places as fisheries.
- Fisheries with a commercial outlook are creating many new angling opportunities, often with good access to the waterside.
- More opportunities to fish mean that anglers are spread more thinly, making it look like there are a lot less people fishing than is the case. It is easy to underestimate angling's popularity. It is a quiet, unobtrusive sport and anglers are spread along thousands of kilometres of waterside.

Pressures

- In our role as regulator, we need to make sure that we conserve the fish stocks on which angling depends, and that we help prevent parasites, diseases or inappropriate fish species spreading.
- We need to help prevent the potential damage to wildlife from litter or discarded fishing tackle by educating and informing people better.
- All sports are finding it difficult to get people involved. However, compared to most, even football, it is holding its position well. It is frequently claimed that the angling club structure is losing-out to the independent 'commercial' fisheries and that fewer people are using river fisheries. We need to understand this better.
- While the majority, (71%) of people see angling and the associated benefits as positive, some (8%) do not find angling acceptable, the remainder not expressing an opinion (2005).



Getting results

We want:

People to understand our role better

We want to work together productively with those people developing angling and those people who will benefit from more opportunities to fish.

It is part of our role to help increase the numbers of people going fishing, which, in turn, will bring social, economic and environmental benefits. Administration of angling as a sport is the role of the Joint Angling Development Board (JADB). Sport England has given the JADB members the responsibility to implement a 4-year Whole Sport Development plan. Wales Angling Coaching Foundation (WACF) plays a similar role for the Sports Council for Wales. However, there are also many other, independent, bodies making important contributions, for example UK Youth, Dreamstore or Get Hooked on Fishing (GHOF).



What we will do

- For the time being we would like JADB and WACF to be our main strategic partners for developing angling. We will also work with other groups as appropriate.
- The JADB and WACF are the recognised 'Governing Bodies' for angling and we will seek to support development of their role.

Angling's strength lies in getting lots of people to take up the sport and so we will get the best results through local groups and organisations. However, we also recognise the need to improve administration and coaching skills nationally to support local activity.

What we will do

- We will continue to fund our work in developing angling through the sale of rod licences, plus any external funds we can secure. We plan to fund this work at today's level for the current 4-year JADB Whole Sport Plan for Angling, and will review the position for future years. This is in addition to our involvement in the Wales Sustainable Fisheries Programme.
- We will work to establish strategic priorities and initiatives with national angling bodies, such as JADB and WACF. Our direct contributions, both funding and support activity, will be aimed mostly at the grass roots level. We will work with local partnerships and help set up angling events or projects that can support themselves. Usually we will not continue as a major funding partner for more than 3 years.



We want:

More information to be available about the wide range of fishing opportunities on rivers, lakes and canals.

We want more people to be able to take up angling irrespective of where they live, their gender, race, age or ability.

Improving access and opportunity

We need to create good quality angling opportunities on inland and coastal waters, within easy reach of people's homes. To do this, we need to use our research to find out where there are existing and potential angling opportunities.

It is clear that urban and deprived areas will benefit a great deal from better angling opportunities. This is especially true for young people, or those who find it difficult to travel a long way to go fishing.

Rivers and canals provide many potential new angling opportunities but we must consider access and safety, especially in urban reaches. In many cases development has made access to the waterside difficult.

People can fish along thousands of kilometres of rivers and on many stillwaters by joining a club or buying a day ticket. But it is not always easy to get information, especially if you are a beginner. This lack of information has prevented many people taking up angling.

What we will do

- Where there are people wanting to fish, we will look at any opportunity to restore, refurbish or even help create new fisheries – especially in urban and deprived areas. If we own the fishery we will let people carry on angling, wherever feasible.

- As polluted fisheries are improved and opened again, we will improve access for the public and tell people about this.

- We will continue to give out information about where to fish through our publications and on our website, also including information about local angling representatives and coaches. We will continue to work with angling bodies to produce good quality angling instruction packs and codes of good angling practice.

Angling tuition

Many people have promoted the development of a network of angling centres, along the lines of

sports centres, to introduce and keep people fishing by using resident licensed coaches. Sport England and Sports Council for Wales have moved away from such projects due to cost and risk. Our own experiences lead us to agree with their views, for the time being at least.

Beginner's angling sessions have proved extremely popular across England and Wales. However, only a proportion of new anglers will take up angling through organised events. If we give people the right information, they can take up fishing in a way that suits them.

As a Government Agency we must support the measures regarding child safety and angling. A well-run and widespread network of coaches is essential if angling is to create productive relationships with key organisations such as local authorities, youth organisations or regional sports councils.

Schools and youth organisations

We are keen to expand the current pilot scale school and youth club based projects that we support, provided there is a consistent approach that sets angling in an environmental or 'natural history' context. JADB should continue to lead this initiative in England, WACF for Wales.

We have a role to continue to promote the social, economic and environmental benefits of angling.

We have a role to continue to promote the social, economic and environmental benefits of angling to national and local government and the general public. To do this successfully we need sound information.

What we will do

- We will undertake a programme of research that:
 - Assesses the scope of these benefits
 - Quantifies them
 - Identifies the best way to deliver them
 - Monitors success

Potential anglers

People who might take-up angling fall into three groups:

- Those who have fished but have stopped
- Those who would like to try but haven't yet
- Those who have never thought of it

We need to find the best ways of reaching these groups.

What we will do

- Using good research we will continue to develop the best approach to encourage each of the identified groups to take-up fishing.

- We will continue to carry out research to find out good examples from the range of angling events we support. For the moment we will continue to support:
 - Short 'taster' sessions
 - A smaller number of more closely focussed projects using advanced coaching

- And we will support external projects where:
 - There are contributing partnerships
 - Organisers collect information on those people who take part and ask them for permission to be contacted for follow-up surveys

We sponsor the Scout Association's angling badge and are beginning to work more with major national youth organisations, such as UKYouth and Clubs for Young People.

There is a need for a universal framework for helping beginners learn to fish and recognising their achievements. We feel that the JADB and WACF should lead in this, while including others.

What we will do

- We will support the JADB, WACF and others in producing high quality training courses and materials for novice anglers.

- We support proposals that clubs and angling projects should train local angling coaches. On a case by case basis, we will consider offering financial support.

- We will support a properly co-ordinated, knowledge-based, programme of getting more people fishing in schools and youth organisations. We will consider helping develop and publish support materials.

- We will focus our resources on making sure as many people as possible can take up fishing at existing local fisheries and we will work to restore or create new angling opportunities.



Angling and tourism

Given that 20% of the population over 12 years old has fished sometime in the past 10 years and many people fish in our major tourist areas, angling should be considered seriously in tourism initiatives. While angling tourism projects have been successful locally, for example on the Southern Chalk Rivers or in the West Country, only in Wales has a structured large-scale programme been implemented, and with great success. We believe there is potential to expand the model used in Wales to benefit more areas of the country, especially rural areas.

What we will do

- Regional Development Agencies are responsible for developing tourism and we will seek opportunities to work with them to include angling within their Regional Tourism Strategies and, in turn, to raise awareness among tourism operators.

We want:

More people, from a wider range of backgrounds, to go fishing.

We want more people to know about and be interested in angling and for those people who do fish to more closely reflect our society as a whole.

Angling's media profile

The popularity of angling alone is not enough to generate strong media interest to raise the sport's profile and encourage more people to take it up. It is not an obviously strong spectator sport. Yet, successes like 'A Passion for Angling', show angling programmes can have mass media appeal. Similarly, National Fishing Week was positively promoted to over 10 million viewers and listeners on terrestrial channels in each of the last two years. Social benefits from angling were at the heart of two Midlands based angling projects, winning their heats by popular vote in ITV's 2005 People's Lottery Millions series.

What we will do

- We will continue to promote events like National Fishing Week as a major flagship for angling. We will also consider supporting other initiatives, such as television and radio programmes or publishing features, designed to raise angling's positive media profile.

Diversity in angling

Age profile

We believe that our work should continue to focus on young people. Not only do they show a high level of interest in angling and the wider environment, but they could also potentially be fishing for many years. However, older people, especially those between 50 and 60 years old, are also very interested in angling. This group tends to have more money to spend and more leisure time, so they could be active tourists as well as potential coaches and angling scheme leaders.

What we will do

- While we want to appeal to all ages, we will focus our efforts on two age groups; 12-16 years and 50 plus.



Angling for disabled people

Disabled people are very interested in angling and for many more this could significantly improve their quality of life. While there is enormous scope to turn this interest into angling activity, we have some significant issues of access to address.

Women and angling

Only 1 to 2% of women in England and Wales regularly fish, yet in the USA 26% (8.4 million) of anglers are women. Our information showed that many women were interested in taking up fishing, so we supported the JADB programme to get more fishing in 2005. Wales Ladies Angling Division (WLAD) has a programme that aims to recruit women as angling coaches.

Black and minority ethnic groups

Our research shows that very few people in our five major ethnic groups know much about or are interested in angling. Yet, events aimed at or involving ethnic groups have been popular.

What we will do

- We will work with and support angling's disability representatives to help more disabled people to take up angling. We will improve access at the fisheries we own. We will also support good initiatives aimed at improving access for disabled people to a wider range of fisheries.

- We will continue to support the JADB programme in England and WLAD project for Wales, both aimed at encouraging more women into angling.

- We will continue to help increase the numbers of people from black and minority ethnic groups fishing through our local diversity action plans and working with community representatives.

We want:

Our fisheries to perform better and angling to keep growing.

We want angling to grow so more people are aware of it and how it helps improve the environment for fish, wildlife and people.

Managing our fisheries responsibly

We are committed to managing our fisheries and developing angling in a way that protects the environment. Our overall strategy – Better fisheries for our nations – shows our overall position on managing our fisheries.

What we will do

- All our work in developing angling will be guided by sound scientific knowledge of anglers, the underlying fish stocks and habitats. We will continue to be involved in producing angling 'Codes of Conduct', together with angling bodies, and will work with the Institute of Fisheries Management to improve and promote good management of our fisheries.

- We will support the JADB's proposal for a good fishery management award scheme if it is based upon sound principles.

Public support for angling

Although there is a great deal of support for angling from the general public, there are some perception issues that we need to understand and address. These include:

- not everybody understands how popular angling is and the social and economic benefits it brings;

We are committed to managing our fisheries and developing angling in a way that protects the environment.

- not many people appreciate what anglers do to care for and protect the water environment;
- some people are concerned that angling might impact on wildlife and the environment;
- a small minority of people (8%) finds angling unacceptable.

What we will do

- Using sound information, we will promote the popularity, interest in and benefits of angling. From time to time, we will also carry out research into public attitudes to angling.
- Using our research results, we will continue to let more people know how popular angling is and about the benefits it brings. We will also look at the best ways of generating those benefits, keeping local and central government informed as we progress.

Better funding to develop angling

Angling's administration often finds it hard to raise income to support its role. Although there is a large number of anglers, they are spread out in many different locations and often difficult to contact and motivate. On the other hand, it is unlikely that Government, or other funding bodies, will increase funding unless

the angling administration is united, accountable and able to bring about agreed results.

When this plan is implemented, there will be many more people fishing and this will help to fund more work to develop angling further. There are also many other potential funding sources that angling might benefit from. As a Government body, we cannot access many of them. However, local and national angling representatives could make more effective applications to Lottery, Sports Council or other development funds. The JADB Whole Sport Plan for Angling, the Fishing in Wales project and now this strategic plan will strongly support future funding applications.

What we will do

- We would welcome angling bodies being able to speak with one voice and, therefore, welcome the formation of the Fisheries and Angling Conservation Trust (FACT). Where we can, we will support them and work in partnership.
- We will work in partnership to support funding initiatives that bring about the results outlined in this plan.

Keeping people fishing

We can introduce people to fishing, but we need to keep them involved. Our pilot schemes show that there is more chance of doing this if new anglers are part of an angling club. This may also provide greater social benefits by getting people involved in activities within their community. So, in principle, we support breathing new life into the club structure. We support JADB and Sport England's focus on Club Mark that recognises excellence. We also feel that support and advice about management and development should be provided to the clubs.

What we will do

- Although we recognise that commercially run fisheries have an important role to play in introducing and helping keep people fishing, we also believe the angling club structure should be maintained and improved – this will lead to more social benefits.
- We will continue to monitor the number of people buying or not renewing rod licences and relate this information to other initiatives. We will try to understand the reasons why people stop fishing and, where appropriate, encourage them to go fishing again.

Watching how we are doing

In this section we give a summary of the work needed to get the results we want to see. We also show how we will measure our progress.

Measuring our progress – how well are we doing?

People understand our role better

We want to work productively with those people developing angling and those people who will benefit from more opportunities to fish.

We will know that we are making progress when:

- feedback tells us people understand and accept our role;
- there is an increase in the number and quality of partnership initiatives;
- Governments increase funding to develop angling.

Result 1: There are more fishing opportunities on rivers, lakes and canals and more information is available about them.

We want more people to be able to take up angling irrespective of where they live, their gender, their race, or ability.

We will know we have been successful when:

- there are 2% more people fishing each year;
- people are not prevented from fishing due to a lack of information about local access and tuition;
- there are enough angling coaches (about 2000 we think) to meet demand and support angling initiatives across England and Wales.

Result 2: More people, from a wider range of backgrounds, go fishing.

We want more people to know about and be interested in angling and, for those people who do fish, to more closely reflect our society as a whole.

We will know that we are making progress when:

- more people say they are interested in angling;
- the number of 12-16 year olds and people with disabilities buying rod licences have both risen by 20%;
- women and people from black and minority ethnic groups buying rod-licences have all doubled by 2011.

Result 3: Our fisheries perform better and angling keeps growing.

We want angling to grow so more people understand it and it helps improve the environment for fish, wildlife and people.

We will know we have been successful when:

- monitoring shows fish populations remain stable or improve;
- our data shows new anglers continue to fish, and the number of people stopping fishing reduces;
- more fisheries follow codes of good practice;
- the general public continues to support angling;
- funding for angling increases.

Timetable for getting results

We have put a copy of the detailed timetable for delivering our results on our web site. We will update this regularly. If you would like to find out more, please go to:

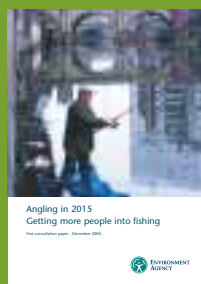
www.environment-agency.gov.uk/fish

We will publish a performance review showing where we have been successful, and why we have changed any of our positions shown in this plan.

Relevant Information

You may be interested in the following related Environment Agency publications:

- Creating a better place: corporate strategy 2006-2011
- A better place to play
Our strategy for water related sport and recreation 2006-2011
- Cleaner coasts, healthier seas: Working for a better marine environment
Our strategy for 2005-2011
- Your Rivers for Life
A strategy for the development of navigable rivers 2004-2007
- Soil, the hidden resource. Towards an Environment Agency Strategy for Soil Protection, management and Restoration – a consultation document
- Our nations' fisheries
The migratory and freshwater fisheries of England and Wales – a snapshot
- A better environment, healthier fisheries
Better fisheries for our nations. Our strategy for 2006-2011
- Waterways Management Plans
We have nine Waterways Management Plans covering the rivers over which we are the Navigation Authority. The Plans are part of our navigation strategy, Your Rivers for Life.



Angling in 2015: Getting more people into fishing

In Spring 2005 we undertook an open consultation that acted as the platform for this Plan. Find a copy online at www.environment-agency.gov.uk

To talk about any aspect of this plan contact Richard Wightman, Angling development manager. You can reach him on angling2015@environment-agency.gov.uk

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