



Virtual Fisheries Forum 01/12/2021 (Fishing rod license sales and marketing)

Q&A session

Q. Is there any particular demographics of people who have been observed or shown to be more likely to adopt angling as a hobby becoming regular license holders and has this changed historically?

A. (Steve Chambers) We have seen success amongst family groups who were looking for an activity to do collectively with the adults and children together. There are many groups unfortunately who are underrepresented in the sport.

A. (James Roche) Children around 8-10 is a good age range for being receptive to our Get Fishing events. The collective family appeal of the activity has definitely been evident from my observations.

Q. Will any of the Rod Licence Money raised help removal of illegally moored boats on the River Thames?

A. (Steve Chambers) It wouldn't be appropriate to spend fishing licence income on this but if you contact the Environment Agency incident line on 0800 80 70 60 with any specific incidents, they will pass it on to the correct team.

Q. Has the EA found any correlation between factors such as the cost of angling, reduced availability of quality open access waters or the rise in veganism to the lack of younger people taking up the hobby?

A. (Steve Chambers) Adults having a lack of dispensable free time is the biggest factor by far as indicated by our research. Technology obviously is a big competing factor to occupy younger people for their entertainment and this will not change. Life has got more expensive over the last decade also so dispensable income for leisure activities is definitely a factor.

Q. What is the Environment Agency doing to advertise angling currently and in the near future plus why do we not see television adverts for fishing licenses anymore?

A. (Steve Chambers) We used to have television adverts and got some great deals with TV companies for this publicity but in 2010 the coalition government introduced austerity putting a stop to advertising by their public bodies. The government did not want public bodies spending public money to advertise their services. The current government allows more scope for advertising, but we are still not able to achieve the level we did previously due to lack of finances available to do so.

A. (Alex Clegg) That is also where the AT comes in to help push angling participation and the correct legal procedures of purchasing licencing documents to fish. The Get Fishing campaign with it's events and information sharing particularly.

Q. Why is the cost of the 1-day licence so high? In order to bring people into the sport would a lower token cost not be more effective. Who decides these tariffs?

A. (Steve Chambers) Prices are always under review. The Government itself is who would have to decide on any price change. We have to balance costs with income as well. Still from my experience fishing abroad, compared to other countries our Environment Agency 1 day license fee is a considerably lesser proportion of the annual license fee. We have only had one price increase which was in 2017 and that was secured through pledging a case to the government for approval. We try and keep the license fees as low as possible, so it is not a barrier to new people entering the sport.

A. (Alex Clegg) To add in the "Take A Friend Fishing" Scheme is another participation driver which the Environment Agency run each year so potential anglers can legally try the sport free of charge in terms of rod licensing.

Q. What would be the process for getting a Get Fishing event arranged and executed successfully?

A. (James Roche) We have a team of regional development officers covering England. The most local to the planned event area would take

charge. Many of our events come about where clubs/fisheries contact our officers to express their interest in hosting an event, but they need guidance and help with the advertising and administration which we can guide them through as we have all the resources available. If you contact me, I can direct you to the regional officer most appropriate to you.

Q. Could you share some information around the marketing and how this is designed to impact perception of anglers and angling in general, positivity?

A. (James Roche) We have a dedicated marketing team for our Get Fishing campaign that focus on pushing entry level grass roots angling. We like to see family groups in particular engage with our Get Fishing events, so we incorporate this into our advertising strategies such as with imagery of families enjoying themselves fishing. We also like to push angling using simple and affordable equipment to maximise the entry level attractiveness. Non anglers will be less attracted to give fishing a go if there is a perception you can only do it if you have expensive specialist equipment.

A. (Steve Chambers) A point to touch on is that we as anglers are all well aware of the benefits our sport provides however, the general public are not. Angles such as the relaxation and mental health boost are key for us to utilise so that the general public are aware angling is a good thing even if they do not participate. Public perception is critical.

Q. With people now taking more staycations would it be worth contacting holiday parks that have fishing facilities and offering a coach to let people give it a try while on holiday?

A. (James Roche) There is a few examples of holiday parks that have been involved with us and our coaches. The last 18 months had made it tricky to arrange events or pursue plans we had drawn up pre pandemic, but we are having these conversations once again.

Q. Steve do you think the rise in stay cations has led to an increase in short period licenses being purchased such as the 1-day or 1-week licences?

A. (Steve Chambers) I certainly think increasing staycation popularity will benefit angling participation and when people remain in England for their holidays, they are much more likely to want to try fishing thus hopefully purchasing 1-day or 1-week licenses.

Q. What kind of licence evasion rates do you think we are seeing?

A. (Steve Chambers) Around 5% is what we are seeing. The platforms of license display are changing to digital format in the near future and our methods of checking licenses already orientate around a database as many people do not have their license card on the bank despite being legally rod licensed so we can check through searching their details.

Q. Have there been any considerations to enable rod licence purchasing in more locations/vendors such as tackle shops and at fisheries on the bank?

A. (Steve Chambers) The more places we have selling licences the more expensive distribution becomes as we need to pay commission and it becomes harder to keep track of money etc. It is so easy now to buy online instantaneously that the digital way is our main focus. The main government are pushing for digital to be the norm in all processes really.

Q. On the subject of licences are there any plans to make the security/legitimacy of licences better for example by adding a photo?

A. (Steve Chambers) It is something we will be looking at but not a plan to be executed for the coming years licenses.

Key contacts from this forum meeting:

- Steve Chambers (Environment Agency Senior business lead, licences and promotion) steve.chambers@environment-agency.gov.uk
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