

National Angling Strategy Annual Report 2021/22



Image source: Canal and River Trust



Foreword

Welcome to the National Angling Strategy Annual Report for 2021/22! This year saw a return to some sort of normality after the tumultuous period of COVID-19 in the previous year. That said many social restrictions were still in place throughout the majority of the year, however it did feel a bit more like 'business as usual' with a full calendar of angling participation events, project work being undertaken and further strengthening of partnership working arrangements to help bolster the push to fulfil the aims and objectives of the National Angling Strategy.

This year has seen some exciting incentives get underway such as the Angling Trust's 'Reel Education' schools programme backed by Shakespeare and Defra's new Fisheries and Seafood Scheme which will look to release investment into recreational sea angling. There was also the highlight of the Canal and Rivers Trust's National Celebration of Young People and Angling which attracted a record attendance! (You can read more about all of these in the report).



Image Source: Canal and River Trust

These are just some of the examples of the wide and varied range of work that is underway to try and help grow angling as a sport, to help people connect with the outdoors, become active and at the same time improve their health and wellbeing. Many of the case studies in this report detail the amazing work the angling community have undertaken, with most of this being led by willing volunteers trying to give something back to their sport.

The work highlighted here is only a snapshot of the huge amount that is taking place on the ground working towards the aims and objectives of the [National Angling Strategy](#). For more information about this Annual Report or the Strategy in general please contact Tom Sherwood (tom.sherwood@environment-agency.gov.uk).

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Introduction

In this report for 2021/22 we aim to showcase some of the exciting work that has been carried out by the angling community in contributing to the aims and objectives of the National Angling Strategy.

The National Angling Strategy 'Angling for Good' was launched in June 2019. It is a partnership-led strategy that was developed by consultation with the angling community key partners, angling charities and other interested organisations and using feedback from the National Angling Survey in which over 35,000 people took part.

The aims of the National Angling Strategy are to:

1. Increase participation in angling to:
 - a. Increase the numbers of people getting active outdoors through angling.
 - b. Improve the health and well-being of those that take part.
 - c. Help people and communities develop with skills, education, volunteering and facilities.

2. Connect more people to nature through angling for their well-being and to improve the environment.

3. Increase the economic impact of angling and in particular deliver economic benefits in rural and coastal communities and revenue to clubs, fisheries and businesses.

These aims are being delivered through the following six objectives:

- Objective 1 - Develop awareness and knowledge of angling
- Objective 2 - Increase participation in angling
- Objective 3 - Develop social benefits through angling
- Objective 4 - Develop Sustainable Places to Fish
- Objective 5 - Increase angling's economic impact
- Objective 6 - Understand angling data and evidence

Through this report we will be taking a look at individual case studies from each of these objective areas.

Objective One: Develop awareness and knowledge of angling

Case Study 1: Get Fishing and We Fish as One campaigns

This year, the Angling Trust's ['Get Fishing' campaign](#) to get more people fishing more often, embarked on a new video digital marketing strategy with 3 aims: 1 - to encourage the non-angling public to come to a Get Fishing event, 2 - to help Get Fishing event attendees progress to become fishing licence holders and, 3 - to inspire existing anglers to keep fishing.

Get Fishing increasingly used Facebook and Instagram stories to keep up with current digital marketing developments and present beginner content in bite-size chunks on their timelines. This proved extremely popular and increased the campaign's reach and follows to unprecedented levels.



Image source: Angling Trust

The pure excitement captured in one [Get Fishing video 'Proud dad moment'](#) chimed with both anglers and non-anglers. With 930,000 views, 20,500 likes, 756 comments and 1,150 shares on Facebook it is the most successful Angling Trust video ever! This was also the year Get Fishing employed TikTok in its digital marketing mix. A [TikTok of Harry age 4 catching a big carp](#) went viral with 3,600,000 views that generated hundreds of questions about fishing.

To support [Sport England's 'Uniting the Movement' strategy](#), and in a bid to address, challenge and remove obstacles to diversity and inclusion in angling, Angling Trust expanded its ['We Fish as One' campaign](#). This raised interest from mainstream media and spread diversity and inclusion messages into the angling community via a [campaign toolkit](#) to provide partners such as clubs, coaches and fisheries the framework to adopt more inclusive ways of working.

We Fish as One campaign champion and Women's Carp Team England member [Aimee Eaton spoke out about fishing helping her to recover after experiencing domestic violence](#), and encouraged other victims to come forward and consider angling as a therapeutic hobby. It received widespread coverage in non-angling publications, notably [Yahoo News](#) and [The Independent](#).

With the continued Environment Agency and Sport England investment the social media marketing strategy to encourage, help and inspire new anglers exceeded targets with the highest growth in follows, reach, engagements, and impressions across all of platforms in any year since these campaigns launched. New and more diverse audiences were exposed to the appeal of fishing and ultimately - despite the last two year's challenges - these two highly effective Angling Trust marketing campaigns underpinned a correspondingly successful operational delivery programme that saw public attendance at Get Fishing events exceed all expectations in 2021/22.

For more information, please contact Will Smith (will.smith@anglingtrust.net).

Objective Two: Increase participation in angling

Case study 2: The Get Fishing Fund

Since its launch in 2020, the Get Fishing Fund has supported well over 200 projects nationally with fishing licence income to help get more people fishing. Over £300,000 of fishing licence income has supported angling clubs, fisheries, charities and schools purchase the resources needed to run events and activities to help make it easier for thousands of people to get into fishing. The fund is administered by the Angling Trust and supported by the Environment Agency.

Funded Project: POINT (www.point-send.co.uk)



Children enjoying a fishing session organised by POINT
Image source: Angling Trust

POINT is a charity based in the Northwest supporting children and young people with additional needs and/or disabilities.

Following a Get Fishing Fund grant, the charity rolled out a programme of angling activities to give the young people they support, the chance to get fishing.

Chris Hepburn, POINT Activities Manager commented, “the funding has enabled the charity to deliver angling activities to children and young people who have disabilities and/or additional needs. It has been a huge success with over 100

children and young people engaging in a sport that they never thought they would have been able to”.

Funded Project: Exeter and District Angling Association (www.exeteranglingassociation.co.uk)

Exeter and District Angling Association are a proactive angling club based in the Southwest. The club run a busy schedule of coaching events and the Get Fishing Fund has enabled them to engage even more people in angling.

Roly Palmer, the club’s licenced level 2 angling coach added, “the funding is imperative in allowing the club to purchase the required fishing equipment to enable the us to get more people fishing. We are running over 30 Get Fishing Award events this year and are really excited about getting started”.

For more information, please go to www.anglingtrust.net/funding/get-fishing-fund/



Youngsters with their Get Fishing awards
Image source: Angling Trust

Case study 3: The National Celebration of Young People and Fishing

The Canal & River Trust's (CRT) 'Let's Fish' programme successfully coaches thousands of people each year how to fish and the highlight of the year is the National Celebration of Young People and Fishing.

John Ellis CRT's National Fisheries and Angling Manager explains more, "creating an angling habit is one of the core philosophies of the Let's Fish programme. Friendly competition with a team component is one important way of achieving this objective. To achieve success in life and in sport people do best working as teams. Angling competes for a finite number of participants with many other sports. The most popular sports in the UK have one thing in common, namely a team component. For angling to appeal to the many who value being part of teams within sporting activity, it makes sense to offer this opportunity as part of the overall diverse package the sport has to offer".

Let's Fish believes the concept of team and healthy grass roots fun-based competition is an area that has been neglected in angling participation programmes for several decades. With administrative support from Angling Trust, CRT through 'Let's Fish' invested a total of over £14,000 hosting the 2021 national celebration of young people and fishing with a number of regional events feeding participants into the national celebration.



All smiles at the National Celebration of Young People and Angling
Image source: Canal & River Trust

The national celebration event has grown from just 17 participants in 2017 to the record entry of 202 in 2021. The entry comprised of 72 cadets (7 to 10 years) 112 juniors (11 to 15 years) and 18 youth (16 to 20 years). It was by some margin the largest young people's angling participation event in the UK and is believed to be the largest held since the 2009 Angling Trust junior national. Covered on Facebook live, the emphasis is on fun and all participants received a gudgeon

mug for landing a gudgeon and a perch badge for landing this species along with other prizes, some of which were donated by the angling trade. John added, "in 2022 we will be aiming for over 300 participants, made up of around 150 returnees and 150 first time participants. Additionally, as part of United by Birmingham, the community programme of the Commonwealth Games Let's Fish will deliver around 20 Regional Commonwealth Community fishing events".

Cadets Team Result:

1. Stoke on Trent AS 201 points
2. Crewe & Congleton 198 points
3. Ramsbottom All Stars 196 points

Junior Team Result

1. Sensas Smithy's 352
2. Ramsbottom Allstars 342
3. Team Ramsbottom 322

For more information, please contact John Ellis (john.ellis@canalrivertrust.org.uk)

Objective Three: Develop social benefits through angling

Case study 4: Get Fishing for Wellbeing

In 2021 the Angling Trust launched its Get Fishing for Wellbeing project to provide health workers - such as Community Link Workers and GPs - information about how fishing can be beneficial for conditions that can benefit from a 'Social Prescribing' approach to healthcare.

This includes societal disorders such as loneliness and inactivity, as well as the negative effects of illnesses such as anxiety and depression. By providing a connection between health workers, individual patients and quality assured Get Fishing for Wellbeing Approved Partners, the project is putting fishing into a toolkit of less-conventional ways to relieve long-term health and wellbeing conditions.



Dean Asplin an Angling Development Manager for the Angling Trust told us: "Fishing really can make a huge difference to those in need of support, and we identified a network of very active and professional angling organisations such as Tackling Minds, Help for Heroes, iCARP and Get Hooked on Fishing that already work in this sector. What was missing was a centralised resource hub to bring all of this

to within reach of the health, community, and social prescribing networks."

Richard Hadley, the Angling Trust's Lead Safeguarding Officer added: "In June I initiated a standard approval process where potential new providers were able to self-assess and then access any training, safeguarding and protocols needed. This provides a level of reassurance at which point the Angling Trust are happy to champion them to the link-working and NHS sector, as a Get Fishing for Wellbeing Approved Partner"

The system is simple and builds on existing competencies. It's proved incredibly popular, and the Angling Trust already has 30 partners registered with the aim being to double this by 2023. Get Fishing for Wellbeing success milestones in 2021 include:

- Get Fishing for Wellbeing webpage launched - info for potential patients and the Social Prescribing networks to understand what angling can offer at www.anglingtrust.net/getfishingforwellbeing
- Promotional PDF sent to all Social Prescribing networks to direct them and their patients to the website
- 10,000 'Get Fishing for Wellbeing' leaflets distributed to Social Prescribing networks and GP surgeries
- Number of Get Fishing for Wellbeing Approved Partners reaches 30
- Angling Trust and iCARP appear on 'Podcast on Prescription' as part of the National Academy for Social Prescribing: www.pod.co/podcast-on-prescription/dean-asplin-and-dr-mark-wheeler

Please give fishing a go – it can be a brilliant way to get relief from even the most persistent conditions, and the difference to health and wellbeing is often noticeable after even the first session. If you would like more information about Get Fishing for Wellbeing please contact Dean Asplin. dean.asplin@anglingtrust.net

Case Study 5: Get Hooked on Fishing – continuing to make a difference

Get Hooked on Fishing (GHoF) is a registered charity that provides positive experiences, life skills and opportunities. Using mentors and qualified coaches, they engage young people in a range of angling-based activities and initiatives that are proven to develop their personal and social skills and improve their relationship with the community.

In 2021/22 GHoF have been very active providing a mixture of social inclusion, family and community orientated angling events around the country. This year they have worked with close to 10,000 children and adults across a wide range of ages, cultures and socio-economic backgrounds. They have also worked with a diverse range of partners reflecting the scope of their work, including; Mainstream schools, special schools, alternative education providers, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Local Authority Family Services, community groups supporting recovering drug and alcohol addicts and the homeless.



Fishing and face painting – possibly the most fun you can have!
Image source: GHoF

Sarah Collins CEO of GHoF explains more, “in this post-pandemic year and amid a cost-of-living crisis, where should you turn to access the well-documented health and well-being benefits of spending time in ‘blue-green spaces’ with family and friends? With our charity, Get Hooked on Fishing, of course! Our ‘Family Fishing Days’ and ‘Have a go!’ sessions, supported by the Environment Agency and the Angling Trust, are free or affordable sessions and continue to be hugely popular.”

There are also exciting times ahead as in 2022, a new collaboration began where GHoF has partnered with Swimbooker, backed by Barclays Eagle Labs and supported by the charity, MIND. Participants have been able to access information and guidance to support their *financial* health and well-being, their *mental* health and well-being and *activities* which promote and demonstrate the health and well-being benefits of going fishing.

Swimbooker, whose vision is to make angling more accessible, embracing the ‘digital-by-default’ mandate via their website and mobile app, shared their information-rich directory with visitors which contains a growing number of directly bookable fishing locations across the country. Alfie Tilley and Keanu Griffin, co-founders of Swimbooker, commented, “GHoF is a charity doing excellent work in providing fun, safe, affordable, accessible and inclusive fishing opportunities for diverse communities and we welcome this partnership. We’re proud to be providing the technology to put angling at the forefront, in line with other modern leisure sports and activities”.

For more information, please contact Sarah Collins (sarah.collins@ghof.org.uk)

Objective Four: Develop sustainable places to fish

Case Study 6: Aquatic weed control workshops

Five years ago, The Institute of Fisheries Management (IFM) were approached by the Environment Agency to see if they could run a workshop for angling clubs and fisheries on aquatic weed control. After predation, the management of aquatic macrophytes and algae is possibly the most common fishery management problem these days. This problem has become a lot worse over the past 15 years or so due to the introduction of non-native invasive species and the banning of a number of successful herbicides which has left the toolbox somewhat depleted.

Over the last 5 years the IFM have held a number of events with the first ones being run at Holmfirth and Kettering as face to face events over the course of a day with well over 100 attendees at both events. With the onset of Covid, undeterred the IFM moved the workshops online and have tailored the format accordingly. Through the magic of the internet over the two years of Covid disruption they had close to 400 people join them and over 500 downloads of the recordings.

These workshops funded by the Environment Agency through fishing licence income have been invaluable in teaching anglers, angling clubs and fishery owners various fishery management techniques which will help to control aquatic weeds and help promote sustainable fisheries.

So, what have been the key findings from the workshops?

1. Not all plants are bad, and they play a vital role in creating a balanced ecosystem within a water
2. Get a plant guide and find out what you are actually dealing with. It is hard for experts to ID things when you just send them a grainy phone picture
3. There are still effective tools for the management of problem plants, but you must act early to tackle the issue
4. Use a range of techniques and don't just rely on methods that have worked in the past. Plants can be cyclical, and you may be faced with a different plant this year to last
5. Dyes, barley straw, weevils and other biological controls can work if employed correctly. Don't wait until the plant is established before acting
6. With climate change and new invasive arrivals we are going to have to keep our eyes open for problems and develop new techniques to deal with them



Attendees at the IFM's Kettering aquatic weed control workshop.

Image source: IFM

Whilst there is no doubt that 'virtual' events do have their place, moving forward the IFM are hoping to revert back to the more 'traditional' workshop as it was felt that many delegates are better able to share their problems and solutions with each other.

For more information, please contact Paul Coulson (paul.coulson@ifm.org.uk)

Case Study 7: The Angling Improvement Fund

Launched in 2015 the Angling Improvement Fund (AIF) is a fund that is administered by the Angling Trust on behalf the Environment Agency. The money is reinvested income from fishing licence sales that is used on projects than benefit anglers across England.

The fund opens for applications twice a year with two different themes. One pot focuses on predation of fish stocks by mammals and fish-eating birds. The other focuses on biosecurity and preventing the spread of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS). These themes could change to meet the most beneficial demand in angling at that point in time, aligned with the wider National Angling Strategy.

Since its launch, the AIF has helped out 602 projects with £2.4 million in grants being awarded to applicants. This figure is due to raise further still once the 2022-2023 rounds have been completed. Any angling club, association, fishery, not-for-profit organisation, charity, school, local council etc is eligible to apply and details of each round are advertised in the angling media and published on the Angling Trust website.

Little Britain Anglers have a stretch of the River Irwell from Bury to Radcliffe in Greater Manchester. Invasive species such as Giant Hogweed, Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed have been allowed to take a firm hold, due to lack of access to address the difficult problem. This has led to considerable bank erosion, having the effect of preventing both anglers and the public from accessing the river to enjoy its corridors safely.

The club, which already operates a 'Check, Clean, Dry' policy, made an AIF application to the biosecurity and INNS theme and were awarded £4574. This was put towards training volunteers to safely spray the weeds as well as all the equipment and PPE required. Furthermore, the club bought and installed boot wash stations and a heavy duty boot cleaner to minimise the spread from seeds on the footwear of members leaving the area.

Another venue that enjoyed AIF support was Top Barn Fishery who were granted £2185.45 towards the cost of 6 floating Islands. The fishery was suffering from serious predation caused by cormorants as well as grebes, and a survey revealed that they were incurring substantial silver fish losses. Working in partnership with the Angling Trust and a private contractor, the installations have provided protection and cover, enabling stocks to thrive once again.



Some of the newly constructed floating reed islands at Top Barn Fishery.

Image source: Angling Trust

Nicky Harper from the popular Worcestershire day ticket water explained, "the support given to us from the Angling Improvement Fund came in the form of advice as well as money. We're most grateful and have seen increased footfall since the installation of the project, due to being able to offer better more consistent fishing to our visitors".

For further details please contact aifadmin@anglingtrust.net

Objective Five: Increase angling's economic impact

Case study 8: Reel Education schools' programme

The 'Reel Education' programme is a new and innovative angling engagement programme. It is jointly funded in partnership by the Angling Trust and Shakespeare fishing tackle and is another example of the angling trade helping to develop fishing.



Chris and Neil, the school initiators
Image source: Angling Trust

The programme is targeted at primary schools and links directly with Key Stage 1, lower and upper Key Stage 2 and in line with national framework for learning, the lesson content encompasses links with the local community facilities, so content has resources for coarse, sea and game.

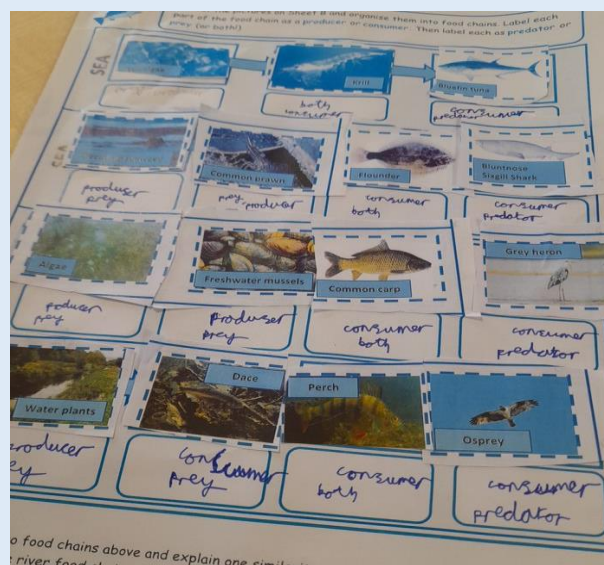
Content was written by teachers for teachers to provide angling related lessons in maths, art and science and differentiated according to ability. Teachers can utilise detailed planning to develop their own lessons, or power point slides to support fully narrated delivery by teaching assistants if required. All supporting resources are downloadable.

In addition to the in-class work, young people get to experience angling related games delivered by Angling Trust qualified and licenced angling coaches. The coach is also responsible for establishing exit routes and pathways to local clubs or fisheries to provide next steps opportunities to try fishing.

The ambition is to work with over 400 schools nationally and have 56,000 young people experiencing the Reel Education programme, over a two year period. Two part time school initiators have been appointed, Neil Wylie in the South and Chris Holden in the North.

Following the delivery of 6 pilot interventions involving over 1,700 children, the volume of interest in next steps to angling is well above anticipated levels. Originally, it was envisaged that between 5 -10% of children would wish to try angling following initial engagement however, this figure is around 60% which is incredibly positive and demonstrates that the sport of angling is still relevant and appealing to young children.

For more information, please contact Richard Hadley (Richard.hadley@anglingtrust.net)



Example of science related work
Image source: Angling Trust

Case study 9: The Fisheries and Seafood Scheme

Defra has recently launched its Fisheries and Seafood Scheme (FaSS). Derived from the 2020 Fisheries Act, the fund has the overall objective of 'delivering investments to safeguard the long-term sustainability, resilience and prosperity of the seafood sector across England' and included in this is recreational sea angling.



The new fund will help towards the National Angling Strategy objective of increasing income for angling businesses to enable more sustainable development and boost angling tourism in rural and coastal areas.

The recreational sea fishing (RSF) sector is increasingly being recognised by UK fisheries managers as an important and valuable

stakeholder in inshore fisheries. In terms of scale, on average 771,000 people went sea angling in the UK each year between 2016-2019, with sea angling generating a total economic impact of £1.94bn and supporting 16,300 jobs in 2017.

The scheme will provide funding for a range of projects that will deliver a number of high-level outcomes, including; improving participation and achieving good environmental status through the conservation and restoration of the marine environment;

The Defra led Recreational Sea Fishing Forum (RSFF) which brings together the recreational sector, regulators and policy makers to shape sea fishing policy will be key in helping promote the new fund. Defra's Grant Horsburgh said, "for the first time the recreational sea fishing sector now has a designated fund that they can bid into to help develop projects that will promote sea angling participation and help grow the industry. This in turn will hopefully lead to additional positive effects in the local economies via investment through angling tourism."



Fishing on Eastbourne Pier.

Image source: www.seaangler.co.uk

For more information, please contact Grant Horsburgh (grant.horsburgh@defra.gov.uk)

Objective Six: Understand angling data and evidence

Case Study 10: Let's Fish evaluation and angling participation research

The Canal and River Trust (CRT) have been running their successful 'Let's Fish' angling participation intervention for a number of years. Recently they undertook research to try and assess the effects of their programme on participants health and wellbeing.

The evaluation was undertaken through a mix of quantitative and qualitative research techniques involving pre and post event surveys and semi structured interviews



Image source: CRT

Research showed that calmness and relaxation were overwhelmingly most frequently experienced effects of participating and that 86% of children and young people and 75% of adults agreed they had learnt a new skill.

The surveys demonstrated that a Let's Fish session had a small but significant effect on wellbeing of participants aged under 18 with results showing wellbeing scores increased significantly from before to after a Let's Fish event. Interestingly this significant effect was not observed with the adult sample which could suggest that Let's Fish has a more profound instant effect on the wellbeing of children than adults.

Despite differing results the qualitative element of this study revealed a number of positive effects of a Let's Fish session, therefore suggesting that the programme brings benefits to participants as a whole.



A CRT Let's Fish event in full swing.

Image source: CRT

Future Let's Fish research will be focussing on a PhD project in partnership with University of Derby which will be starting in January 2023. This will look to investigate and evidence the effects of angling on the inland waterways for children and young people with ADHD or emotional behavioural difficulties.

For more information, please contact Anna Baatz (anna.baatz@canalrivertrust.org.uk)