

The Social and Community Benefits of Angling

A 3-Year Research Project by Substance, funded by the Big Lottery Fund

Project Details

Substance, a social research cooperative, have won a Big Lottery Fund research grant for a project entitled: '***The Social and Community Benefits of Angling***'. The grant will fund a three-year project from January 2009 - January 2012 that will investigate the positive role angling can play for those who participate in it, young people and communities in which it takes place.

What is the Research About?

Although millions of people go fishing, not much is known about the activity in terms of the individual and community benefits it can generate.

There have been some big claims made about angling - that it has a range of benefits for participants, from health to volunteering; that it can help young people at risk; and that it can help rural communities. Yet the evidence base for this work is under-developed and organisations involved, as well as policymakers, need more research to understand, develop and maximise these benefits. Those representing angling need such information to help 'make the case' for public or other support.

The project will work closely with angling and community organisations and charities, policymakers and anglers to help address gaps in knowledge about the activity and provide evidence of angling's positive impacts and best practice to help influence changes in policy.

Research Questions

There are four Research Questions to this project, based on a recognition of the need for a better evidence base of angling's social and community impacts:

1. **What constitutes participation in angling in England and Scotland and how do people perceive and receive benefits from it?**
2. **How can angling help young people, particularly those who are marginalised or socially excluded?**
3. **What role can angling play in rural communities and their development?**
4. **How can we disseminate this knowledge, engage stakeholders and implement change?**

Each of these relates to key areas of work by national agencies and local projects as well as claims made about the social benefits of angling.

Research Tasks

1. What constitutes participation in angling and how do people perceive benefits from it?

i) We will conduct a *quantitative* survey of participants in angling, identifying different forms of angling participation and how it can make contributions to personal and community development. This will be conducted in Year One and repeated in Year Three and will require the cooperation of a wide range of angling organisations.

This element will utilise online survey tools and encompass traditional survey-type approaches as well as other, innovative, web-based forms of consultation, data generation and feedback (including audio visual evidence, comments, blogs, digital mapping etc.).

ii) We will undertake a *qualitative* study of participation in angling and how people and communities benefit from it.

- *Literature Review* - on social science angling research, governance documentation, policy and angling development plans
- *National stakeholder interviews* - comprehensive interviews and consultation with key individuals from all national bodies in angling, related policy arenas and associated organisations in both England and Scotland.
- *Local research* - more in depth, qualitative ethnographic research with a range of local angling 'sites' and local initiatives across the countries, in all disciplines, and embracing the work of a range of stakeholders and forms of participation.

This element of the research will provide evidence of the different benefits that people and communities get from different forms of participation, in a variety of locations and in all disciplines of angling.

2. How can angling help young people and combat social exclusion?

We will conduct a two-year 'action research' case study focussed on the Get Hooked On Fishing charity, about angling's role in helping marginalised and excluded young people.

This will involve a researcher working closely with GHOF and conducting the following research exercises:

- In depth interviews and consultation with GHOF national staff, Chair and trustees at appropriate stages.
- In depth case study work with 3 GHOF projects, including interviews, focus groups, work with young people and other research throughout project.
- Research with the other GHOF projects at regular intervals, including interviews with staff and young people.
- Helping the charity to make the most out of its monitoring and evaluation, including developing best practice and improving the reporting of its impact
- Developing advice and tool kits on best practice for working with disadvantaged young people, especially for new projects
- Researching policy developments, other providers and developing new funding streams

- Promotion, mapping, and generation of a range of evidence, involving young participants
- Exploring organisational options and structures for the charity and projects
- Other bespoke work as required.

This element of the research will help develop new knowledge about the benefits that angling can bring to young people and the best approaches for doing this. It will also use research to help the GHOF organisation develop best practice and maximise its impact.

3. How can angling help development in rural communities?

We will conduct an in depth study in the Assynt area of Sutherland, Scotland, to explore how angling can contribute to wider community development and provide benefits for residents and visitors. This will include:

- Work in conjunction with a range of community organisations including the Assynt Angling Group, Assynt Crofters Trust and Assynt Foundation.
- Interviews and consultation with staff at the key angling and community organisations.
- Interviews with angling visitors and local participants about their experience and benefits from angling, providing market information to the community organisations and a better understanding of the positive roles angling can play.
- Research alongside the Country Sports Tourism Group pilot project developing Wild Trout fishing tourism.
- Postcode survey and digital mapping work with visitors.
- Web-based feedback, comment forms, surveys, blogging and other internet based means of broadening access to the study.
- Observations of angling body and community group meetings, events etc.
- An economic impact assessment of angling in the area.
- A specific local literature review, including reviews of historical articles, as well as recent initiatives around angling based tourism and community land ownership.
- Other work to:
 - Identify resources for ongoing research that supports the organisations.
 - Explore capacity and opportunities to develop education, volunteering, skills development and other initiatives around angling, particularly for young people.
 - Explore possibilities for developing links with youth inclusion and other socially beneficial angling interventions elsewhere, including the potential for income generation.

This element of the project will provide new knowledge about the role angling can play in wider organisational and community development in rural areas and support the development of initiatives in the case study area of Assynt.

4. Project dissemination, stakeholder engagement and project cohesion

The project will:

- Establish an Advisory Group to engage stakeholders throughout the research and build links with policy makers.
- Hold regular workshops and seminars

- Generate reports, website information and publications - including tool kits on best practice and bespoke work for partner organisations.
- Develop an online Angling Research Resource for angling social enterprises and communities to access project learning.
- Deliver workshops for each case study and national seminars at the end of each year.
- Deliver an end of project conference and bespoke website.

This element of the project is about making sure that information generated is shared as widely as possible.

Who?

The project will be lead by Dr. Adam Brown, a Director of substance and will employ two researchers for two years (from April 2009).

When?

- Start date January 2009
- End date January 2012
- Main data collection period 2009-11.

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