

# Getting Hooked: Get Hooked on Fishing, Angling and Youth Inclusion



**Dr. Adam Brown**

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**A substance Research Report for  
Countryside Agency, the Home Office and Get Hooked On Fishing,**

# substance.

We are an experienced social research company specialist in the areas of sport, youth inclusion and community regeneration. Members hail from backgrounds in leading university research institutes, social enterprise and IT. Substance help make connections between people and organisations at the grass roots and policy makers, funders, government, commercial corporations and charitable foundations. We work with them in order to demonstrate impact and value, influence policy and effect social change. We provide the people, experience, technologies and networks to make this happen.

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### **Dr Adam Brown**

Adam is a director and founder member of Substance with particular expertise and interest in sport, particularly football and its fans, sport and cultural policy, as well as major events and their legacies. He is one of the few researchers in the country to consider the social effects of angling and is a board member of both FC United of Manchester and Cornerhouse.

Adam has extensive research and policy experience in the areas of sport and popular culture and was Deputy Director and Senior Research Fellow at the Manchester Institute for Popular Culture, Manchester Metropolitan University from 1996-2006. In this time Adam led a number of major academic research projects and applied research at MIPC, including projects for the ESRC, UK Sport and the Football Foundation. He was also a leading member of the Government Football Task Force and published widely on issues of democratisation in football and popular culture.

#### **substance**

308 Ducie House  
Ducie St  
Manchester  
M1 2JW

Tel: 0161 244 5418  
Email [info@substance.coop](mailto:info@substance.coop)  
Web: [www.substance.coop](http://www.substance.coop)

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# Executive Summary

## 1. Angling - Context

Angling has one of the highest levels of participation of any 'sport' or leisure activity in the UK, with nearly 4 million participants. Participation of females and BME populations is however very low. Bodies such as the Environment Agency are making significant efforts to increase participation of all groups, with priorities in these areas.

Angling is an activity which can generate both long term engagement, with many committing to the sport 'for life' and one which can lead to many other areas of interest and skill development.

It is also an activity which can be very attractive to young people although some traditional 'routes' to participation have declined (such as familial).

Angling offers considerable potential as a diversionary and developmental activity for young people. However, it is one which, until recently, has received little attention from policy makers, government departments or social agencies and it has been to date largely excluded from debates around the sport and social inclusion agendas.

Angling has an extremely large literature, yet unlike other high participation leisure activities, there is *very little* academic or social science research literature.

Part of the reason for this 'exclusion'/omission is because of its lack of status as a 'sport' and because it is one which, until recently, has been poorly represented within policy circles at a national level. This is now being addressed by the creation of a 'Whole Sport Plan' by the Joint Angling Development Bodies; and through the promotion of the benefits of fishing by the EA and other organisations.

## 2. Angling - Potential

Recreational fishing is an activity which, if delivered properly in a developmental approach, can offer something new and 'different' as an engagement activity to other, more mainstream sports.

The need to remain quiet and concentrated, but with moments of extreme excitement, allows a number of benefits in the context of youth inclusion work, including opportunities for relationship building that do not occur in the same way.

Fishing is an important alternative to team sports because it is:

- A less hi-octane activity than, for example, football
- An activity which is an individual pursuit but one which also offers communality.
- An activity which often takes place out of normal, urban environments, but also one which offers specific potential for rural communities.
- A means of engaging young people - often when 'traditional' means of 'learning' sport have broken down

Fishing is a learning process that involves problem solving, acquiring skills, and the development of other interests. As such it can act as a gateway to ongoing personal development beyond a simplistic 'diversionary' approach.

The potential of angling as an engagement activity is only fully realised within a developmental approach which can lead to a building of relationships and broadening of young people's horizons.

### **3. The Get Hooked On Fishing Approach**

Get Hooked on Fishing is a national charity established to provide opportunities to fish, within a learning environment, especially for young people at risk of exclusion. Established by Mick Watson in Durham in 2000, it has received support from a wide variety of local and national organisations. It has led the way for fishing as an engagement and developmental activity for young people.

GHOF has grown from an experimental single project site to a charitable trust with ten projects around the country. It has demonstrated the potential of a developmental approach to angling tuition for young people 'at risk' and has won widespread praise for its work.

The GHOF approach is based around a three-tier course delivered to groups of young people. Its modular approach seeks not only to build up skills in angling and knowledge of fish and fishing, but a progression from engagement to empowerment.

The incremental approach also allows those who have acquired skills and knowledge to share expertise - including in informal ways. This creates opportunities for relationship building, skills development and peer mentoring.

Under new Chief Executive, Anne Moyle, board membership, governance structures and 'back room' paper work have all been reviewed and the Trust has oriented itself toward meeting governmental agendas around youth exclusion, maximising the benefits of its developmental approach.

Currently with 10 local projects the Trust has an objective of delivering 30 schemes over a 5 year period, extending the work nationally. The Trust requires significant resources if it is to meet these objectives and although it has had considerable recent success in this regard, challenges remain.

Given a growing tendency to employ non-mainstream activities in youth inclusion work, there are considerable opportunities for Get Hooked On Fishing to expand its work and its offer.

The further development of accredited courses, volunteering, peer mentoring and improved monitoring and evaluation are key factors in determining the future of GHOF.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 The Research

This report is about the activity of angling (recreational fishing with a rod and line) and focuses in what it can offer in relation to governmental agendas around social inclusion. It is in part the result of research with the Get Hooked on Fishing Charitable Trust (the Trust, GHOF) which took place between March 2005 and June 2006 which was commissioned by the Countryside Agency and Home Office Positive Futures program. The research was undertaken at both the Manchester Institute for Popular Culture at Manchester Metropolitan University and at Substance. The report is also the result of broader research into fishing and fishing cultures undertaken by Substance and at MIPC; as well as Substance's work on wider issues of sport, community and the social inclusion agenda. The report and research also draw upon extensive experience and examples of work in the broader sport, community and social inclusion field<sup>1</sup>.

The report outlines the role that fishing can play within broader strategies and programmes to combat youth exclusion. It provides some background on fishing as a popular activity, or sport, in the UK but concentrates on GHOF and the ways in which it has and can continue to contribute to such strategies.

The initial commission for the Countryside Agency was to conduct 'research on the Get Hooked on Fishing Charitable Trust as a vehicle for using the activity of fishing to combat "social exclusion" and establishing beneficial relationships with young people at risk of exclusion.' The Home Office funding was specifically around the development of new monitoring and evaluation methods for GHOF. The work centred around the following activities:

- Research into the broader sport and social inclusion contexts in which fishing, and in particular GHOF, sits.
- Visits to GHOF and observations.
- Meetings and interviews with key GHOF personnel and projects.
- Development of the GHOF Trust documentation.
- Development of more effective means of monitoring and evaluating the activities GHOF undertake.
- Development of funding bids for the flagship Durham-based project, GHOF North East, as well as help with funding initiatives for the national charity.
- Initial help with the development of the North Liverpool Positive Futures GHOF project.

Our wider work on fishing has included qualitative research around specific fishing locations, in particular in Sutherland, Scotland, as well as reviews of literature on motivations, discussions with key organisations such as the Environment Agency around participation and reviews of the wider benefits and the organisation of fishing.

## 1.2 Fishing

Described variously as a 'sport', 'leisure activity' or 'pastime', fishing is an aspect of British (and other) popular culture which enjoys some of the highest active participation of any sport. There is an extensive literature on many aspects of the sport such as instruction (Crawford 2002); narrative and biographical accounts (Gierach 1990) and 'diary' (Beer 2003); and bio-science (Pitcher and Hart 2004)).

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on this, visit: <http://www.substance.coop/index.php/Section6.html>

However, apart from one notable anthropological study unearthing fly fishing's invented traditions (Washabaugh 2000), it is an area which most academic study and in particular the sociology of sport has almost entirely ignored. This is especially strange when one considers that it is rated as the most popular leisure activity in England and Wales with more people participating than in football (which has received widespread academic attention).

### 1.3 Fishing, Sport and Social Policy Agendas

Fishing also suffers in terms of recognition, its ability to access sports funding and as an activity that can attract support as a sport based social inclusion initiative because its status as a 'sport' is far from clear or accepted. We explore this a little further in Section 4 below but, given the prominence given to physical activity within sport based youth programmes, understanding what fishing can contribute regardless of its 'status' is important to recognise as an alternative to these approaches.

Indeed, there are emerging opportunities in this regard. The Home Office's Positive Futures programme has, more than most youth engagement and developmental programmes, embraced fishing at project level, as well as through some funding for GHOF. Its new strategy, developed by national managers Crime Concern, calls for projects to 'broaden the range of arts and other activities offered' to employ a wider range of, often non-traditional sport and other cultural activities:

'A hallmark of Positive Futures projects has been their effective use of sport as a way to engage young people and support their progression, with sport being interpreted very widely to accommodate young people's different interests.... The imaginative interpretation of sport has been very effective, and is something we will continue to encourage. Coupled with this, an increasing number of Positive Futures projects are extending their range of activities beyond sport... We know that sport is not effective in engaging all young people, and that young people want a wide range of activities. A key theme over the next two years will, therefore, be to encourage projects to broaden their remit, building on the excellent foundations of sport and physical activity across the programme.'<sup>2</sup>

This is an example of new opportunities there are for angling organisations to develop this area of work and attract funding to support it. However, fishing as a whole also needs to communicate and demonstrate more effectively what it can contribute to government agendas such as health, crime and substance misuse reduction, and young people, including delivery of Every Child Matters outcomes.

### 1.4 Social Exclusion

The government's Social Exclusion Unit defines social exclusion as:

'what happens when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdowns.'<sup>3</sup>

The breadth of this definition means that it is often difficult to be precise about who is socially excluded and who is not; and whom organisations should be targeting. In the context of this report, it is useful to interpret social exclusion in terms of those sections of society which are usually referred to as being the most difficult to reach.

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<sup>2</sup> Crime Concern (2006) *Be Part of Something: A new national strategy for Positive Futures*, Crime Concern: 23

<sup>3</sup> Social Exclusion Unit website: <http://www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk>

These include certain black and minority ethnic communities; truants; looked after children; young adults with offending histories; Class A drug users; travelling communities; people with physical and learning disabilities; and people with mental health problems.

### **1.5 Get Hooked On Fishing**

Get Hooked on Fishing is a national charity established to provide opportunities to fish, within a learning environment, especially for young people at risk of exclusion. Established as a local project in Durham in 2000, it rapidly gained a reputation and received support from a wide variety of local and national organisations, including the police, Positive Futures, Countryside Agency, Connexions and the Environment Agency. It has developed into a national trust and has led the way in fishing acting as an engagement and developmental activity for young people.

Whilst GHOF will be the focus of this report, we also provide a brief overview of fishing and how it relates sport and broader social agendas, before looking at the organisation in particular and how its approach in particular incorporates developmental engagement strategies for young people. We will provide an overview of GHOF, its development and monitoring and evaluation; and a consideration of the strategic and resource issues which face the development of this area of work.

## 2. Fishing – An Overview

### 2.1 Policy and the Regulatory Framework

It is important to briefly illustrate the governance and legal framework that fishing sits within in the UK.

The principle agency responsible for the regulation, policing and development of recreational fishing in England and Wales is the Environment Agency (EA; and the Environment Agency Wales). In England and Wales it is a legal requirement that anyone who fishes in fresh water must be in possession of a Rod Licence to do so from the EA. However, alongside this is also a system of private land ownership and private ownership of fishing rights which covers much of the fresh water rivers and lakes in England and Wales. As such, it is usual that you not only need a Rod Licence but also a Permit to legally fish. This system of regulation and ownership is underpinned by criminal charges and stiff penalties, as well as a series of legislation:

- Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975
- Salmon Act 1986
- Theft Act 1968
- Area and regional bylaws
- Diseases of fish Act 1937
- Import of Live Fish Act 1980
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

At a local level, fishing is organised into a series of angling clubs of a enormous variety. GHOF intersects with both angling clubs, private owners and is in partnership with the EA nationally and in a variety of local contexts. Under the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975, it is the EA's responsibility to '*maintain, improve and develop freshwater fisheries*'. However this role has broadened recently:

'Last year the Government issued statutory guidance that made our role in angling clearer. We should:

- '*enhance the social contribution fishing makes as a widely available and healthy form of recreation*'
- '*enhance the contribution salmon and freshwater fisheries make to the economy, particularly in remote rural areas with low levels of income*', while, among other things, '*putting people at the centre*' in contributing to Sustainable Development.... [and] increasing the number of anglers can also help address local social issues.'<sup>4</sup>

In Scotland the system comes under the jurisdiction of the Scottish Parliament and has traditionally operated differently (the EA extends only to England and Wales). Unlike other countries Scotland has no State licensing system for fishing, the principle difference being that there is no need for a Rod Licence in Scotland, but there is a need for a private permit. Fishing rights are retained in Scotland by the 'riparian' owner - riparian rights being a 'concept of water law under which authorization to use water.. is based on ownership of the land adjacent to the [water].'<sup>5</sup> It is a criminal offence to fish for salmon without legal right or written permission and generally it is a civil offence to fish for other fishes.

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<sup>4</sup> Environment Agency (EA) (2004b) *Angling in 2015: Getting more people into fishing, First consultation paper, December 2004*, Bristol: EA

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.bmwd.org/Terminology.htm>

Across the UK the cost of fishing can vary hugely: other research we have undertaken in the North West Highlands of Sutherland, Scotland, found that private permits can range from the local, cooperatively-owned and cheap (£5 a day) for loch trout fishing; to the expensive (£90 a day) for river salmon fishing, owned by local landed estates. Elsewhere in both England and Scotland private fishing for salmon can run into several hundred pounds for a day - itself raising issues of the exclusion of many social groups from such fishing.

GHOF has recently begun exploring development of projects in Scotland, although the vast majority of its work has been in England and Wales. Also the EA stresses that: 'Although we are only responsible for freshwater angling in England and Wales, we are keen that all forms of angling in the United Kingdom can benefit from our work.'<sup>6</sup>

In the last few years, fishing in England and Wales has received greater attention from policy makers and governmental agencies, especially the EA. The EA has published widely on the state of fishing in England and Wales – including the landmark *Our Nations Fisheries* report – and has conducted extensive research into participation in angling, highlighting some of its benefits to wider society. In policy terms, the EA is now prioritising increasing participation in fishing because:

'We see angling as good for people and for the environment and that is why we take our role in developing and promoting the sport very seriously. With many people's encouragement we have already done much to help in increasing interest, opportunity, and support for angling.'<sup>7</sup>

The Labour Party also published its *Charter for Angling* in 2005. This made a number of policy commitments to fishing, including promotion of rod and line fishing as beneficial to the environment, society and the economy; promised support for tackling pollution and support for the EA's ambition of getting 100,000 more people fishing by 2007.<sup>8</sup> It was notable that within this document there is also a brief mention of fishing's potential in young people's development, citing the GHOF project in Durham as having 'remarkable success in working with young people' and in 'diverting young people away from crime and promoting social inclusion'.<sup>9</sup>

However, some government departments have recently become more interested in fishing for a variety of reasons, not least in terms of the role it can play within youth inclusion work. The Countryside Agency (now the Commission for Rural Communities) and the Home Office (particularly the Positive Futures programme) have both funded work around angling and social inclusion, not least with Get Hooked on Fishing (including this research). The CA was a major contributor in funding the GHOF North East angling centre at Wadsworth, County Durham (providing a grant of £237,000 for the acquisition and construction of the centre) and has at times worked very closely with the organisation; and Positive Futures has funded the organisation's projects both nationally and at a local level. Although it is not a mainstream sport, GHOF has also received verbal and at times strategic support from the Minister of Sport within DCMS.

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<sup>6</sup> Environment Agency (2004) *Our Nations Fisheries: The migratory and freshwater fisheries of England and Wales – a snapshot*, Bristol: EA

<sup>7</sup> EA (2004b)

<sup>8</sup> Labour Party (2005) *Labour's Charter for Angling*, London: Labour Party

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*: 5

## 2.2 Definitions and Types of Angling

It is important that we are clear about what we mean by 'fishing' or 'angling'. This report is focused on catching fish by use of a rod and line undertaken for the purposes of recreation. It is not concerned with fishing by net, industrial fishing (e.g. at sea), fish farming or fishing undertaken solely in order to eat (although recreational fishing can of course produce fish to eat). Having said this, all forms of fishing derive from practices developed many millennia ago, when humans sought to feed themselves with fish. Some estimate that 'angling with a rod and line has been in existence since at least 2000BC.'<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, 'modern' recreational forms of fishing enjoy a very long heritage in the leisure life of the UK (Isaac Walton and Charles Cotton's *Compleat Angler* was first published in 1653 (Bear 2003)), and it has its own 're-invented' traditions, myths and cultures<sup>11</sup>. As such angling has an embedded place in this nation's cultural and leisure heritage which dates back as far, if not further, than many mainstream sports - something which underpins its attraction to participants within social programmes.

In broad outline terms, in the UK there are 3 principle forms of angling:

1. **Game Fishing** - which is predominantly for fresh water fish (rivers and lakes) that can be eaten (if kept), such as trout; and migratory fish (those that live in both sea and fresh water) such as salmon and sea trout. It is most common that this form of fishing uses artificial flies and lures (fly fishing), but can also involve other techniques (bait; spinning).
2. **Coarse Fishing** - again predominantly for fresh water fish but usually those that are rarely eaten. This form of fishing most often takes place in still waters and canals (although rivers are also common) and usually employs the use of real food as bait (maggots, bread).
3. **Sea Fishing** - Self explanatorily, this form of angling takes place in the sea, from beach, shore, harbour wall and in boats. A range of different techniques are used with both food bait and artificial lures common, often involving heavier duty tackle than other forms of fishing.

These very broad definitions – which the *Charter for Angling* describes as 'largely artificial distinctions'<sup>12</sup> - can vary in different locations (and within different cultures). With technological developments helping change in practices and creating new crossovers (such the development of salt water fly fishing), these definitions are not at all clear cut. Within each there are also both a range of different methods used, but also perhaps more interestingly a range of participant profiles, cultures and practices. There can be some clear differences in attitude, behaviour, expectations, relationship to the sport and to fish, motivations for participating in fishing and social backgrounds of those fishing (although these, too, are not rigidly defined). Further exploration of some of these issues has been undertaken by the EA in its *Our Nations Fisheries* and *Public Attitudes to Angling* reports. The more ethnographic work we have undertaken in the north of Scotland has also explored some of these issues.

Each form of angling has also been employed within various social inclusion and youth oriented projects in the UK, including Get Hooked On Fishing, with coarse fishing by far the most common.

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<sup>10</sup> Labour Party (2005): 11

<sup>11</sup> Washabaugh, W (2000) *Deep Trout: Angling in popular culture*, Oxford: Berg

<sup>12</sup> Labour Party (2005): 10.

## 2.3 Governance and Representation

Like mainstream sports, angling also has its own internal regulatory and governing bodies. There are a number of governing bodies reflecting the diversity of angling in the UK - from the National Federation of Anglers (coarse fish), National Federation of Sea Anglers, to the Salmon and Trout Association (game fishing). This diversity, however, has at times caused problems coordinating and presenting a unified front to policy makers. Some efforts have been made to overcome this through the creation of the Joint Angling Development Board (JAGB) and more recently the submission of a *Whole Sport Plan* for angling to Sport England.

In 2005 the Fisheries and Angling Conservation Trust Ltd was formed to further help represent angling interests to government. Its founder members were: Angling Trades Association, Association of Stillwater Game Fishery Managers, Atlantic Salmon Trust, Commercial Coarse Fisheries Association, National Association of Fisheries and Angling Consultatives, National Federation of Anglers, National Federation of Sea Anglers, Salmon and Trout Association and the Specialist Anglers' Alliance.<sup>13</sup> However, as Labour's *Charter* argues, 'angling is still short of full-time professional advocates and needs an improved and strengthened national governing structure'<sup>14</sup>. On the whole angling governing bodies remain relatively weak and under resourced.

As part of drives to improve their status and funding opportunities, the NGBs, along with the EA and other organisations have sought to provide a more unified 'front' with clearly understood and communicated aims in terms of maximising participation in angling, particularly amongst low participation groups. What shall be argued in this report is that by understanding and promoting the role angling can play in delivering on government (particularly youth agendas), their position overall and their ability to attract significant resources can be enhanced. As such, it may be beneficial if these organisations were to ally schemes targeted at increased membership and participation – such as National Fishing Week - with an articulation of the benefits fishing can bring, and in particular how fishing can meet governmental agendas on young people's health, safety and education (such as those highlighted in the Every Child Matters Outcomes framework, which we will return to later).

## 2.4 Participation

Before considering more specifically the role of fishing within youth development and GHOF in particular, it is perhaps worth noting the popularity of fishing as a pastime more generally. Angling is arguably the UK's biggest participatory sport/leisure activity. A recent survey by the Environment Agency in England and Wales said that 5.8 million people had fished in the previous two years<sup>15</sup>, and the Labour Party has claimed that between 3 and 4 million people fish every year, more than attended football matches. It is also an important area of the economy (particularly to rural areas) as it is estimated that the capital value of inland fisheries in England and Wales was £3 billion<sup>16</sup>; and that anglers spend over £2.75 billion a year on their sport, creating 20,000 jobs<sup>17</sup>. *Our Nations Fisheries* indicated that:

- the activity is dominated by 'men aged 35 to 54 years'
- women comprised only 5% of anglers

<sup>13</sup> <http://pacgb.co.uk/pressreleases/fact1.htm>

<sup>14</sup> Labour Party (2005): 11.

<sup>15</sup> Environment Agency (2005) *Public Attitudes to Angling 2005: A survey of the attitudes and participation in England and Wales*, Bristol: EA: 6

<sup>16</sup> EA (2004): 18

<sup>17</sup> EA (2006) *Fishing For The Future: Angling to 2015: Our plan to increase participation*, Bristol: EA: 5

- only 7% of anglers were children under 17<sup>18</sup>.

The importance of fresh water fishing to the leisure life of some groups in England and Wales, is very high, whilst for other groups - women, ethnic minorities - it is very low:

- 13% of the population over 12 said they had been fishing (freshwater and/or sea) in the last 2 years (5.8 million people).
- 10% (8%), 4.4 million, were interested in going fishing in the future although they had not fished in the last 2 years.
- Current anglers are predominantly male (75%), with a relatively high proportion of anglers aged 15-24yrs, compared to the total sample profile. The current angler profile does however comprise a greater proportion of females, 12-24yr olds and ABs than the profile of rod licence holders recorded in 2001.
- 94% of the current anglers were white, whilst 3% were Asian and 0% were Afro-Caribbean.<sup>19</sup>

As mentioned above, it is also the case that different types of angling can attract different types of people:

- Salmon and sea trout anglers tended to be older than coarse and trout anglers, with 60 per cent being over the age of 45 (compared with 50 per cent for coarse anglers), possibly a result of the high cost or inaccessibility of this kind of fishing.
- The majority of anglers who had fished since April 2000 did so for coarse fish (86 per cent), while 24 per cent fished for brown or rainbow trout, seven per cent for salmon or sea trout, and five per cent for grayling.

This is also reflected in the bias within many fishing based youth inclusion activities. The relative older age of game anglers, the steeper learning curve in casting, the cheaper cost and greater ease of access of coarse fishing sites are all contributory factors to this being the case. The concerns for health and safety, risk management and high insurance costs tend to act as barriers to greater use of sea angling within youth projects (and more generally), although this is by no means entirely the case, with at least one GHOF project regularly using sea angling.

The EA's *Fishing for the Future* report says it will prioritise increasing the numbers of people from different backgrounds that go fishing. In particular the EA want to increase participation of:

- Older people
- Women
- Black and minority ethnic groups
- The disabled<sup>20</sup>

Fishing projects which can demonstrate how they might help promote participation within these groups may be able to access funding which could provide activities which might then lead to wider developmental work. GHOF have structured their modular approach to learning fishing skills in such a way that it can be adapted to apply to a mass participation event - like one off events in National Fishing Week - as well as act as a means of engaging and building relationships with young people at risk.

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<sup>18</sup> EA (2004): 16

<sup>19</sup> EA (2005): 7

<sup>20</sup> EA (2006)

## 2.5 A Long Term Engagement and ‘Gateway’ Activity

As with many other sports and activities, angling is one which not only attracts very large numbers of people to participate in it, but also one which people dedicate huge amounts of time to, for whom it can become a structuring part of their lives. For some angling is an obsession and people we have spoken to have decided to work in certain locations because of the fishing in that area; or have bought properties near to favourite fishing sites. Others spend hours on the internet and in chat rooms discussing different forms of angling, fishing sites and tackle; whilst many more spend large amounts of disposable income on equipment, clothing, visiting remote locations, staying in hotels and driving the economic spin-offs from the sport.

This ‘obsessive’ nature of participation in angling is something which is important to recognise in relation to angling youth inclusion projects. As we will discuss later in this report, many of those who work and participate in GHOF schemes suggest that following an initial engagement, many young people take to the sport over a long period of time – something that is especially significant with young people who have possibly concentrating or making commitments.

Furthermore, as we also discuss in more detail later, angling can act as a gateway to a whole variety of other activities and skills. The process of catching fish is one of problem solving - ‘How do you catch more and bigger fish? How do you change tactics when you don’t catch fish?’. Anglers recourse to the very extensive magazine and book literature, to websites and the internet, to other anglers, for advice. They may start preparing their own baits, or tying their own flies, acquiring new skills and knowledge; and angling can lead to an interest in the environment, conservation, nature, bird watching, photography, rural affairs and even art. As such, angling is an activity that can offer its many participants a long term and rewarding engagement which may become a major feature of their lives. But it is also a sport that can act as a gateway to further personal development in a whole series of areas.

The EA, along with other organisations – such as GHOF and Dreamstore - are increasingly demonstrating the potential of fishing in conducting more difficult work with young people whom are most socially excluded. We will consider in more detail later (4) the particular benefits that fishing might contribute to work with ‘socially excluded’ groups, but the potential, within a broader framework seeking to promote fishing, is great. The role of the EA and the NGBs will be critical in this, as will that of delivery organisations such as GHOF. We will now look at the structure and development of GHOF before considering in more detail what social benefits fishing might bring within sport-based social inclusion programmes.

### 3. Get Hooked On Fishing: An Overview

Get Hooked on Fishing Charitable Trust (The Trust) is a national charity registered in the Charity Register in 2004 (Register Number 1101901.) The aims of the Trust are to:

‘Provide or assist in the provision of facilities for all aspects of Angling for the benefit of those who by reason of their youth, poverty or social or economic circumstances have a need of such facilities, with the object of improving the condition of life of the users and as a means of reducing the incidence of crime and anti social behaviour’

GHOF began in 2000 as one initiative among several run by Durham Agency Against Crime which sought to use activities to reduce crime levels amongst young people. The brainchild of policeman Mick Watson, and supported by Chief Constable George Hedges, this fishing activity quickly became established as the most effective means out of a range of different activities of engaging, and providing a diversionary activity for, young people (particularly boys) in the area. This soon grew into a programme of fishing education in which the diversionary elements gradually became more developmental, with some participants becoming peer mentors, fishing coaches and volunteers for the project. A formal project, Get Hooked On Fishing, was launched and run by Mick Watson, subsequently on career break from the police.

The Durham project received considerable positive feedback from the local police and crime reduction agencies, who reported falling levels of youth crime in local areas; a huge amount of media attention; and was also the subject of a positive assessment by Durham University in 2001. GHOF report that:

‘Since starting five years ago the scheme in Durham have delivered to 806 participants of which 425 were on final warnings or reprimand. Since attending they have had no reports of the participants re offending or having visible involvement in anti social behaviour and there has been a 75% reduction in their truancy from school.’

Whilst we have reservations about bold claims of *causal* relationships between any activity and a particular social outcome, such as a reduction in offending (see Section 6), these assessments helped GHOF gain further support. Perhaps more importantly, the Durham GHOF project had demonstrated in practice to those running, observing and participating in it that it had real value for the young people involved. Further, in 2001 Durham University conducted a review of the project and concluded that:

- There are many preventative achievements and sustainable outcomes of the scheme.
- Greater social inclusiveness has been demonstrated, as has crime reduction and behavioural improvement.
- Many practical and social skills have been demonstrated.
- Communication skills are improved, patience and confidence building are developed.
- Angling is now an active hobby for most participants
- Peer-led coaching has been successfully developed.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Macgill, E with Bradley-Nicholson, E (2001), *Get Hooked on Fishing: An Evaluation*, Durham University Department of Sociology and Social Policy, September 2001: 21.

### 3.1 Expansion

This independent review, positive media coverage and Mick Watson's 'drive' and belief in the benefits the project could bring meant the establishment of other, similar projects, elsewhere in the country - often guided and advised by GHOF - as well as a growing interest within angling of the role that fishing could play in delivering broader 'social benefits'. Also, the desire to expand the activities of GHOF both *within and beyond* the North East and to ensure that the most positive and beneficial elements were maximised in Durham and replicated elsewhere.

These dynamics in turn led to two key things:

1. The development - with significant grant funding from the Countryside Agency - of an 'angling and conservation centre' at Wadsworth in County Durham for the GHOF North East project at which they would base their delivery.
2. The development of a national charity, Get Hooked On Fishing Charitable Trust, from 2002 (formally entered as a charity in 2004) which sought to extend the project nationwide under one umbrella.

Whilst the motivations for both of these developments were sound, both caused some significant issues for a project which had grown from very small scale and localised beginnings to national prominence in a very short time span. This is a common problem for third sector, not for profit and voluntary organisations. For one which was attempting something at the time pretty unique - the employment of angling to combat youth inclusion - without any coherent support from fishing as a whole, or much financial backing, it was particularly so.

In particular, the Durham project ran into difficulties with the local angling club with whom it was in partnership at the conservation centre - difficulties which at times dominated the Trust. There is no need to go into the detail of what happened with the Wadsworth site in this report, but it did raise familiar difficulties some sports clubs have with undertaking difficult youth inclusion work when their core business interests lie elsewhere. Further, it raised the problems with partnerships that are not clearly articulated and understood from the outset that have been highlighted by our wider research<sup>22</sup>. The actions of the angling club - including at one time an eviction of GHOF from the site - led to a drive within GHOF to acquire the centre for itself so that it could fulfil its potential.

Our involvement as consultants in part sought to address this issue, helping GHOF to secure further grant aid (this time from the Coalfield Regeneration Trust) to 'buy out' the angling club in 2006. With GHOF Durham evicted, and the angling club unable to deliver to its original objectives, it sought to sell the site, but were obliged to repay the CA grant, something which made the sale financially difficult for the club. With the CRT grant - secured against the future provision of GHOF delivery to priority former coalfield areas<sup>23</sup> - a newly formed social enterprise company Get Hooked North East Ltd (GHNE) was able to purchase the site and the angling club, the sale of which was finalised in July 2006. The centre now forms a flagship site for the Trust, provides opportunities for other projects to deliver residential and other courses and is the focal point for GHOF NE activities. New developments and ideas, such as conservation and biodiversity activities around Wadsworth, suggest a broadening of the range of activities to engage young people at the site.

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<sup>22</sup> Brown, Crabbe and Mellor (2006) *Football and Its Communities: Final report for the Football Foundation*, London: Football Foundation.

<sup>23</sup> A Brown (2005), GHOF application to Coalfield Regeneration Trust, July 2005.

The second development, that of a national charity in 2004 - the Get Hooked On Fishing Charitable Trust - also brought problems of expansion. Although it received widespread plaudits, and important support from some quarters (the EA, Positive Futures, Countryside Agency) it struggled to develop a truly national presence on limited resources. Also, local projects varied widely without much coherence as to what made a 'Get Hooked On Fishing' local project distinct to other alternatives in angling. Also, its only national staff member, was hard pushed to meet the demands of both the Durham project and increasing interest nationwide without the required material and human resources.

### 3.2 The Glenkeen Governmental Review

In recognition of these difficulties and with the full cooperation of the trustee board, the charity underwent a governmental review in 2004-05, this was undertaken by consultants, Glenkeen. Their *Final Report* contains considerable detail on the history of GHOF from a Durham project to a national charity as well as recommendations for its future development and as such there is little point in re-presenting that detailed history here. However, it is important to note that our initial involvement was as commentators on that review, invited by the Home Office Positive Futures programme, which along with the Countryside Agency had funded it. It was seen as problematic by a number of stakeholders and we made a number of observations on the draft (in a confidential document of January 2005<sup>24</sup>).

It is not our intention to revisit the debates about that review here. What is most relevant is that Glenkeen's *Final Report* did contain a number of important recommendations about the way forward for the Get Hooked On Fishing Trust. Glenkeen's recommendations<sup>25</sup> subsequently formed the basis of a development plan accepted by the trustees in April 2005, which included the following key points:

- The Trust developing as a truly national charitable organisation with 'Charter Mark' status for local GHOF projects.
- A reformed structure in which the board of trustees would be served by a new Chief Executive, responsible for 'funding and the national development of GHOF'.
- Clear criteria about what constitutes a GHOF local scheme together with 'a package of service and services developed [for] those localities where there are designated GHOF schemes'.
- Central government funding to be sought to core fund the Trust.
- Job descriptions and contractual appointments revised to meet new demands.
- Focus placed on re-establishing the Durham scheme, which serves to provide the foundation signature to the wider Trust's development.
- Improved governance of the Trust and revision of membership.
- Development of resource materials (production of a Manual was underway by Spring 2005 at the Durham project, as well as other governance documentation, as described below).
- Further development of 'exit routes' and accreditation for participants.

In line with much of this, our funded work with GHOF began in earnest in Spring 2005 and was focused around the following elements:

- i) Liaising with the Trust, namely its Chair, John Milford QC, particularly in relation to restructuring and staffing.

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<sup>24</sup> Brown (2004), *Comments by Dr Adam Brown on Glenkeen (2004): An Independent Review of the Get Hooked on Fishing Trust (Draft B)*, MMU, Manchester December 2004.

<sup>25</sup> Glenkeen (2005) *Get Hooked on Fishing: An independent Review*, London: Glenkeen

- ii) Assisting in the development of documentation and resource materials, specifically, a Charter Statement, Development Plan, and promotional material in conjunction with George Hedges on behalf of the Trust.
- iii) Assistance with raising funding.
- iv) Helping to resolve problems at Wadsworth, which were dominating the national GHOF agenda, including help to raise funding.
- v) Developing a more robust Monitoring and Evaluation framework in order to demonstrate the benefits of the project more effectively and credibly than had been in the past.
- vi) Ad hoc advice, review of materials and other funding bids.

### 3.3 Reflecting New Social Agendas: The Charter and Development Plan

Documentation was overhauled in conjunction with George Hedges, former Chief Constable of Durham Constabulary, who was working on behalf of the Trustees. This was in line with the review's recommendations as well as the Trust's decision to formalise a Chartered scheme structure, with it acting as a national umbrella to a expanding series of local projects.

The documentation was completed by Summer 2005 and adopted by the Trustees consisting of:

- A Charter Mark Statement to be signed by local projects
- A Development Plan Outline
- A Promotional Flyer
- Job and person specifications for a Chief Executive and a Development Manager.

The texts of these documents are included in an Appendix to this report.

It is important to stress that these were drafted with a specific aim of showing that the Get Hooked programme was about both promoting participation in angling *per se* and, more crucially, that it could meet new government agendas around social inclusion - in fact the original motivation for GHOF. In particular, the Trust revised its mission from a narrow focus around crime reduction to now reflect the broader social inclusion agenda:

‘The provision, or assistance in the provision of facilities for all aspects of Angling to create opportunities for participation as a means of engaging young people who by reason of their youth, poverty, social or economic circumstances lack such opportunities. In particular. Get Hooked on Fishing will seek to provide, through their participation, gateways and pathways to development for young people at risk from crime, drug use, educational exclusion, poor health and other forms of social exclusion.’<sup>26</sup>

The *Charter* which projects were to be asked to sign also demonstrated this broadening of approach, stating that GHOF projects should aim to:

- Reduce offending and re-offending
- Reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour
- Improve educational standards by:
  - reducing truancy and other educational exclusions
  - complimenting the school curriculum
  - assisting educational development (e.g. in literacy, numeracy)
- Identify and develop peer coaches in angling and provide pathways to other skills and employment opportunities

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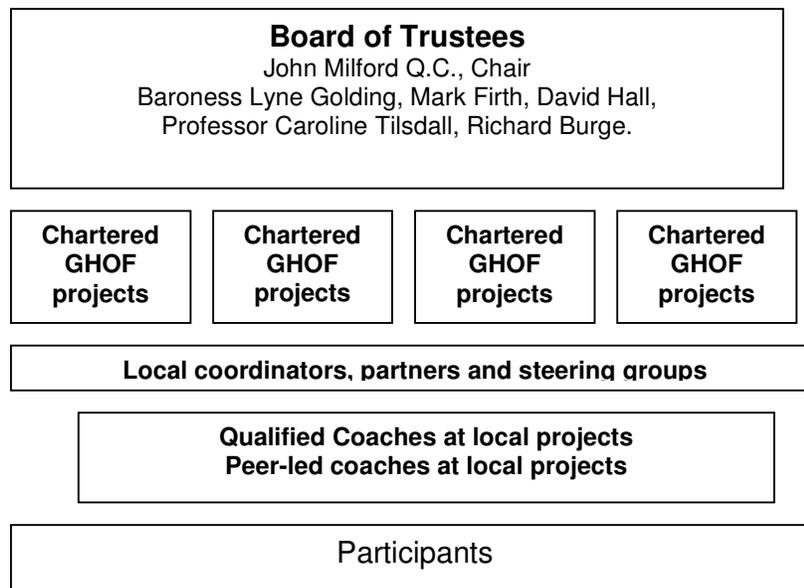
<sup>26</sup> GHOF (2005) *Charter Statement*

- Increase awareness of environmental issues and countryside protection
- Encourage the long term participation in the sport of angling<sup>27</sup>

The Plan set a target of 6 new schemes to be developed each year for 3 years, something which would require considerable funding resources and to which the trust is still working. However, as part of this, it also recommended the formation of, and a flexibility toward, local partnerships:

‘To develop partnerships with other agencies to create sustainable local projects, including the creation of centres for angling and conservation.’<sup>28</sup>

This itself reflects a broader ambition on the part of the Trust to ‘improve communities by providing local, flexible solutions to local issues, through local people.’<sup>29</sup> The *Development Plan* also recognised the newly adopted structure for the Trust’s development by positioning the Trust as the overarching body which ratified, promoted, helped and administered an expanding portfolio of schemes across the country. The following diagram outlines this ‘umbrella’ structure developed with the Trust. However, despite funding successes, it is recognised that sustainable, additional, central resources are needed to be invested strategically in the Trust for this to be achieved as a truly national body, a factor built into the Trust’s Business Plan (below).



**Fig 1. The Get Hooked on Fishing Charitable Trust Structure.**

A new Chief Executive, Anne Moyle, was appointed in summer 2005 and a core element of her work has been the search for strategically vital, core finance to develop the Trust. Anne Moyle, along with John Milford, has also begun a review of the trustees to ensure the board has the appropriate skills and connections - such as appointing angling publisher David Hall in 2006.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*

<sup>28</sup> *ibid*

<sup>29</sup> [www.gethooked.org.uk](http://www.gethooked.org.uk)

The renewed approach and governance was developed at the same time as the redrafting of a *Get Hooked On Fishing Manual* which set out the core elements of the 3-stage GHOF course. We will return to this later in more detail, although it is worth noting here that the *Manual* benefits from the Mick Watson's experience of running fishing projects and GHOF projects for over 6 years, and has proved a useful guide to new projects. It is particularly noteworthy that built into this system is a belief in:

- The importance of fishing as an engagement tool
- The importance of having the right deliverer
- A staged progression through a 3 module course
- Volunteering and peer mentoring
- Accreditation

We explore these in a little more detail in Section 5 because they build on to the particular attractions of fishing as an engagement activity, a developmental approach which can offer gateways and a broadening of horizons to young people.

### 3.4 Recent Developments and Current Status

Since our core involvement ended, GHOF have further refined and developed the governance documentation for the Trust under the guidance of the Chief Executive which includes the following.

#### 1. *Business Plan for the Trust*

This builds on the development work undertaken in 2005 and provides a detailed road map for the strategic development of the Trust, its organisational structure, operating strategy, promotional strategy and perhaps most significantly its funding requirements. The plan targets the 'roll out' of new schemes to areas within the Top 50 of the Multiple Deprivation Index highlighting its orientation to the youth inclusion agenda whilst also making the diversity agenda a key priority.

#### 2. *Operating Plan*

This details the roles and responsibilities of the Trust and local projects, organisational structures, target areas, required documentation (such as Child Protection) and key partner agencies at national and local level.

#### 3. *Development Plan for 2007-2010*

This details a vision of the Trust for 2010 in which it 'will have built a UK network of 30 projects supported by a management framework that will ensure the integrity of delivery'<sup>30</sup>. It also identifies Key Performance Indicators and Objectives for the next three years. These 6 objectives reflect the orientation of the Trust to a more developmental model for young people at risk of exclusion:

- a. Recruitment of young people at risk from deprived areas
- b. Recruitment of those new to sport
- c. Development of pathways for participants to work towards non-sports qualifications
- d. Development pathways for participants to work towards recognised sports qualifications
- e. Development pathways for participants, staff and volunteers to work towards appropriate coaching qualifications
- f. Encouragement of more girls and women to participate<sup>31</sup>

#### 4. *Guidance on Starting a Get Hooked On Fishing Scheme*

This includes background information on the Trust and its approach as well as the offer of taster sessions and costs of introductory taster sessions and module delivery.

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<sup>30</sup> GHOF Charitable Trust (2006) *Development Plan 2007-2010*: 4

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*: 7

5. *A Volunteering Contract*
6. Further development of the job descriptions for Chief Executive and Director, helping to clarify roles.

Along with progress on accreditation for the modular scheme, these developments reflect both our own recommendations on the orientation of the Trust as well as national developments within the broader youth inclusion sphere – such as the promotion of volunteering. The most significant issue for the development of the Trust is the need for it to significantly increase funding levels if it is to achieve its target of six new projects a year.

Along with the employment of a Chief Executive and Director, the funding of new projects and running costs associated with the Trust, something in the region of £160,000 a year is required. We return to this issue later (Section 7) but it is worth noting here that the renewal of the Trust’s approach, documentation and targets, as well as the appointments of Chief Executive and Director has resulted in some significant funding achievements. Not least is the award of £90,000 a year for two years from the National Sports Foundation, as well as the securing of a significant proportion of the matched funding required.

It is worth concluding this section with a review of the current status of the Trust and the GHOF schemes.

|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Chair</b>                          | His Honour, Judge John Milford QC  |
| <b>Trustees</b>                       | David Hall, Richard Burge, Professor Caroline Tisdall, Baroness Lin Golding (and others to be confirmed at time of writing).   |
| <b>National Staff</b>                 | Anne Moyle, Chief Executive<br>Mick Watson, Director   |
| <b>Current Chartered Projects</b>     | North East (Durham)<br>North Liverpool (with Positive Futures)<br>Preston (Making Dreams Come True)<br>Telford (Shropshire)<br>Midshires (Crewe Victoria Community School)<br>Bournville Village Trust Birmingham<br>Grimsby<br>West Sussex (PCT)  |
| <b>New Projects Proposed for 2007</b> | Kent (Groundwork)<br>Annandale & Eskdale<br>Wansbeck, Northumberland<br>Teesside (with EA, Groundwork)<br>Tyne and Wear (with South Tyneside Positive Futures)<br>Hull (with Hull Sports Partnership and District AC)<br>Southampton, Poole (NACRO)<br>Peterborough (Police)<br>+ 4 more to be confirmed |

**Fig 2. Current Status of Get Hooked On Fishing**

## 4. The Social Roles of Angling

In this section we will consider the social roles of angling and in particular what fishing has to offer young people. We will look at the arguments of the Environment Agency to promote fishing, before looking at where fishing fits into the broader sport and social inclusion agenda. We then consider in more detail what fishing has to offer as a diversionary and developmental activity for young people and in particular relevance of the approach of GHOF to engaging young people at risk will be discussed.

Of course angling plays a huge number of roles in society - it is an important leisure activity that a wide variety of people participate in, and in huge numbers as we have seen. It is an important part of the leisure economy, with an estimated £2.75 billion spent each year on the activity. What we are concerned with here is an element of that - how those roles might relate to the broader sport and social inclusion agenda.

### 4.1 Historical roles

It is perhaps first worth noting that in some ways recreational fishing must always have held rewards for people doing it, in that millions of anglers have chosen to spend their time and money on the activity across all sections of society over several hundred years. The narrative literature on fishing from Walton to Gierach is dominated by accounts of favourite expeditions, locations, events - a fun, at times thrilling, activity, often taking place in attractive locations, with friends old and new, and of course the joy created by catching fish - whilst also recognising its downsides - the fishless days, bad weather, boredom. However, like other sports, fishing also offers an 'escape', moments (or days or weeks) when the routine of the everyday can be left behind:

'The solution to any problem - work, love, money, whatever - is to go fishing, and the worse the problem, the longer the trip should be.'<sup>32</sup>

This in part reflects the attraction of fishing as a diversionary activity for young people that we discuss in the next section – a diversion that GHOF place within a more developmental approach. However, it is the particular qualities of all forms of angling, unlike many other mainstream sports, that has attracted people to it in large numbers. A recent BBC 2 TV programme, *The Accidental Angler*, said that one of the qualities of fishing is the concentration needed - that when fishing you must be ready for something to happen (a 'bite') even though for most of the time nothing does, and may not at all; yet when something does it is a moment of extreme excitement and adrenaline rush. The presenter, Charles Rangeley-Wilson, described it as a 'roller coaster of hope and despair'; where you come back the day after a fruitless day's fishing with 'all the expectation there again'. It is, he said, an activity that 'requires the persistence of a termite and the patience of Job'; and that, in regard to success, 'everyone is levelled' and 'the river always wins'. It is these elements that not only attracts large numbers to fish (it's 'democratic' features), but also makes angling a useful engagement tool for young people.

Here angling can create opportunities for 'what Victor Turner has referred to as a "liminal" space, which provides the individual with a "spatial separation from the familiar and habitual".... where "normal" social rules are broken and subverted...' However fishing also reflects the fact that:

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<sup>32</sup> Gierach, J (1990) *Sex, Death and Fly Fishing*, Simon & Schuster

'As well as providing a space in which people can escape their wider troubles through an intense, un-self-conscious involvement with a physically rewarding activity, more generally, sport can provide spaces in which participants may: enter unfamiliar locations and meet new people; talk and reflect upon relationships and performances; be encouraged by coaches and peers to take; personal and mutual responsibility, thus refining; their sense of both individual potentials and mutual dependencies; experience strong and open inter-generational contact, thus fostering more respectful forms of interaction; be encouraged to recognise the importance of partnership, consensus and reliance on others through their own experience; feel able to freely submit to the 'rules of the game' and the time-limited disciplinary regimes of particular sports.'<sup>33</sup>

There is not space to explore this literature or the wider motivations for anglers further here. The traditions of angling, questions of why people chose to do it, and the benefits they feel from it is something that has been covered in other literature<sup>34</sup>; and the different participants, cultures, practices and locations of fishing will be explored in our ongoing research. However, in terms of discussions about the more instrumental roles that fishing can play as an activity, the EA has recently outlined why it promotes the activity and the benefits the EA thinks it brings.

## 4.2 Environment Agency

The Environment Agency in particular has been increasingly proactive in recent years in promoting fishing as a broadly beneficial activity. Much of this promotion of fishing centres around arguments about the stated and potential benefits of fishing for participants, as well as the positive impact anglers can have on the environment. Indeed, the EA's consultation document '*Angling to 2015*' argued that the benefits of fishing needed better promotion:

'Angling is not a spectator sport like football or other 'mainstream' sports, but, nevertheless, it is still the nation's favourite sporting pastime... However, many people still see angling as a minority sport, unaware of the many benefits it can bring.'<sup>35</sup>

The EA's remit now includes governmental instruction for it to:

- 'enhance the social contribution fishing makes as a widely available and healthy form of recreation'
- 'enhance the contribution salmon and freshwater fisheries make to the economy, particularly in remote rural areas with low levels of income'<sup>36</sup>

In *Angling to 2015*, the EA highlighted the three principle areas it saw societal benefit being delivered from angling.

### a) Social

The Agency argues that fishing can deliver on government agendas to promote sports and outdoor activity to young people, illustrating that it is popular with young people, is 'very versatile and anyone can take it up at low cost'. Angling is an activity which also encompasses a wide variety of different social groups (whilst not including some). The 'active' elements of fishing link to governmental health agendas around

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<sup>33</sup> Crabbe et al (2006) *op cit*: 18

<sup>34</sup> Washabaugh (2000); EA (2005) *Public Attitudes to Angling 2005: A survey of attitudes and participation in England and Wales*, Bristol: EA.

<sup>35</sup> EA (2004b): 6-8

<sup>36</sup> *ibid*: 6

the importance of physical activity, but also angling can offer other health benefits that some sports do not – such as around stress, ‘well being’ and relaxation<sup>37</sup>.

The EA and organisations such as the English Federation for Disability Sports (EFDS) have shown that angling is also a favourite sport among people with disabilities. However, despite this contribution to what can broadly be considered to be the ‘diversity agenda’, as participation figures show, angling still has to attract more women (currently 5% of anglers) and Black and Ethnic Minority populations if its ‘benefits’ are to be felt more widely. These are now priority areas for increasing participation for the EA.

Some of our research in Scotland has also illustrated the importance of remoteness and solitude when fishing, which attracts people to particular areas to fish (Brown, forthcoming). The following quote shows the contribution ‘wilderness’ fishing can have in terms of both physical activity and solitude:

‘Primarily it is the [relative] wildness and unmanaged nature of the fishing [that attracts me]. You don’t see many other people – at least not on the remoter lochs. Also the fact that you can do a good day’s walk combined with fishing; the fact you can fish a different loch every day for a month and not exhaust it; the beauty of the landscape; the lack of ‘administrative hassle’ once you have purchased a licence...’<sup>38</sup>

This suggests that, in contrast to most mainstream sports within these debates, angling can offer associated benefits and in particular a freedom from the modern, and urban world. This contrast to the urban, a space for quiet and reflection rather than high octane sporting activity, is also one of the positive impacts that projects such as GHOF on Fishing can have for young people. Angling then also provides both an activity and economic development, to areas which are outside the urban centres, something which raises its importance in the development of rural communities and - in the context of GHOF - the potential roles in relation to rural exclusion and rural youth exclusion in particular.

#### *b) Economic*

The EA and the JADB have also argued that fishing makes a significant contribution to the English and Welsh economy with the sector estimated to be worth £3.5 billion, with 16,000 full and part time jobs. This is especially important in terms of the economy of rural areas. Whilst there is not space to explore this issue in this paper, some locations (especially Wales) have heavily promoted tourism on the back of fishing, investing £2.5m in fishing tourism promotion<sup>39</sup>; and the EA has prioritised making fisheries more valuable in England and Wales, contributing to the rural economy in particular. This again is something supported by our research into angling in the far north of Scotland, where the sale of fishing permits on one mutually owned estate is the most significant net contributor.

#### *c) Environmental*

The EA argues that anglers can be of benefit to the environment in a number of ways:

- Anglers can be the ‘eyes and ears of the water environment’, alerting regulators to problems or breaches.

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<sup>37</sup> Department of Health (2005) *Choosing Health Making healthy choices easier, Executive Summary*, London DoH.

<sup>38</sup> Female angler, aged 43, *Cultures of Fishing in Scotland research*, Brown, forthcoming.

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.fishing.visitwales.com/>

- Fishing is often the first contact those who live in cities have with the rural environment.
- Angling organisations promote conservation, such as the Angler's Conservation Association (ACA), various Rivers Trusts and the National Association of Fisheries and Angling Consultatives (NAFAC).
- The EA says that 'developing new fisheries, and restoring derelict ones, especially in urban areas, means many new opportunities for people to take up fishing, as well as improving the general environment.' (EA 2005b: 8)

There are debates about the extent to which promotion of angling can conflict with preservation of the natural environment both in the UK (the balance between angling-based tourism and the preservation of wilderness locations) and the US (Wasaburgh 2001), although a commitment to the environment has been a common feature of the vast majority of anglers we have spoken to. However, rather than get sidetracked into debates about the instrumental and intrinsic benefits of one sporting activity over another, it is important to focus on the potential roles angling can play with regard other sports and the broader social inclusion agenda.

### 4.3 Fishing's as a 'Sport'

Since the election of the Labour government in 1997 there has been increasing interest in the contribution that sport in general can make to the tackling of social problems. It has been assumed that the 'power' and popularity of sport in the UK puts it in a unique position to build and sustain communities, and that it can have positive influences on social and economic regeneration, public health, educational standards, community safety, crime reduction and the tackling of social exclusion. However, there has been until recently little thinking on how fishing might have a relevance to these policy agendas, despite its very high participation rates.

Over the past 10 years, the policy context for sport has altered in line with increased and more formally expressed expectations that it can deliver a range of social benefits. In line with current government priorities and terminology, since the late 1990s it has become largely accepted in national and local government that sports can help to tackle 'social exclusion'. In more prosaic terms, this means that sports are now frequently said to be able to contribute to the well-being of individuals and communities in at least four key areas:

- Social and economic regeneration
- Education, skills and employment
- Health improvement
- Crime reduction

With particular regard to young people, the government has also established a framework - Every Child Matters - against which all services to young people - including sports provision - will be measured. This is based around 5 key outcome areas:

- Be Healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Be free from substance misuse
- Achieve economic well being<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/>

At national level, this belief in the 'power' of sport to meet disparate policy agendas is apparent in the number of government departments that currently identify sport as a key deliver of their objectives. It is important for fishing to consider the policy approaches that these departments are formulating, and for GHOF in particular. If fishing is to maximise the potential for it to deliver on these agendas, then it needs to be able to position itself in relation to programmes and funding initiatives within this policy context, as well as be able to demonstrate its ability to meet these government agendas. However, it also needs to articulate what role it can play, not only as something which has intrinsic 'benefits' for people who take part, but as an engagement strategy for young people, from which the broader developmental agendas on health, crime, substance misuse and education can follow.

Fishing's contested status as a sport has meant that it has been virtually ignored within debates about sport, community and social inclusion. On one hand some of the assumptions about sport are now being questioned:

'it is not possible to make generalisations about specific patterns of character development or behaviour as a consequence of particular patterns of sports participation.'<sup>41</sup>

On the other, the potential of fishing as an activity which can deliver on government agendas is being given more attention. Indeed, we have seen through our wider research (for instance in case study work for the Positive Futures programme) an increasing use of fishing as an engagement and development activity within and alongside the use of more traditional 'sports'.

Fishing's low profile in sport policy and funding debates rests on four elements:

- its lack of status as a sport
- an image and at times reality of the activity as a sedentary one;
- the prioritisation given to rigorous physical activity, particularly within community sport, by government, funders and sports agencies; and
- the historical challenges felt by fishing organisations in advocating more effectively the 'social benefits' and contributions of fishing, particularly for young people, in order to receive wider support.

To take the first of these, Jay Coakley's 'traditional' definition of sport says:

'sports are institutionalised competitive activities that involve rigorous physical exertion or the use of relatively complex physical skills by participants motivated by internal and external rewards'<sup>42</sup>

By examining fishing within this debate, we can see some of the attributes the activity may share with other more mainstream sports, as well as its differences.

### *Physical Exertion*

Whilst some forms of fishing do involve physical exertion, it is not a defining factor in angling as it is in most sports. The more common form and also popular stereotype is of a man sat or stood with rod in hand, not moving. Whilst recognising this 'norm' is important, it does not preclude an understanding of fishing as one which entails physical activity, whether climbing to mountain lochs (as the quote above illustrated), walking to remote sea fishing locations, wading in rivers, or casting. GHOF have also

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<sup>41</sup> Crabbe *et al* (2006) *Knowing the Score: Positive Futures Case Study Research: Final Report For the Home Office*, November 2006

<sup>42</sup> Coakley (2003): 21

begun to develop opportunities for physical activity within their projects such as nature, conservation and biodiversity walks; and frequently use hi-octane games as an 'ice breaker' in sessions and residential. As such fishing can be seen as having an unrealised potential in generating recognition of it as a site for physical activity benefits.

Conversely, agencies such as Sport England are now looking beyond core sports to deliver on the activity and health agenda<sup>43</sup>; whilst programmes such as Positive Futures are encouraging projects to explore the use of a wider range of activities within their work<sup>44</sup>. This should offer further opportunities for fishing organisations to develop these approaches.

More importantly however, it is precisely because fishing requires quietness, stillness and calmness to be effectively undertaken, that it offers opportunities for young peoples' (and others') development in ways that are different to mainstream sports. As we shall see below, and notwithstanding the benefits it can bring in physical activity, it is fishing's sedentary and often solitary nature that makes it attractive as an alternative to more active sports as well as opening opportunities for relationship building and developmental progression. These factors are also important in understanding the other health and personal benefits of the 'quiet' nature of fishing.

#### *Physical Skill*

All types of fishing involve a degree, and in some cases a very high degree, of physical skill and dexterity. The art of fly fishing in particular, involves a number of different techniques that people will take years and years to master; whilst the ability to attach tackle together, to cast to a specific spot, or 'lie', and to land fish are important in all forms of angling. If archery is defined as a sport in this respect, then the ability to land a size 16 fly perfectly on the water near a rising fish, without 'spooking' it, could be seen in the same light. This dexterity can provide a number of transferable skills for those that fish, not least in hand eye coordination, as other sports do.

#### *Competitive Activity*

To some extent all forms of angling contain an element of competition (and one that delivers internal and external rewards) in that the activity pits human beings against fish and the natural elements. However, many anglers also form themselves into organisations and numerous formal, prize giving competitions exist from grass roots angling clubs to international teams and in all codes of fishing. The role of certification, accreditation and awards is also a feature of GHOF activities, as are competitive events.

#### *'Blood Sport'?: The role of Animals*

Whilst some sports, including Olympic sports such as horse jumping, involve other animate beings, few involve catching (or even killing) the animal. Indeed, activities undertaken recreationally that do have this as their aim (e.g. shooting game birds) are more often referred to as 'blood sports'. Where activities like shooting occur in events like the Olympics, the animal is taken out of the equation and replaced by an artificial object (e.g. clay pigeon) - something not possible in fishing. One exception is fly fishing casting competitions - where the fisher has to land a fly on a target and no fish are involved.

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<sup>43</sup> <http://www.everydaysport.com>

<sup>44</sup> Crime Concern, 2006: 23

Of course the role of the fish raises a whole series of ethical, moral and legal issues, including at times opposition to the practice altogether. There is not space to explore the different layers of these complex issues in this paper, but it is important to note their existence. Further, some research suggests that opposition to fishing is low:

'71% agreed with the statement that "Angling is an acceptable pastime", while only 8% disagreed... [Although] there was less certainty about whether "Angling is a cruel pastime". 24% agreed, while 47% disagreed and 26% neither agreed nor disagreed.'<sup>45</sup>

However, fishing's status as a sport should not be a barrier to a recognition of its potential role as an effective developmental and engagement tool within social inclusion projects and programmes. Coakley's 'alternative' definition of sport perhaps offers a different way through this debate:

'1. What activities are identified as sports by people in a particular group or society?  
2. Whose sports count most in a group or society when it comes to obtaining support and resources?'<sup>46</sup>

To take the first of these, within angling, there is a routine and common reference by participants, in literature and by organisations such as National Governing Bodies to fishing as a 'sport'. As we have seen, all three forms of fishing share characteristics of other sports, as well as having governing bodies, national teams and organised competitions. However, the perception of those who *do not participate* appears to not regard fishing as a 'sport', certainly not in the same way as more mainstream activities such as football.

With regard to the second of Coakley's criteria - which sports count most in society when it comes to allocation of resources - fishing does not receive anything like the funding other sports do in terms of community or developmental work. Sport England, although it encourages people to fish, has funded some schemes and has worked with the JADB in developing the *Whole Sport Plan* for angling, does not recognise fishing as core sport and as such this limits funding opportunities, despite the activity and health opportunities it may offer.

The EA provides significant support to fishing and fisheries funded through its collection of the rod license fee; and has also been one of the most significant funders of 'social inclusion' projects in angling, although this is a small element of total fisheries expenditure. Indeed, even the EA funding has come through a route of promoting the environment and use of the countryside, rather than normal sport or recreation funding routes. However, as we have seen, more recently, angling bodies and the EA have increased efforts to promote 'the social benefits of angling' and it is within this context that we have begun to witness the promotion of angling as a means of combating social exclusion amongst young people.

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<sup>45</sup> EA (2005): 6

<sup>46</sup> Coakley (2003): 23

## 5. Get Hooked On Fishing: A Developmental Approach to Angling and Youth Inclusion

'To be outside; in pursuit of something; with friends; so we can help each other; and be part of something; that helps us learn.'<sup>47</sup>

It can be argued that fishing has always held particular benefits for young people and that this has been encouraged within the culture of the sport for many years. Our research in Scotland suggests that often a relaxed approach is taken to 'juniors' or young people who wanted to fish, whether or not they had permission to do so, in recognition of the perceived benefits it can bring.

Here the diversionary or developmental aspect of fishing for young people are stressed as part of the everyday practices of the sport, rather than a programmed or project-based participation. One former policeman and now an important figure in a cooperatively owned local fishing organisation in the north of Scotland suggested that he 'never stopped any young people fishing whether they had a permit or not... we want people to learn to fish don't we? And if they're fishing, they're not up to mischief.'<sup>48</sup> Another person involved in the a local crofters fishing provision said, 'the thing is here, kids are practically born fishing and I'll bet there isn't a house without a rod round here. For them it's an important part of growing up, coming of age, having some independence...'<sup>49</sup>

In this case, in a non-programmed way, benefits to young people (coming of age, having independence) and the wider society (diverting young people from 'anti-social behaviour') are cited as part of the everyday practices of fishing. Interviewees in this particular location unwittingly raised two of the key issues being discussed in policy approaches toward fishing in England and Wales, namely fishing to combat social exclusion and increasing participation in fishing. Within this there is a perception that fishing is an acceptable, even worthy activity, with a tradition that underpins it in a way which is not the case with some modern extreme sports.

However, in terms of programmed activity, and in particular GHOF projects, there are a number of key issues around the engagement and development of young people at risk that need to be highlighted here. GHOF argues that its projects can help young people achieve more in education, be deterred from crime and substance misuse, become more autonomous and be healthier, through participation in fishing.

### 5.1 Delivery

The Trust sets out to achieve this through a series of locally based projects that have received its Charter mark, as outlined in Section 3. These projects deliver angling coaching courses to young people considered at risk or whom have had limited opportunities to fish. This is done through a course with three modules which incrementally increases participants' skills. Young people can access the scheme either through formal referrals (such as crime reduction agencies), or in sessions provided for particular agencies (such as local Positive Futures projects, or schools), or on an ad hoc basis.

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<sup>47</sup> [www.gethooked.org.uk](http://www.gethooked.org.uk)

<sup>48</sup> 'CM', interview with author, June 2005.

<sup>49</sup> 'RM' interview with author, June 2005

Projects employ both full-time and part-time coordinators, as well as using the input of volunteers, peer mentors and sessional coaches. These can be one of the following:

- Professionally qualified people with backgrounds in education, youth work or the police etc.
- JAGB or PAA Qualified licensed Coaching Staff with Level 2 angling coaching license for practical input on angling skills
- Peer-led coaches that have completed compulsory parts of GHOF Module 2
- Volunteers that have undergone CRB process and that have a valid current basic First Aid Certificate<sup>50</sup>

However, GHOF also stress that regardless of the background of the individual they will need particular skills to fulfil the role, such as the ability to:

- Communicate with young people in a friendly manner
- Have empathy with issues surrounding young people
- Deal with conflict in a fair and appropriate manner
- Convey a sense of responsibility
- Inspire young people to achieve
- Educate a basic knowledge of angling
- Communicate an appreciation of environmental and conservation issues
- Pass on an awareness of health and safety issues
- Impart knowledge in a non-formal environment
- Be impartial and believes in equal opportunities
- Understand Child Protection policies
- Be open and honest<sup>51</sup>

This itself reflects the approach of other inclusion programmes which prioritise staff with 'youth work' skills - the ability to develop mutual respect with young people and take a less disciplinarian approach - than traditional sport development 'coaches'. This reflects findings in other research which suggests that:

'Successful relationship building may be *assisted* by sports competency, but is *primarily* driven by the young people's identification with the socio-cultural background and approach of the workers. Projects' capacity to create the right cocktail of characters with the necessary blend of skills to work in this multi-dimensional field will define their success.'<sup>52</sup>

Local projects can be stand alone organisations, that receive funding and referrals from other local partners, such as the Durham project which works closely with the Durham Agency Against Crime (which originally established the project), Connexions and Durham Positive Futures, among others. However, they might also be part of broader youth inclusion projects, such as the Liverpool GHOF scheme, established in 2005, which is part of the North Liverpool Positive Futures project<sup>53</sup>.

## 5.2 Engagement

The attraction of fishing as an activity for *some* young people is immediate. Indeed, some participants on GHOF projects may have already had experience of fishing,

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<sup>50</sup> GHOF (2005) *Manual of Guidance*, Durham: GHOF

<sup>51</sup> *ibid*

<sup>52</sup> Crabbe, T (2005) '*Getting to Know You*': *Engagement and Relationship Building First Interim National Positive Futures Case Study Research Report*, London: Home Office

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*: 17

others may have family members who fish, whilst a few will be active anglers. This means that for those young people fishing is already a culturally familiar activity for them. This does not mean that they necessarily have many opportunities to fish - indeed in one case, a young person who had considerable problems at home reported that his father refused to take him fishing; and for another we heard that the father had actually stolen his son's fishing equipment. For these young people GHOF provided a way around these obstacles and access to an activity that they were already keen to participate in; as well as helping them develop skills further. Indeed, for some who have experience of fishing, new roles such as helping peers less experienced than themselves may open up.

This is not the case for all young people and for the vast majority GHOF provides their first introduction to the sport, which is a central aim of the charity. Here, fishing provides something unusual, out of the ordinary and an activity that does not receive widespread media or public attention. Unlike mainstream sports like football, the young people will not have undertaken the activity at school, nor watched it on television. Some young people will, as a result, be actively opposed to the idea and whilst this might create obstacles, it also opens up opportunities for broadening horizons:

'at first I thought what the hell do I want to do that for, it's boring; but after the first time, I couldn't wait to go back'<sup>54</sup>

There are several factors within the GHOF approach which can help such a turnaround. The first is that, as with fishing more generally, having somebody who knows where to go and knows what to do, as well as an easily accessible place to fish, is vital in beginning participation. The EA report that these are among the biggest obstacles to introducing new people to the sport generally, and even more so with those most marginalised in society. GHOF's approach addresses this by having skilled, qualified fishing coaches who can take groups of young people to fishing ponds, but whom also meet the criteria above, not least an ability to relate to young people on their own terms. This is supplemented by the use of peer mentors (which we return to below) where some young people assist others, and generally the provision of a supportive environment in which new skills can be learnt.

Second, the actual catching of fish is a key element in retaining the engagement of some young people (whilst others have been observed happily fishing for hours without any success). As one member of a GHOF project stated:

'getting that first fish is the thing. Once they've felt a fish on the line, the pure excitement of it, and seeing what they have done by landing it, you've usually got them. For many then, there's no stopping their enthusiasm.'<sup>55</sup>

Third, and following on from this, fishing is an activity in which usually the participant spends most of their time *not* catching fish and many hours can be spent without success. However, it is also one which requires significant concentration in those hours in order to achieve success and a readiness to respond when they get a 'bite'. This heightens the excitement when a fish actually does bite, makes it more 'special' and is absolutely central in retaining participants' engagement.

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<sup>54</sup> Young person on GHOFNE event, Durham, speaking to author

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

Fourthly, is the wider learning that is possible around the provision GHOF make which is embedded within their courses. Significant parts of the delivery of the courses are 'classroom' based, such as modular elements on:

- the physical properties of fish
- their habitat and feeding habits
- fish welfare
- the migratory life cycles of species such as salmon and eels

All these can help to retain the engagement of young people and increase an interest in the activity, as well as providing wider learning. Indeed, recent developments at some projects have included the addition of other, non-fishing activities such as conservation walks, biodiversity learning and wider appreciation of environmental factors.

Our own observations - as well as those of the Trust, its project workers and participants - all suggest that it is because fishing offers something new, different and an alternative to mainstream sports, and especially team sports, which means that it is a successful means of engaging young people. For some young people this is simply because they are not proficient at sports such as football, and participation in those activities can simply exacerbate their own sense of exclusion and alienation. The following example from a Positive Futures case study which is now running a Get Hooked project, emphasises the point:

“Irving” has low self esteem, communication problems, moderate learning difficulties, and has been diagnosed as suffering from ADHD and ‘borderline Aspergers.’ He bullied and was excluded from primary school and is now at Secondary school. He was referred by Social Services who feared he was in danger of becoming involved in ASB on his Estate. An internal assessment reports that his behaviour at PF is now greatly improved. He hates football, but loves fishing and outdoor pursuits, which the project can offer him... He is a regular attender.<sup>56</sup>

However, it is also an important alternative because it is:

- A less hi-octane activity than, for example, football
- An activity which is an individual pursuit but ones which also offers communality.
- An activity which often takes place out of normal, urban, environments, but also one which offers specific potential for rural communities.
- A means of engaging young people - often when ‘traditional’ means of ‘learning’ sport have broken down - which offers opportunities for mentoring, discussion, learning in other areas (e.g. conservation), and transferable skills training.

GHOF themselves explain that fishing ‘works’ in this context because:

‘the close, shared activity creates a comfort zone for young people, allowing for conversation and bonding. It is not a “team game”, yet does lend itself to camaraderie and a sense of shared purpose and experience. The coaching process is supportive of close “one to one” briefing [and] acquiring the skills of fishing brings with it status... It requires focussed attention and concentration [and] little physical prowess is required.’<sup>57</sup>

Further, with reference back to the importance of the type of staff delivering the project, it is argued that ‘the coach, because of his knowledge of the activity, quickly

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<sup>56</sup> Crabbe T (2005) *Going the Distance: 3<sup>rd</sup> Interim Positive Futures Case Study Report*, London: Home Office, August 2006: Appendix 2, Participant Journeys: 83.

<sup>57</sup> GHOF (2005) *Development Plan*.

becomes established as a trusted role model'. This has been observed in a number of cases and is important in opening opportunities for relationship building with young people:

'The initial contact was made by Richard and then my initial meeting with them was when we went, I took them fishing February 2005 and the day before me and Richard were driving past the estate and they were out playing footie so we just got out of the car and started chatting and they are just teenage lads basically. Then I took them fishing the next day, they had a really good day even though the fishing was rubbish because it was too cold but they did have a good day and then at the end of the day one of them asked me if I had all me stuff back, 'cos a lot of the stuff was mine and we were packing it away and I got all my stuff back and he said 'yeah, you know why that is don't you that's cos we F'ing well like you', so that just made me laugh the first day so I thought that was alright. And then what we did then was we moved the Saturday football from the sports centre in Everton Park up to their estate and we started providing to give them a link into us on a Saturday morning.'<sup>58</sup>

Here both the activity and having the right sort of staff – able to communicate on the street and develop mutual respect – are important factors and different elements of fishing will appeal to and engage young people to differing degrees. For some it is the opportunity to escape, even for a brief time, the local context from which they have become alienated and excluded which attracts them. Others have reported that it is the opportunity 'to get some fresh air' and go into rural areas; or to have an adult that shows an interest in them and their progress; whilst for some it will be the excitement of the potential of catching fish. For most there is at least an element of exploring a new, well known but untried activity.

Whatever it is that succeeds in engaging young people, however, the crucial thing is the ways in which that engagement can then be used for broader relationship building to open up developmental pathways for young people; and in which angling can act as a gateway to the delivery of a wide range of educational messages. In this sense both the activity of fishing and the approach of GHOF in particular have a lot to contribute.

### **5.3 Gender and Diversity**

The gender imbalance in participation rates in fishing generally (as well as most youth inclusion programmes), can also be reflected in GHOF projects, which can lessen the successful engagement of young women. Strategic decisions by the charity (as well as the EA) to address this, and practical attempts by projects at a local level have had some success with the organisation reporting participation rates of around 14% for females, significantly higher than the 5% the EA says fish regularly.

This gender imbalance also reflects broader tendencies within youth inclusion projects and sports-based ones in particular that have been highlighted elsewhere<sup>59</sup>. As with other examples of sport being used to engage young people (where for instance dance classes have been introduced as an alternative to football), there is a danger that in seeking to address the issue projects will fall back onto gender stereotypes. Whilst this approach, if it acts as a gateway for some young women to then go on to participate in fishing or other developmental relationships with the

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<sup>58</sup> Crabbe (2005) *op cit*: 29

<sup>59</sup> Woodhouse, D (2006) *Constraint and Contestation: Gender, Sport and Positive Futures*, Paper to Sport and Community Conference, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia March 2006.

programme, can be successful, other approaches – the use of female role models, for example - may also increase female participation.

In fact, the Trust's new *Business Plan* makes a priority of increasing diversity through its local projects and to work toward the Equality Standard for Sport.

'Although this [86%-14% gender imbalance] is acknowledged as a common feature of most sport-related community interventions, and of fishing more generally, GHOF is keen to encourage more girls and other minority groups into fishing.'<sup>60</sup>

This is backed up by a programme of activities designed to broaden participation in GHOF projects, including investigating possible work with Brownies and Guides; 'Mums and Kids' coaching; development of links with Women in Rural Enterprise; specific campaigns to target daughters; as well as broader 'diversity' activities such as work with Interfaith.<sup>61</sup>

#### 5.4 Developmental Approaches - the benefits of being quiet and still

As has been argued elsewhere, it is less the type of activity - be it sport, arts or fishing - that is important, than the use made of the initial engagement to develop relationships with them which can then lead to a building of relationships and broadening of young people's horizons. As such, any one activity does not *intrinsically* produce improvements in behaviour, or attendance, or reduce risks for young people; but rather can act as a gateway to new opportunities being created. This is as true of mainstream sports as it is of fishing:

'sport and related activities have value beyond their intrinsic appeal to young people... it is not the sport itself that matters most. The value can only be realised when sport is undertaken *within* a 'developmental approach'. In this sense it is the adoption of a personal and social development model which is 'sacred' to sport-based social inclusion programmes rather than 'sport'.<sup>62</sup>

Thus, whilst some mainstream sports can offer particular attractions within a developmental approach - such as team building, togetherness, rigorous physical activity - other activities offer different attractions. With fishing, it is perhaps most importantly the length of time, the sedate nature, the need to obey certain modes of behaviour in order to be successful and the need for concentration, that are its greatest contributions to a developmental approach. These factors seem to offer something to young people that other, hi-octane physical activities, do not.

One Positive Futures worker who had referred young people to a GHOF session, said:

'I don't know what it is about fishing, but this lad *supposedly* had ADHD. A nightmare most of the time. Goes fishing, he sits there for four hours without catching anything and doesn't move. Has to be practically dragged away and can't wait to go again.'<sup>63</sup>

Furthermore, the fact that young people can remain in one place for a length of time offers distinct opportunities for conversations, one-to-one mentoring and relationship building that are otherwise difficult, and especially so, for example, as young people are running around a football field. This 'surprise' at how fishing has succeeded as an

<sup>60</sup> GHOF (2006) *GHOF Development Plan*: 9

<sup>61</sup> *ibid*

<sup>62</sup> Crabbe *et al* (2006): 19.

<sup>63</sup> Conversation with author, September 2006

engagement strategy with some young people when other activities have not is a common response.

The beneficial effects of this ability to retain attention, as well as remain in one place is something GHOF themselves stress. In particular it is the opportunities that this stillness creates for developing relationships that is one element of the success of the GHOF approach because it allows instruction at the river or bank side, which can then develop into conversation:

‘we don't just go fishing on get hooked, we do many different things, we have fun we learn and we talk about some very serious things’.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, it is perhaps ironic that one of the key factors in fishing not being considered within wider policymaking and debates about sport and social inclusion - its often sedentary nature - that offers its greatest contribution to its potential to deliver on the self same social agendas.

## 5.5 A Safe, Learning and Developmental Environment

‘Angling might be said to be so like the mathematics that it can never be fully learned’<sup>65</sup>

A key feature of the GHOF approach and course is the structured learning approach as detailed in the Manual . The Manual of Guidance - the course outline given to projects - has been developed to reflect the experience of the scheme leaders and the participants. As such it should,

‘be considered in its whole as a 5-year case study and as an educated reference guide... The manual should not be viewed as entirely prescriptive and will evolve as new and existing schemes contribute through time. What the reader will see in its first form is a proven coherent path for young people to develop.’<sup>66</sup>

This provides a structured but adaptable learning path for staff, volunteers, peer mentors and young people. Its 3 stage, modular approach seeks not only to build up skills in angling and knowledge of fish and fishing, but a progression from engagement to empowerment:

‘Module 1: To engage effectively.  
Mentoring: To maintain contact and motivate, guidelines and monitoring  
Module 2: To retain, empower and develop.  
Module 3: To develop further, reward and sustain.’<sup>67</sup>

This staged, progressional development of skills and knowledge in a modular framework allows people to develop their fishing skills in a structured way, at their own pace. The incremental approach also allows those who have acquired skills and knowledge to share expertise - including in informal ways, such as *ad hoc* advice by the lake or river bank. Elements such as the classroom sessions create opportunities for communality in an otherwise largely individual activity and on occasion this can allow different groups of young people, or young people from different areas to meet, exchange and come together. Underpinning this learning structure are the usual documentary requirements for child protection - a series of consent forms for

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<sup>64</sup> [www.gethookedonfishing.org.uk](http://www.gethookedonfishing.org.uk)

<sup>65</sup> Walton, I and Cotton, C (2003 edition transcribed by Richard Bear) *The Complete Angler*,  
Renaissance Editions, University of Oregon

<sup>66</sup> GHOF (2005) *GHOF Manual*

<sup>67</sup> *ibid*

participants, including nomination forms, photography consent, accident incident, risk assessment, and medical declaration forms.

The GHOF approach incorporates both volunteering and peer mentoring as central elements and the role of young people in running both the course and these other, more typically mundane, aspects is crucial. Module 1 deliverers will identify young people who show the aptitude to become peer mentors. These then help deliver modules – through for example helping others out and passing on knowledge – as well as aspects such as health and safety messages.

‘One of our lads was brilliant giving out the healthy and safety advice to the others and he was only 13. He basically said “you can lark around on the bank if you want, but if you do, you’re in danger of drowning but more importantly you won’t catch any bloody fish”. The others listened to that.’<sup>68</sup>

This ‘peer mentoring’ allows both progression and empowerment, as well as transferable skills development. The development of some, previously at risk, young people into long time mentors for the project is one of its strongest success stories.

‘It feels good when you catch a fish. You think, “I really did that”, then you coach another kid to catch a fish.....they catch a fish because you coached them and that feels even better.’<sup>69</sup>

In terms of accreditation, at each stage young people who complete a module are awarded certificates, something clearly valued by participants, and GHOF are at present in the process of acquiring accreditation for peer mentoring and volunteering (for example with the Open College Network). Also, those who progress can also choose to take their fishing coaching badges, providing ongoing learning and accredited skills that can lead to part or even full time employment.

Furthermore, this approach is underpinned by a mentoring system in which young people can access adult mentors both during time at the project and when away from it. Here, mentors provide a sounding board, advice, and even at times mediation both by telephone and in person. However, where this works best, it is because trust has been built up first through the initial engagement activity of fishing, within an approach that then allows the development of a relationship.

All of these factors clearly indicate that the GHOF approach can show how angling – a somewhat marginalised sport – can be an extremely useful means of engaging and developing young people. However, this is not simply because of the *intrinsic* value of fishing (although as indicated this does contribute something), but the developmental approach taken in its implementation, most notably.

- The provision of an alternative activity to mainstream sports
- Opportunities for relationship building, broadening horizons and developing mutual respect with coaches and mentors
- Learning, skill development
- Volunteering and opportunities for taking responsibility
- Accreditation and reward system
- Particular opportunities for rural inclusion projects

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<sup>68</sup> MX, interview with AB, September 2004.

<sup>69</sup> Peer-led coach in Durham, [www.gethookedonfishing.org.uk](http://www.gethookedonfishing.org.uk)

## 6. Demonstrating the Potential: Monitoring and Evaluation

### 6.1 Existing Models of Monitoring

In its origins, GHOF was primarily a police-sponsored diversionary youth project aimed at reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. Both the organisers at the time and other independent observers soon realised that it was much more than that, offering opportunities for ongoing engagement, relationship building and developmental and educational work with young people. These elements lie at the core of GHOF's growth and its potential.

However, assessments of the project's success – at both a local and a national level, within the trust and from outside agencies - remained based around two assumptions:

1. That fishing was somehow a 'special' activity with intrinsic benefits for those that participate in it over and above other activities.
2. That participation on the scheme could be equated in a causal relationship with desired social outcomes – in this case reductions in crime, anti-social behaviour and truancy.

Our approach to this issue suggested three things. The first was that, although angling as an activity does offer some distinctive characteristics which other more widely adopted sports do not – such as solitude, quiet, the need to remain still – that itself doesn't make it any better or worse than other activities for relationship building with young people. What is important here is understanding the different benefits and opportunities fishing can bring as an activity within a developmental approach to youth engagement, something the GHOF approach as well as this report, have hopefully begun to explain. Understanding and explaining what fishing offers in this respect and how it might lead to meeting wider youth agendas, is essential if angling is to realise its potential in relation to sport-based social policy.

The second is that although reported reductions in crime may well have been as a result of young peoples' involvement in the project, there is no guarantee that is so. As such, there is a need to question the crime and truancy reduction assumptions implicit in early evaluations of GHOF's work. As we have argued elsewhere, the *causal* relationships between 'sport' and desired social outcomes are notoriously difficult to prove conclusively: it is difficult to be certain that a particular change in behaviour is due to one activity alone (rather than changes in other areas of the young person's life); and such assessments do not take account of unreported offending or anti-social behaviour.

Furthermore, the somewhat 'bald' statistical approach to demonstrating the success of GHOF simply did not explain the ways in which it was successful, the richness and feel of the project work, or allow for softer, more qualitative ways of demonstrating the positive impact of involvement in the project for young people. This latter point was the case even though GHOF themselves used the self-same qualitative measures - pictures, young people's testimony and other non-statistical ways – to promote the potential of the organisation. Finally, the use of rather fixed quantitative measures did little to help the project reflect on its work, develop and increase its capacity.

Both of these issues informed the development of a revised monitoring and evaluation framework for GHOF as part of our consultancy work with them.

## 6.2 A New Approach

The Trust is an umbrella body for an expanding range of local projects. It needs to understand better the scope of work their projects are undertaking, be able to account for the Trust's work and impact as an aggregate and evaluate its projects so that it can be a more effective national charity and to access further funding. As we have said above, the Trust also needs to explain better how involvement in GHOF can work within a developmental approach and how it can develop learning within the projects and the Trust as a whole to improve delivery.

However, the Trust has also to be responsive to the different experiences, capabilities and capacities of a variety of local projects and to the different quality of the stories of young people's experience of the projects. This suggested a flexible framework which will take account of these differences and which allowed both 'hard', quantitative measures about the numbers of participants; and 'softer' quantitative evidence of the experience of young people.

The new framework was drafted at the time that we were also involved in developing a new, three tiered approach to monitoring and evaluation, a version of which was being piloted for Positive Futures. The GHOF system benefited both from that experience but also the comments of GHOF project coordinators working 'on the ground', several of whom commented on a draft framework. Initial drafts were considered too complex and some aspects were inappropriate for the GHOF programme. There remain issues about the size of GHOF and its resources available for monitoring and evaluation.

The new framework was also drafted at a time when the Every Child Matters Outcomes Framework was being implemented as a way of assessing the different impacts of young people's services. Whatever monitoring and evaluation system used by GHOF, it is essential for its own development and for attracting funding for its work, that it is able to demonstrate how it meets different elements of the ECM Outcomes Framework. As we have already seen in previous sections, both fishing generally and the GHOF approach in particular, can deliver on several of the ECM areas.

Within the new monitoring and evaluation for GHOF, the following principles were incorporated:

- To make M+E as small a burden as possible on project staff
- To make the framework participatory allowing managers, staff, volunteers and participants to contribute
- To allow quantitative and qualitative measures to be utilised
- To demonstrate how the projects meet elements of the ECM agenda.

The new GHOF Monitoring and Evaluation Framework comprises the following elements:

**Stage One** - new Data Collection and Report forms to record basic information about project participants, partners, activities and funding.

**Stage Two** - A means of recording both 'hard' and 'soft' measures about the progress individuals have made on the course.

**Stage Three** - A tool kit for projects to show annually how their activities are meeting the Every Child Matters Outcomes Framework

As part of the crucial third stage, the new framework for GHOF includes among many, the following examples of how it might evidence sub-categories of the ECM framework:

*“Be Healthy: Be Mentally and emotionally healthy*

There is considerable anecdotal evidence and *some* research to suggest that certain aspects of fishing are beneficial to mental health - in particular providing tranquillity, solitude, opportunities to meet and talk with other people, one to one mentoring etc. Indeed some of the factors that have been associated with ensuring mental and emotional health are provided on GHOF project activities:

- relaxation
- the ability to express your feelings
- achievable goals to aim for
- time for the things you enjoy
- a sport or exercise you enjoy

In this sense, the programmes of activity provided by GHOF projects offer tangible evidence of the protection of vulnerable young people’s mental and emotional health. Other tools may be used to enhance this information:

- Photographic and video evidence of project’s capacity to generate a space in which participants are content and chatty; as could personal testimony of participants; and evidence of identifiable friendship groups.
- Personal diaries which are written or videoed or even recorded via text or web based chat rooms can provide further evidence of shifting self image.
- Evidence of progression through Modules and in behaviour as indicated in the Progression Matrix of individuals - such as becoming a peer coach.

*Stay Safe: Free from bullying, discrimination, crime and anti-social behaviour*

Beyond disciplinary records associated with particular activities, projects might develop:

- Codes of conduct with participants about what is/isn’t acceptable during sessions and generally.
- Evidence of suspensions from projects or time outs associated with bullying.
- Recording ethnic minority data is a requisite, however this should be self determined by the participants and this might allow collection of this data within a broader exercise or discussion about ethnicity.
- Recorded residential discussions.
- Using classroom sessions to discuss what young people regard as 'anti-social behaviour' and how this is isn’t evident on projects.”<sup>70</sup>

The framework is currently being rolled out as part of the GHOF course Manual to new projects as well as old ones signing up to the Charter status - indeed, it is a condition of the Charter that this framework is adopted. Furthermore, GHOF has said that is now building provision for adequate monitoring and evaluation into new funding bids (best practice suggests that this should be 5% of future project costs).

Indeed, the approach adopted here has been developed further since into the Substance Project Reporting System, a comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework which is available to sports policy programmes and individual projects working in the fields of youth and social development<sup>71</sup>. This is now being used in the Positive Futures and Kickz programmes as well as elsewhere. The framework embraces :

- An on-line tool which allows both quantitative and qualitative data entry to enable projects to capture and represent the full range of work that they do.

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<sup>70</sup> Brown (2006) Get Hooked on Fishing: Collecting Evidence - A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

<sup>71</sup> For further information on the SPRS, see [www.substance.coop](http://www.substance.coop).

- A Participant Engagement and Progression Matrix – a qualitative tool designed to record the ‘distance travelled’ of participants and projects
- A participative evaluation tool kit for projects to record qualitative outcomes around a range of criteria.

We are discussing with GHOF the resource requirements in order that this might be made available to the Trust and projects, so that GHOF are better able to demonstrate the success and potential of the scheme for young people; so that it can help projects reflect on their work and develop it further; and so it can help make the Trust more sustainable and able to meet its development objectives.

As part of the Trust’s funding from the NSF, the trust have also set a range of Key Performance Indicators for that the expansion of the Trust. Whilst these are rather more quantitative in nature than we would recommend, this is largely as required by the funding package. Further, what makes this more useful is that each of the 5 KPI areas are linked to an action plan in the Development Plan which have more qualitative indicators around local engagement, local partnerships, communication and monitoring and evaluation. The KPIs set out are as follows.

| Ref | KPI                      | Priority         | Base line | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 |
|-----|--------------------------|------------------|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1   | Young people at risk     | Deprived area    | 0         | 500    | 1000   | 1500   | 2000   | 2500   |
| 2   | Participants             | New to sport     | 0         | 500    | 1000   | 1500   | 2000   | 2500   |
| 3   | Non sports Qualification | Deprived area    | 0         | 100    | 150    | 200    | 250    | 300    |
| 4   | Accreditation            | Other recognised | 0         | 6      | 12     | 18     | 24     | 30     |
| 5   | Coaches                  | NGB              | 0         | 2      | 4      | 6      | 8      | 10     |
| 6   | Participation            | Female           | 0         | 75     | 150    | 250    | 400    | 550    |

**Get Hooked On Fishing: KPIs, Development Plan 2007-2010**

## 7. Conclusions and Recommendations: Resources and Potential Development

### 7.1 Current Status

Get Hooked On Fishing has come a very long way since its inception in Durham in 2000. It has grown from an experimental single project site to a charitable trust with nine projects around the country. It has demonstrated the potential of a developmental approach to angling tuition for young people 'at risk' and has won widespread praise for its work. However, following its governmental review it committed to two key things: developing the Trust as a properly run, truly national charity; and making it sustainable.

The Trust has travelled a considerable distance in the time since that review. There has been a process of reviewing the board membership which is ongoing; the governance structures and 'back room' paper work - *Development Plan, Charter, Operating and Business Plans, Manual* and monitoring and evaluation framework - have all been put in place; and the Trust has oriented itself toward meeting governmental agendas around youth exclusion, maximising the benefits of its developmental approach.

The issues which surrounded the project in Durham - notably a disputed control and ownership of a publicly funded angling centre - have been resolved, providing a long term 'flagship' base for GHNE. The Social Enterprise is run by three local directors, including a previous participant on the GHOF schemes and Mick Watson. The securing of £200,000 of additional funds for this centre (as well as other funding successes) demonstrates the potential for the organisation in attracting grant aid around the youth inclusion agenda. Further, some new projects have begun - notably the successful Liverpool project developed in conjunction with North Liverpool Positive Futures - and others are in development.

The Trust's Business Plan has a stated objective of delivering 30 schemes over a 5 year period, extending the work nationally. This includes the 'pump priming' of new local projects with up to £15,000 start up funding, as well providing guidance in establishing new projects. Although local partnerships will ultimately be the major 'funders' of GHOF projects, this commitment means that the Trust requires significant resources if it is to meet these objectives. Furthermore, the core operations of the Trust in terms of the employment of Chief Executive and Director, mean that somewhere in the region of £160,000 is required each year for the next three years.

Chief Executive, Anne Moyle, appointed in the summer of 2005, has had considerable success in raising further grant funding for the Trust, although important challenges remain. She has sought to take a more entrepreneurial view by building alliances within angling to help sustain the Trust; and has secured the support of other non-angling partners. In particular, the Chief Executive has secured £90,000 of National Sports Foundation funding to develop 6 new projects a year and £25,000 each year for 3 years from the EA to provide for some central overhead cost. However, this funding requires matched resources from non-public funding streams and although there has been some success, further support is required. Throughout this process the Trust's chair, John Milford QC, has been a strong supporter of these developments. However, significant resources are required to deliver an expansion and growth programme as well as to extend benefits, and allow time for the organisation to develop with confidence.

## 7.2 Potential

There is clearly considerable potential for angling as a whole, and GHOF in particular, to develop partnerships, projects, programmes and funding streams in relation to what it can offer around governmental social exclusion agendas, particularly relating to young people. Fishing does appear to be an activity which has significant potential to contribute to these agendas:

- It is an activity which engages masses of people, both young and old. As the EA figures illustrate it has a 'draw' or attraction which is rarely matched in terms of participation any by other leisure pursuit in the UK.
- Given the focus that has been placed on some sports - notably football<sup>72</sup> - it is perhaps because of a low public profile, and uninformed assumptions about fishing that means it has not been considered, and funded, in a similar way to more mainstream sports as a means of engaging and creating new opportunities for young people.
- There has always been an historic *ad hoc* role that fishing has played for young people - as a popular activity and pastime, a focus for learning, as a means of communing with 'nature' and as a means through which adults and young people can communicate. These attractions still hold true for many youngsters and it can perform a similar role in terms of engagement and development of young people.
- As we have seen there are particular factors within learning to fish that also make it a useful tool for engagement of young people but more crucially it has even more to offer as part of a developmental approach, involving relationship building, in its delivery. The GHOF approach in particular has much to offer in this regard.
- There is increasing interest from a wide range of actual and potential partners in *increasing overall participation* in fishing, including the EA, Countryside Agency, angling governing bodies, commercial fishing partners (e.g. tackle manufacturers), policy makers (rural affairs, social inclusion), tourism agencies and destinations, and others (e.g. commercial companies seeking opportunities for Corporate Social Responsibility).
- This interest to increase participation needs to be related to the work GHOF undertake in particular with regard to the participation of 'harder to reach' groups. Making these links will be crucial for the future of GHOF.
- There has been increased interest from agencies such as the Environment Agency and the Countryside Agency to the contribution that fishing can make to *combating social exclusion* and anti-social behaviour; and these agencies have promoted schemes like GHOF to some degree. GHOF need to convince these partners that it can offer a long term means of delivering on these agendas.

Perhaps most importantly, even some specifically sport-based social inclusion programmes, such as Positive Futures, are increasingly looking to new and different ways of engaging young people and fishing has a lot to offer in this respect as something 'different'. Indeed, it could be said that this is something of an historic moment for fishing because there are opportunities for it to benefit from tapping into these different agendas. In particular GHOF has an opportunity to provide some solutions for some individuals to key social problems. However, in order to do this it needs to secure core funding to make the next 'step change' to take the delivery of fishing-related social inclusion programmes to a new level.

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<sup>72</sup> Brown, Crabbe and Mellor (2006)

### 7.3 Strategic Direction

As such, the Trust need to reinforce a strategic decision to meet the approach of delivering on the youth social inclusion agenda and demonstrating the appropriateness and successes of the GHOF approach in this regard. However, a key element will also be the extent to which the Trust can combine this approach of meeting government agendas - based on quality delivery rather than quantity if participants (the developmental rather than diversionary approach) - with delivery that can also met the strategic objectives of the angling sector (including the EA, JADB etc.) to increase participation. This is a twin approach to securing core funding that has considerable potential for the Trust

In order for this approach to be successful, it will require a unity within the Trust behind the strategy and the full commitment of chair, trustees, staff and coaches to it. Internal differences - which at times have cost the organisation in the perceptions of the wider angling sector, and which has occasionally generated negative feedback from local projects - must not be allowed to derail this approach.

To support this, the restructuring of the board of trustees of the charity needs to continue in order that its expertise reflects this approach. The trustees need to be active in understanding the work that is undertaken, employing their knowledge of the sector and developing its work in relation to the social governmental agendas around health, activity, volunteering, education and youth exclusion. It also has a vital role to play in relation to fund raising of both a private and public nature, including the building of wider partnerships.

The potential for the Trust is there. The trustees' and staff's objectives now must be to secure further core, strategic support for its work through the attraction of resources from fishing, government, grant and commercial sectors. This will enable it to develop as a truly national charity, in which local partners are sustainable in partnership with a range of local partners.

### 7.4 Developing the GHOF 'Offer'

In order for the Trust to realise this potential, it will also need to secure more central resources to enable it to further develop its 'offer'. It has already demonstrated some of the impacts that a developmental approach to fishing tuition can bring; and is developing its approach to Monitoring and Evaluation in order that it can better demonstrate the different impacts it can make.

However, key in taking this forward will be the ability of the organisation to further develop certain aspects of its work that relate to key developments of government policy and the emphases in youth social inclusion programmes. These include:

1. **Accreditation** – It is vital that the modular GHOF course, peer mentoring and volunteering are properly accredited by nationally recognised standards. This has been in development for some time and now needs to be made a priority.
2. **Volunteering** – GHOF have high levels of volunteering in their delivery already and has developed a 'Volunteer Contract'. However, this needs to be more widely and better organised as a volunteering strategy by the Trust, in which local projects offer opportunities to volunteer in fishing in a more robust and structured way, with accreditation given. A key partnership to develop nationally will be with the Russell Commission/V organisation; and locally projects should be liaising with their local Community Voluntary Service.

3. **Monitoring and Evaluation** – GHOF have adopted a better framework for their monitoring and evaluation which tries to encapsulate the progress made by young people, and some of the qualitative outcomes. The Trust need to ensure that this is implemented properly and it needs to regularly communicate the outputs from this evaluation to its national and local partners. However, this approach could be improved further, with the use of the SPRS, should resources be found for it. The Trust and local projects should at the very least produce an annual report highlighting their outputs, key successes and challenges and progress toward the development plan.
4. **Partnerships** – The Trust have established partnerships with a number of important national agencies, including the Environment Agency, Countryside Agency and Positive Futures; as well as with some angling bodies. It needs to extend and deepen some of these relationships at a national level; whilst encouraging projects locally to build sustainable institutional, formal and frontline delivery partnerships. Locally, the importance of the new Local Area Agreements through which much youth and other social inclusion funding will be driven, cannot be overemphasised. Engagement with these developments and with governmental agendas at a local level, which at present is patchy, will be crucial for the sustainability of local GHOF projects.
5. **Skills** – It is widely recognised that effective deliverers of sport based social inclusion projects combine both youth work and sports skills, the former element essential in developmental approaches to young people. The Trust need to ensure that projects and delivery staff have the required skills to perform these roles and the Trust should work with the Sector Skills Councils and training providers to meet these training needs, building this requirement into funding packages.
6. **Internal Learning and Regional Development** – As the number of local GHOF projects grows, the Trust will need to ensure, through its monitoring and evaluation, that its Charter standards are being met. However, it also needs to ensure that best practice is shared between projects; that opportunities are highlighted; and that learning is developed within the organisation. In part this can be achieved through internal newsletters and documents, possibly on single issues (e.g. working with Local Area Agreements); and in part through regional development initiatives (e.g. regional coordinators, events, seminars and workshops).

## 7.5 Resources and Strategic Support

As we have already seen, if the Trust is to meet its own aspirations of 30 schemes in 5 years, then it will require something in the region of £160,000 a year over three years.

It has already secured a commitment of £90,000 a year for two years from the National Sports Foundation. However, this needs to be matched with £90,000 of commercial funding. At the time of writing the Trust have £25,000 from Environment Agency (although this cannot count as matched funding); £25,000 from Northern Rock (per year for 3 years); £9,000 from the Community Foundation; £5,000 from LloydsTSB; £5,000 from the Sir James Knott Trust and £1,000 from Coutts. As such, there is a gap of around £40,000 for 2006/07 and £65,000 for 2007/08.

Although other funding bids are still pending, there is an obligation on both the Trust and trustees, as well as their principle and potential partners, to bridge this gap. GHOF schemes and the Trust need to continue developing as has been outlined in this report to help that process. However, it is also an opportunity for new government departments, national programmes and youth agencies to develop new

partnerships with fishing more generally and GHOF in particular that recognise the contribution angling can make to their targets. To assist this, the angling national governing bodies and Environment Agency need to provide a more unified and coherent voice, as well as greater understanding, in relation to these new policy agendas and the opportunities they offer for the development of participation in fishing.

GHOF has shown considerable determination to overcome not insignificant problems that were evident in 2004. This process has included a regeneration of its trustees, a reassertion of its ability to deliver on the youth inclusion agenda, the planning and governance documentation to support this and considerable progress on attracting significant funding. The organisation now needs strategic support from government departments, the EA, agencies and commercial organisations in the fishing sector to realise the potential it has shown and if its benefits for young people are to be felt on a wider basis.

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