

On-line angling Strategy November 2005

British Waterways welcomes angling on its canals and rivers and is committed to arresting the current decline in participation levels. Constructive partnerships with angling clubs and others will be essential to achieving this. The network of on-line angling participants is a valuable group to supplement the work of British Waterways itself.

On-line angling represents an excellent opportunity to integrate a number of aspects of the British waterways vision, in terms of increasing visitor numbers and developing greater social inclusion. It also offers a strong area for working with other agencies and securing funding to encourage greater access to the canal network.

We recognise our responsibility to balance the competing interests of different groups of towpath users. The Waterways Code sets out basic rules of courtesy, care and safety to help promote the Code to all waterways users.

British Waterways operates a devolved management structure and development of angling will be achieved most effectively through waterways General Managers. Each manager will nominate a named member of staff to be responsible for representing angling interests in each business unit, and for providing the first point of contact for angling customers. In this regard, anglers should receive the same level of service as any other group. General Managers and their teams will be able to call upon professional and technical advice from one of the fisheries managers employed within the business, who will be assigned to each waterway for this purpose. By raising the profile of angling within each business unit we expect many improvements and actions will be incorporated into day to day maintenance and development programmes. It will also maximise the opportunities for partnerships and external grants for angling initiatives.

There is a need to strengthen the understanding of costs and benefits of angling at waterway level and encourage business unit management teams to engage with angling customers more positively. Each business unit is expected to produce and maintain an action plan that suitably reflects the potential on-line angling can contribute to the wider British Waterways vision. We expect initiatives to be developed with local angling clubs and other partners, to include a broad selection of ideas, including those previously discussed by the angling g review group. These include joint marketing and promotion of club angling, sponsorship of angling championships, inclusion of angling projects within wider regeneration schemes and contracts with clubs to provide specific towpath wardening tasks, as well as the more traditional fish stocking, towpath improvements and car parking—which can also serve to benefit other visitors to the waterways.

If British Waterways is to be successful in arresting the decline of angling on its waterways it needs the support and enthusiasm of clubs and anglers. We wish to encourage far greater contact between our local staff and those who fish on our waterways and we hope that clubs especially will make a concerted effort to open up constructive dialogue with our nominated representatives. It is also recognised that there needs to be more regular and constructive communication between senior British Waterways management and national representatives of the angling bodies