

1. Aims of the Strategic Framework for Recreational Fisheries

This document describes a high-level framework via which Assembly-Sponsored Bodies with an influence on fisheries, ecology, tourism and economic development can work in partnership with angling governing bodies, clubs and fishery owners to optimise the value to Wales of its coastal and inland recreational fisheries. The aims of the document are to:

- i. Describe a vision for a better future for the recreational fisheries of Wales
- ii. Summarise the present environmental, social and economic state of our coastal and inland fisheries and the potential for increasing fishery performance and values
- iii. Identify the main opportunities for achieving the vision and ways of realising them that will enable all partners to maximise the value of their contributions
- iv. Propose outcome targets for a strategic fisheries action plan and the level of investment that will be required to secure and sustain those outcomes

Few of the high-level outcomes necessary for optimising fishery performance and values could be achieved by any one individual or organisation working alone. A common strategic framework and planning approach, agreed by the Welsh Assembly Government and broadly acceptable to all contributing partners, will serve to minimise conflicts over objectives and to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort, thereby achieving faster results and better value for money than could be obtained via a plethora of single-interest plans.

Contributors

This strategy was drafted by an independent working group initiated by the Welsh Assembly Government. The membership comprised:

Robin Darker	Welsh Federation of Coarse Anglers
Delyth Davies	Welsh Development Agency
Mike Evans	Environment Agency Wales
Ian Harries	Coracle net fishermen
Steve Holbrook	Welsh Assembly Government
Hefin Jones	Welsh Federation of Sea Anglers
Moc Morgan OBE	Welsh Salmon and Trout Angling Association
Jon Munro	Wales Tourist Board
Glyn Perryman	Welsh Assembly Government
Pat O'Reilly (chairman)	Fisheries, Ecology & Recreation Advisory Committee, Wales
Chris Uttley	Countryside Council for Wales

Contents

1. Aims of the Strategic Framework for Recreational Fisheries	1
2. A Vision for the Recreational Fisheries of Wales	2
3. Background Information	3
4. Opportunity Management Plan for Achieving the Vision	4
APPENDIX I – Assessment of the Costs and Benefits	6
APPENDIX II - An Approach to Partnership Project Planning	7
REFERENCES and ABBREVIATIONS	8

2. A Vision for the Recreational Fisheries of Wales

The coastal and inland recreational fisheries of Wales and the waters and riparian land on which they depend will be managed to achieve sustainable healthy fish stocks and habitats for diverse and abundant wildlife. They will be contributing their full potential to the quality of life of the people of Wales via recreational, educational and economic opportunities.

Note: The National Assembly for Wales, its sponsored bodies CCW, EAW, WDA and WTB, and the angling governing bodies, working together at policy and strategic planning levels are, for conciseness, referred to as 'Wales' in the statements that follow.

In order to achieve this vision, Wales must ensure that:

Environmental Integration

Management of fisheries in Wales will be integrated with management of other aspects of the water environment and surrounding land that affects fishery performance, so as to minimise the impact upon fisheries, aquatic wildlife and their habitats and to secure increased synergy with other activities that affect the water and riparian lands.

Recreational Value of Fisheries

The people of Wales and those visiting Wales will have the opportunity to enjoy good quality fishing as a pastime or a sport on local rivers, lakes, canals and coastal waters; and appropriate stretches of rivers, lakes and coastal waters will also be available for non anglers, both rural and urban, to appreciate.

Management of Fisheries and Fishing

Fisheries will be managed in a sustainable way, taking account of risks where they can be foreseen and engaging local and visiting people in learning and development opportunities.

The angling governing bodies will be professionally run and financially stable. They will be united in developing angling as a recreation and a sport and in ensuring that affordable, high-quality coaching opportunities are available to all newcomers to angling.

Angling will be well managed by angling clubs and private owners at the local level in accordance with nationally agreed policies and best practice guidelines.

Environmental and Cultural Value of Fisheries

All inland and coastal waters of Wales will provide healthy aquatic habitats with self-sustaining populations of fish that are unconstrained by factors such as poor chemical or physical habitat, low flows, barriers to movement, or overexploitation.

The people of Wales will take a pride in and care for their fisheries, recognising the valuable role that angling plays in protecting the environment and providing environmental education opportunities; and the importance of our heritage fisheries will be widely recognised and agreed.

Economic Value of Fisheries

Wales will recognise and measure the economic value of its fisheries to both rural and urban communities, committing the necessary resources to marketing and developing its strengths in a coordinated and effective manner, focusing on high-value, low-environmental-impact tourism rather than merely on visitor numbers. The outcomes of marketing initiatives will be monitored.

Fishing will play a catalytic role in the development of other sectors of sustainable tourism.

3. Background Information

The recreational fisheries of Wales provide real and significant opportunities for sustainably developing the rural economy. However, at present many fish stocks are well below historic levels and require restoration; Wales also needs to catch up with its competitors in developing and maintaining access, information, infrastructure and marketing support for fisheries.

Wales has a wealth of affordable coarse, game and sea fishing opportunities readily accessible by local and tourist anglers. There are 240 salmon and trout fishing rivers in Wales, several hundred natural lake fisheries, more than 20 large reservoirs, and over 200 small stocked still-water fisheries, as well as 150 km of canal towpath and 1200 km of coast from which people can enjoy fishing. Nearly 300 charter boats operate from Welsh ports². Each year the recreational fisheries of Wales provide leisure opportunities for some 100,000 anglers living in Wales, with a further 60,000 anglers visiting solely for a fishing holiday and more than 400,000 visitors making fishing in Wales part of their package of holiday activities.

Wales now secures only 5% of the ~£3 billion annual expenditure of anglers living in England and Wales, and an analysis of angling club membership suggests that the recent rate of decline equates to up to 100 job losses per year. Even so, recreational fisheries still contribute more than £100 million per year to the economy of Wales, mainly in rural areas².

At present, in many parts of Wales the sea trout (sewin), grayling and bass provide world-class fishing; stocks are generally at a healthy level and in some places they appear to be increasing. However, many other stocks require significant improvement before they can support a credible fishery. Physical habitat restoration projects are underway in many parts of Wales, and they should help to restore fish stocks once water quality is also improved, but reforms of both the Common Fisheries Policy and the Common Agricultural Policy will be essential if Wales is to derive maximum benefit from its recreational fisheries.

Information to help anglers select fishing venues and to advise on fishing tackle, techniques and tactics is limited, and there are currently no up-to-date Wales-wide detailed angling guides in printed form. Via the Internet, anglers can find details of coarse, game and sea angling venues in Wales but no fishing byelaw information. Rod licences are required by those over the age of 12 who intend fishing for salmon, trout, coarse fish or eels. Obtaining a licence outside Post Office hours is not possible for those entitled to concessions on the grounds of disability.

Events aimed at increasing angling participation have mainly concentrated on introductory lessons with little or no continuing coaching for beginners. While these have been well attended, there is no formal monitoring of the overall effectiveness in terms of environmental education and longer-term participation in the sport of angling.

Wales enjoys a unique mix of community controlled (club-based) fisheries and private fisheries. The majority of river and lake inland fisheries in Wales have a long tradition of management by angling clubs whose officers secure no personal gain from running the clubs. The economic contribution their efforts make to the community in which they live is substantial but is rarely measured objectively save, perhaps, for a simple count of club membership/visitor numbers.

Market research carried out for WTB shows that while good fish stocks are a key consideration in the choice of fishing venue they are not the most important factor. Most anglers - and in particular those visiting Wales for a holiday - place a higher weighting on the quality of the environment, its wildlife and scenic beauty, and upon the warmth of welcome and the help they receive when visiting a new venue. The research showed that in parts of Wales visiting anglers do not always feel welcome, and this influences their decision whether to make return visits.

There is currently no grading scheme to guide visiting anglers as to the standard of facilities and information support they can expect from WTB-listed accommodation.

4. Opportunity Management Plan for Achieving the Vision

To Improve Environmental Integration...

A timely and effective communication process should be set up to ensure that the Assembly, Assembly-Sponsored Bodies, Local Authorities and other key decision makers receive clear and concise briefings on fishery issues and on opportunities to increase the social and economic values of inland and coastal recreational fisheries. The rights and responsibilities of ASPBs and of angling clubs and other riparian owners must be more widely understood, and it should be clear what services anglers get in return for their rod licence and fishing permit payments.

1. The natural environment of Wales benefits from monitoring by the several hundred thousand people whom fish each year on rivers, lakes, canals and shores and often using the Emergency HotLine (0800 807060) to give timely warnings of potential problems. These additional benefits of angling participation, as well as its contribution to the economy and rural recovery, should be assessed and publicised.
2. Welsh Assembly Government fisheries staff need to be able to devote sufficient time to brief Ministers on necessary changes resulting from the Review of Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries, and on revisions to the Common Fisheries Policy and the Common Agricultural Policy that would support other moves to improve the fisheries of Wales.
3. The present gap in communication and understanding between commercial sea fishing and recreational sea angling is particularly unhelpful; appropriate regulation of commercial fishing for the long-term sustainability of stocks and catches would also benefit sea angling. Sea angling is not usually involved early enough when legislation is being reviewed - mainly a problem of lack of AGB funding and time.
4. In order to minimise duplication of effort and to share information resources, systems and new learning, the coarse, sea and game angling interests need to work together at policy (governing body) level and at an operating (individual fisheries) level. To facilitate this the angling governing bodies will need to be better funded.
5. Within its integrated operating structures, the Environment Agency should maintain a clear focus on fisheries management and development processes, facilitating rapid decision-making at the local level where most partnership projects are carried out. To achieve this the Agency will need to establish an effective process for sharing with its partners best practice in goal definition, planning and management of multi-partner projects. This will be essential to ensure that partnerships remain intact and focussed on opportunities for achieving their agreed environmental, social, economic goals.
6. For fisheries to benefit from the powers and expertise of other ASPBs, Recommendation 19 of the Review of Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Review should be fully implemented. The recommendation states: *Statutory agencies with functions of relevance to the management of fisheries should work more closely together to ensure that fisheries issues are properly addressed. Where the responsibility for implementing legislation falls to different agencies, it is essential that these agencies co-ordinate their activities.*
7. Broader agri-environment schemes covering whole catchments should be applied to reducing diffuse pollution and to restoring upland tributaries, lakes and wetlands that have been damaged by intensive farming. The resulting financial benefits from fishing, and the benefits of reduced flood risk, will accrue mainly to people (including landowners) lower down the catchment; however, CCW has powers to grant aid work considered important for biodiversity or for recreation and access. Much more of this investment should now be focussed on delivering benefits for fish and fisheries.

Inland Fisheries Strategy for Wales
Draft C for Stakeholder Consultation, January 2003

To Improve the Management of Fisheries and Fishing...

8. The Assembly has endorsed the recommendation of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Review that fisheries legislation requires urgent amendment. In particular, the Assembly should continue to press Westminster for primary legislation – for example to allow 'fast-track' action to deal with fisheries emergencies.
9. Environment Agency Wales should be empowered to grant aid fisheries improvement work. Other Assembly-sponsored public bodies (ASPBs) such as WDA, CCW and WTB can and should contribute to fisheries partnership projects where, by doing so, they can influence the design of projects so that they deliver optimum sustainable benefits.
10. Fisheries visitor data collection across Wales needs to be improved and made more consistent so that the Assembly and its agencies and partners can assess the effectiveness of development and marketing initiatives and so target future investment accurately. In particular, Recommendation 190 of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Review [SFFR Para 9 2.9] stresses the need for research into the socio-economic aspects of fisheries performance and potential; and Recommendation 191 [SFFR Para 9 2.11] urges that best-practice guidelines be promoted for collecting data on visiting anglers.
11. National and local fishery byelaws and guidance information should be brought up to date and publicised - for example on the Environment Agency website. The angling governing bodies need help to develop a communication channel to all fishery owners and clubs and to use it to provide policy guidance on major issues.
12. The relationship between the Environment Agency and Sea Fisheries Committees needs to be clearly defined via an urgent review of sea fisheries and sea angling.
13. The Minister and Assembly officials should meet annually with officials of CCW, EAW, WDA and WTB and representatives of the angling governing bodies to review the outcomes of fisheries investment and to agree targets for further development.

To Increase the Economic and Recreational Value of Fisheries...

14. Clear, complete and concise information about how to take up fishing in Wales should be produced and made easily accessible - particularly by the young and those with disabilities. In particular:
 - There is a need for easily accessible information, with a Wales emphasis, on how to get started and where to obtain appropriate equipment, safety advice and coaching.
 - 'Where to fish in Wales' information should be kept up to date not only on the Web but also in book form. Sector-specific books detailing fishery information are needed so that Wales can compete effectively in the angling tourism marketplace.
15. The Environment Agency should ensure that block licence for starter days are easily obtainable by those seeking to introduce newcomers to fishing in Wales.
16. The Sports Council for Wales and other ASPBs with an interest in fisheries should invest in high-quality support to those developing, managing and marketing fisheries, so that Wales projects a professional image in the tourism marketplace. This is essential if fisheries in Wales, most of which are managed by unpaid volunteers, are to deliver maximum benefit to the wider community and to rural economies in particular.

APPENDIX I – Assessment of the Costs and Benefits

In Section 3 we asserted that the recreational fisheries of Wales provide significant opportunities for sustainably developing the rural economy. This will require investment, but the potential benefits of a targeted increase in resources are also substantial. **The opportunity management plan and benefits forecast upon which this strategy is based are achievable only if the present real-term level of fisheries investment is maintained beyond March 2005.**

Economic Benefits

If angling participation in Wales were to be restored to its 1980 level the resulting increased angler expenditure could support an estimated 800 additional full-time-equivalent jobs (based on £30,000 of annual tourist expenditure per FTE job). The jobs so created would be mainly in rural inland and coastal communities. Recognising the value of targeted investment in fisheries, and seeking to implement key findings of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Review¹, the Assembly has recently granted Environment Agency Wales an additional £800,000 per year for three years from April 2002.

A Sustainable Fisheries Programme is already underway and has received funding via Assembly grant-in-aid to Environment Agency Wales and other Assembly-sponsored bodies as well as from the European Structural Fund and from fisheries across Wales. By 2006 the aim of this programme is to have arrested the decline in fisheries revenue performance (currently estimated at equivalent to a loss of 100 FTE jobs per year) and to create 80 new indirect FTE jobs dependent on recreational fisheries. The success of this initiative will be assessed by monitoring angling tourism numbers in the game fishing sector.

Environmental Benefits

Improving fisheries by restoring good water quality and habitats creates a better environment not only for fish but also for a diverse range of flora and fauna, including insects, birds, amphibians and mammals. Many people with no particular interest in fishing enjoy visiting beautiful coasts, rivers and lakes, and that enjoyment is greatly enhanced when they can see mackerel shoaling, chub basking, trout rising or salmon leaping.

Anglers also play an important role as 'early warning systems' for pollution and other threats to wildlife and the countryside. Promoting Wales as a world-class venue for responsible, environment-friendly angling will increase the commitment of the 1/2 million people who fish here each year³ to caring for the coast and countryside. Reduced littering, and earlier detection and action against pollution and other environmental crimes, will help avoid damaging publicity; It will also support other Assembly environmental improvement initiatives such as Tir Gofal.

Social Benefits

The social value of fishing, as a source of recreation and as part of the cultural heritage of Wales, spans all ages. Young people benefit greatly from participating in angling as a source of healthy outdoor recreation. Uniquely, Wales has a preponderance of club-based fisheries, where traditional local ownership fosters care for the environment and the fishing is more affordable than anywhere else in the UK; there is also a varied spread of more exclusive, private fisheries.

Cost is not the only obstacle; access and safety issues must also be addressed. Removing the barriers to participation by young people and those with disabilities will also open up opportunities to learn more about - and to grow up actively caring for - wildlife, ecology and scenic beauty. This is particularly important in Wales, where outdoors recreation remains central to the culture of both urban and rural communities, whose enjoyment of walking, birdwatching and canoeing as well as fishing depends entirely on the quality of the natural environment.

APPENDIX II - An Approach to Partnership Project Planning

Successful implementation of this strategy is crucially dependent upon effective partnership working. For partnership projects to succeed we believe the goal-setting, planning, management and monitoring should be based upon the following principles:

1. The overall project goal, expressed in outcome terms (a set of end states to be achieved not tasks to be carried out) should be explicitly defined in terms that are clear to all partners and should be formally agreed by all founding contributors when the project is being set up. The end states should include not only the technical improvements (physical or chemical changes to the fishery, for example) but also the information and learning outcomes, financial outcomes, cultural (behaviour-change) outcomes and relationship developments that are key to project success.
2. A project manager and a core project team (of ideally no more than about seven members drawn from the contributing partners) should be established, and that team should be responsible for planning and managing the work necessary to achieve the project goal.
3. A top-level project plan should be developed by the contributing partners (and not by the lead organisation alone). That plan should be in milestone form, with intermediate states along paths towards the required technical, learning, financial, cultural and relationship end states. The milestones should be described and defined explicitly (including an assessment of resource needs, risks and opportunities); ownership (responsibility for securing achievement, usually with support from other project team members, of the milestone end state) of each milestone should be agreed by the partners at the outset.
4. All contributing partners should have copies of the milestone plan, and the milestones should not be altered unless the partners formally agree to a change in project scope. (The means by which the milestone states are to be achieved should be continually reviewed to gain maximum benefit from all that is learned during the project and from similar concurrent projects.)

Fishery improvement projects are high-risk, high-opportunity ventures; they therefore require a risk- and opportunity-management based approach to planning (rather than an 'if all goes well' planning basis). The above strategic overlay would have to precede task-level planning (which in any case should be a rolling-wave process in order to capitalise fully on new learning and opportunities found and created during preceding work stages). During implementation it will sometimes be necessary to revise the detail plans; however, by first establishing a robust milestone plan with an agreed end goal, partnerships will always have a firm foundation and a sound basis for maintaining good working relationships.

None of the principles listed above is in conflict with the PRINCE II (**PR**ojects **IN** a **C**ontrolled **E**nvironment) methodology generally adopted by government agencies; however, this approach does provide a top-level framework whereby all involved in fisheries development projects, regardless of the nature of the expertise they bring to the team, can participate fully in the planning and performance measurement process.

REFERENCES and ABBREVIATIONS

1. Welsh Assembly Government's response to the report of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Review (MAFF/NAW) November 2001
2. Study into Inland and Sea Fisheries in Wales (Nautilus Consultants), October 2000
3. Wales Tourist Board statistics

Abbreviations

AGB	Angling governing bodies
ASPB	Assembly-sponsored public body
CCW	Countryside Council for Wales
EAW	Environment Agency Wales
FTE	Full-time equivalent
WDA	Welsh Development Agency
WTB	Wales Tourist Board
SFFR	Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Review