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Let's Fish

A Novice Anglers Strategy

2020-2025

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Introduction

Introduction

Angling in Ireland is a popular recreational activity and sport, however fewer people are fishing today than in recent decades and young people in particular are not drawn to angling. The Novice Anglers Strategy 2020-2025 sets out an approach that enables more young people and non-anglers to experience fishing with a view to adopting it as a lifetime pursuit.

The need to get more young people involved in angling is highlighted in IFI's Corporate Plan 2015-2020. Whilst noting that Ireland has a large recreational angling community, the plan also recognises the challenges presented by the increasing age profile of anglers and the failure to attract significant numbers of young people. The plan also notes the sport's positives including the fact that it can be enjoyed at almost any age with little or lots of skill and that it complements other outdoor recreation activities.

Angling's social and economic value in Ireland is significant. A 2015 study by Millward Brown found that over 270,000 people identify themselves as anglers, another 50,000 people had fished in the previous 12 months and around 163,000 overseas visitors fished in Ireland the same year. The value to the economy is reflected in the 11,000 jobs that it supports and the €800 million that it generates annually.

"Let's Fish" will begin to connect people to angling and to the environment, making it easier to find out about and experience angling as a recreational activity and encouraging them to enjoy it for many years.

Background

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) is leading on development and delivery of the strategy in association with key stakeholder organisations. The agency's CEO, Francis O'Donnell, summarises the societal benefits of angling as follows:-

CEO comment to be added here following adoption.

Context

Research carried out in late 2019 has helped inform Let's Fish. It comprised the following:-

1. A survey of individuals throughout Ireland interested in angling, both anglers and non-anglers. The survey, delivered online during December, attracted nearly 600 responses.
2. A survey of Ireland's angling clubs, again delivered online during December. Forty clubs responded.
3. Consultations with angling's representative bodies, or 'Federations'. These consultations support the need for this strategy and align with the strategic actions.

Research Informs



Benefits to individuals

The survey results highlight the view that angling can improve physical, mental health and wellbeing by helping people relax and reducing stress. Angling requires a good deal of preparation and patience and it forces people to be aware of and work with the natural environment, removing them from the routine of everyday life, often for lengthy periods of time. However, angling by its very nature is something of a best kept secret as it mostly takes place away from the public gaze. The benefits to individuals need to be better communicated.



Benefits to communities

Community benefits derived from angling are revealed in the survey results, such as strong and connected communities, an improved rural economy, contribution to domestic and international tourism. Creating linkages with Community Policing has been proven to reduce anti-social behaviour and crime. Such benefits can only be achieved when angling is promoted as a broad-based recreational pursuit and is easy to access. This already happens in some areas with, for example, the 'Dublin Angling Initiative' and 'Something Fishy'.





Barriers

Research also highlights a number of barriers to the strategic development of participation amongst non-anglers including the issues below.

Governance: There are numerous representative organisations across angling. This is partly the result of angling embracing five main disciplines – trout, salmon, coarse, pike and sea. Currently the representative organisations, known as Federations, tend to operate independently of each other, however the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment is proactive in encouraging joined-up thinking and collaborative working. Angling regulations may appear strong but they are conservation focussed and explained with clarity provided.

Clubs: Angling club structures in Ireland are generally perceived to be weak with only minimal work on education and development. Clubs are perceived to be male dominated with a focus on the interests of existing members. Very few clubs promote angling to new audiences and internal communication systems are generally weak.

Facilities and access: In order to encourage people to take up angling, facilities should be available at a local level, and elements including signage, parking, fishing stands, permits, on-site accommodation etc. need to be in place. Through IFI's capital works scheme the call for projects relating to facilities improvements, including universal access, has been oversubscribed; projects are supported when funding is available. Angling can be enjoyed by persons of varying abilities including wheelchair users so accessibility is important.

Promotion: Whilst angling is recognised as a recreational activity and a sport which involves over a quarter of a million adult anglers at a domestic level in Ireland, it does not enjoy the same level of awareness as team sports that have far fewer participants. Given that angling is not a spectator sport and that it is undertaken by individuals, perhaps this is to be expected. However, the age profile of people taking part in angling is increasingly that of the older generation. Promotion is needed to introduce the idea of angling and its benefits to new audiences in a way that is attractive and inclusive, presenting the unique nature of angling and encouraging people to take the first step.

Resources: In thinking about how to involve more people in angling it is natural to programme activities for schools, youth and community groups. Today there are just over 1 million young people in Ireland age 5 years to 19 years, or 21% of the population. The barrier here is the resources needed to deliver activities on a scale that can make a difference. IFI staff on the ground have delivered thousands of hours of engagement through information and education initiatives yet can only reach a small percentage of the market. There needs to be an approach to resources that can maximise the development and delivery of programmed activities. Whilst these barriers are particularly relevant to getting more people to take up angling it's recognised that other challenges such as fish stocks, water quality and poaching also impact on developing angling participation. Cost has been suggested as a potential barrier but when compared to other sports or activities it is relatively low.

Environmental Assessments

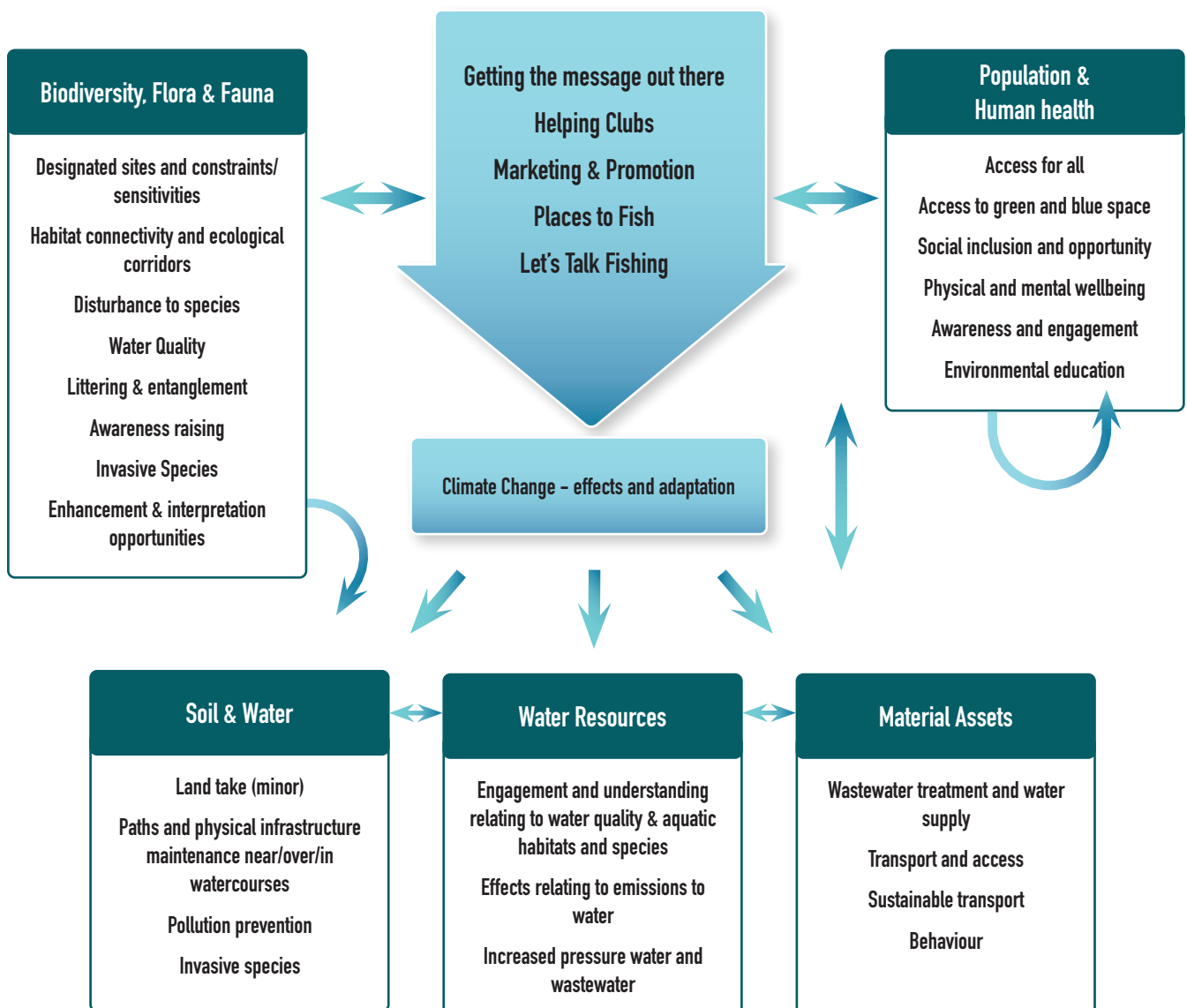
Environmental Assessments

A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been completed with provides a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (AA). All full documents are available for viewing on

<https://www.fisheriesireland.ie/nas>

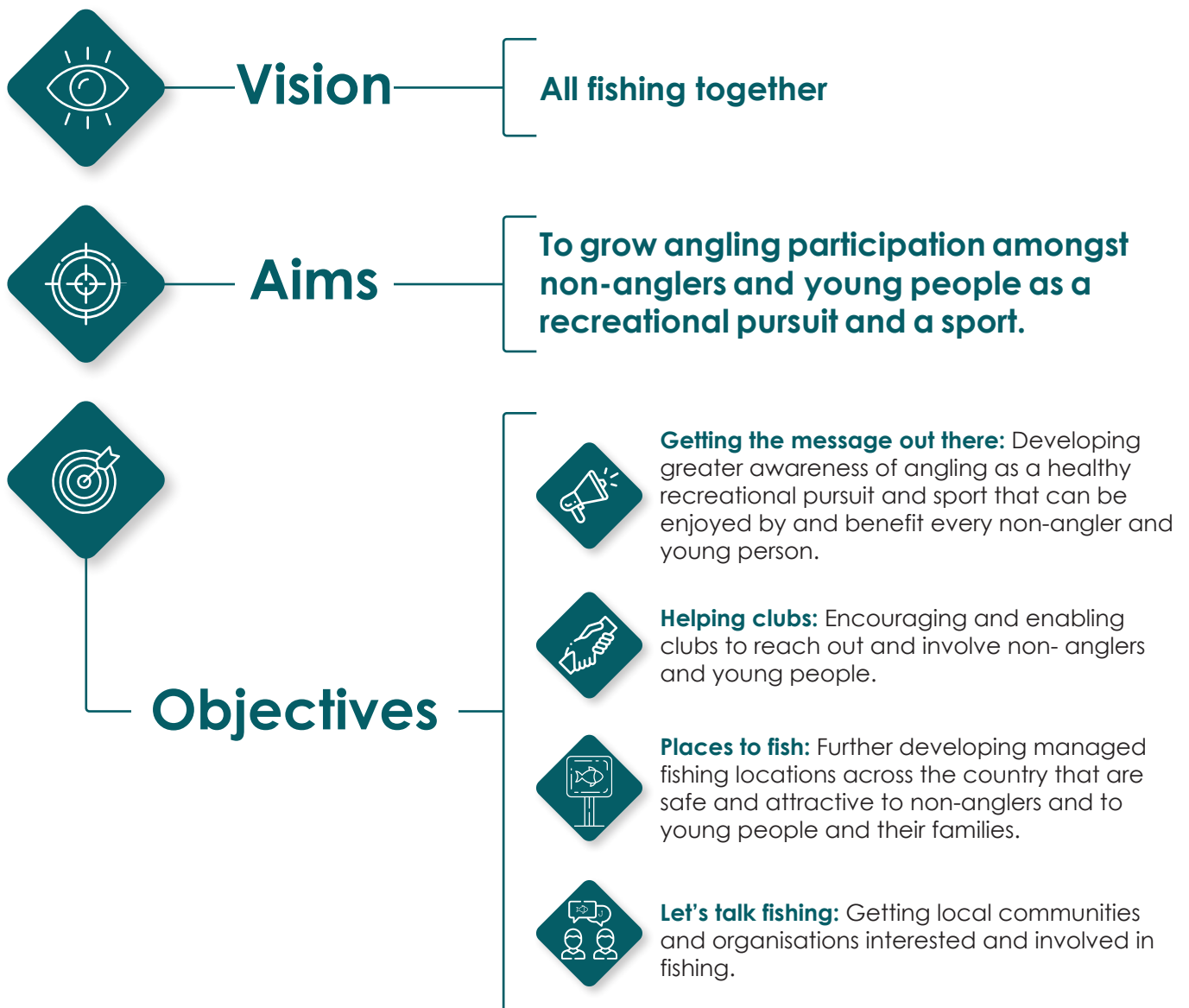
Following the incorporation of mitigation measures into the NAS, it is concluded that the Novice Angling Strategy will not give rise to any adverse effects on the integrity of European sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

A Strategic Environmental Assessment has also been completed and the principal effects including inter-relationships is shown below



Vision, Aims, Objectives

The vision, aim and objectives place Ireland's angling clubs at the very heart of this strategy. Newcomers to angling and young people in particular will look to their local club for guidance and encouragement as they learn how to fish. Angling clubs must be ready to welcome newcomers of all ages, therefore the strategy naturally engages with angling clubs, supporting them in their efforts to attract and retain new anglers. Some clubs will be more ready than others with facilities and governance fit for purpose and coaches ready to share their experience and skills. The full potential of this strategy cannot be realised without the angling clubs, supported by their angling Federations.





Objective 1

Getting the message out there





Objective 1

Getting the message out there

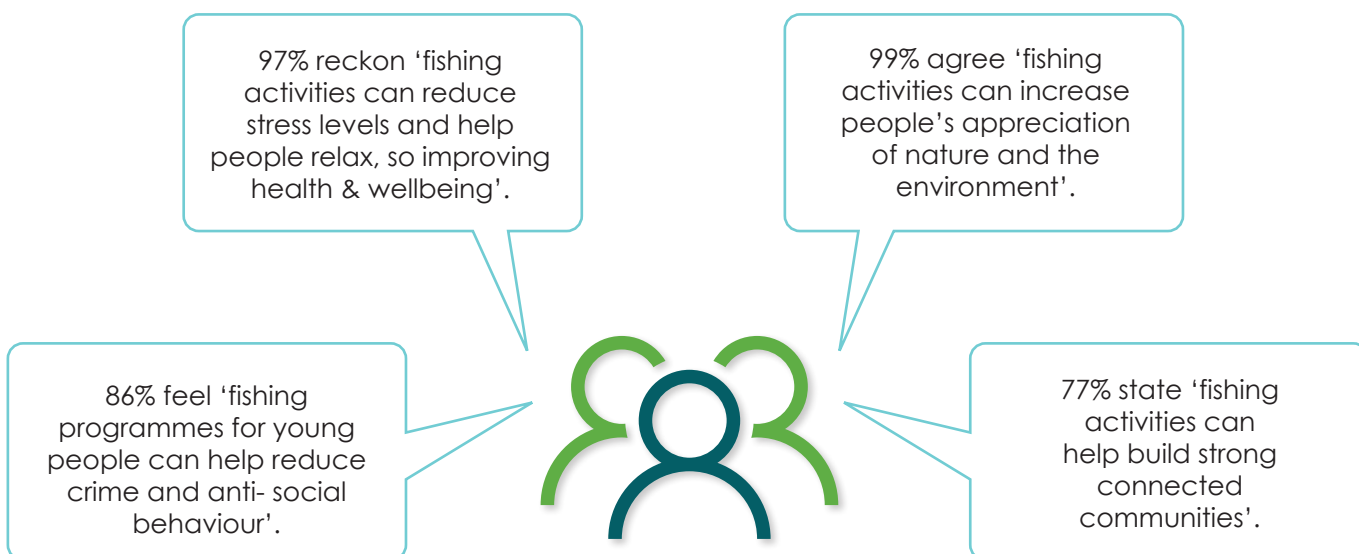
Developing greater awareness of angling as a recreational pursuit and sport that can be enjoyed by and benefit every non-angler and young person.

By its very nature angling is something of a best kept secret. It often takes place out of sight and is enjoyed mostly by individuals. It doesn't attract media attention in the same way as spectator sports. It has several disciplines and multiple representative organisations which makes effective promotion difficult. Lack of awareness means it does not easily come into people's minds when thinking about activities that young people might enjoy. Promotion is needed to let people know about angling, why it is a worthwhile pursuit and how to experience it. It needs to be presented as an attractive activity. Information will help make it more accessible.

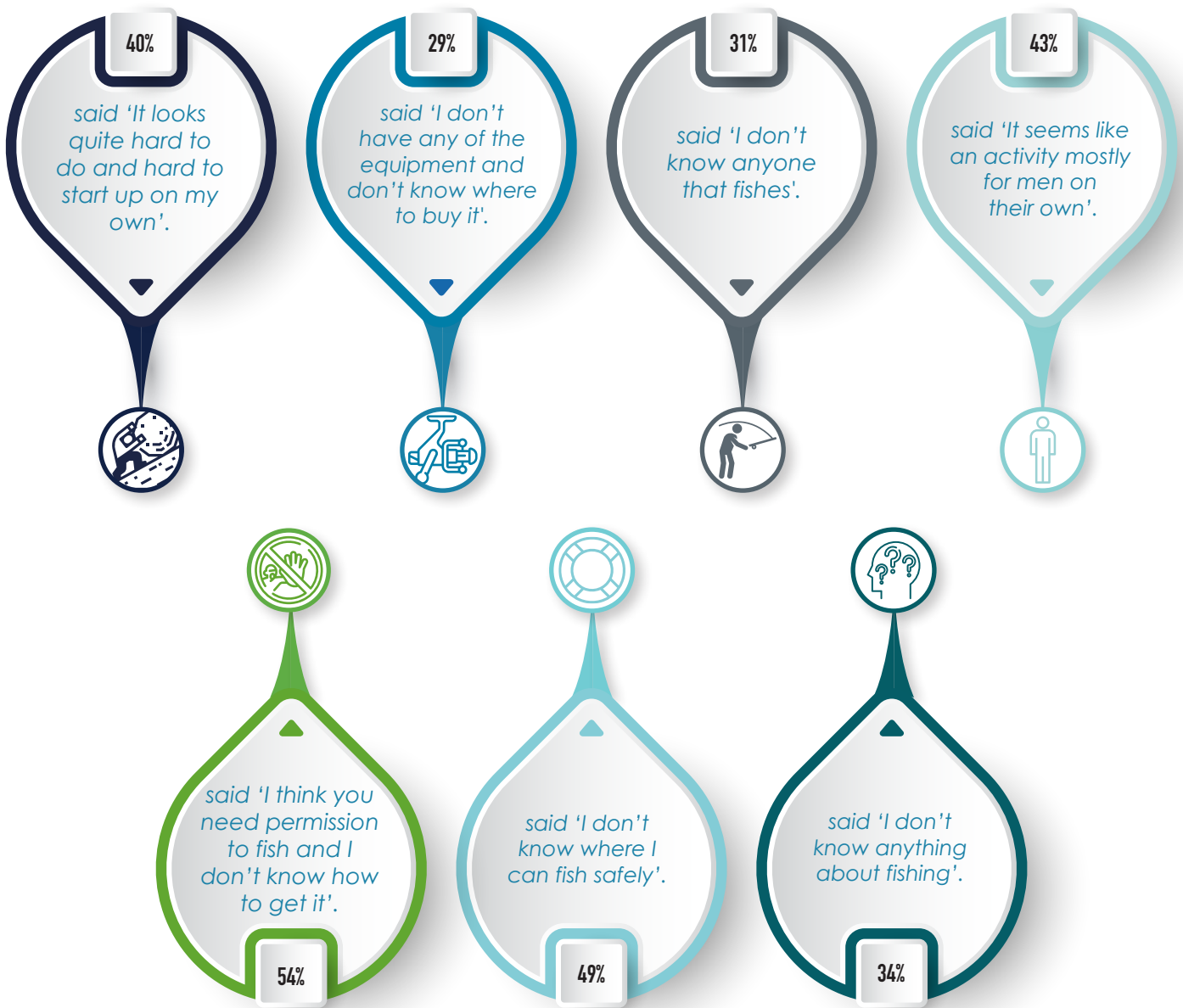
Outcomes

-  More families, females and non-anglers know about angling.
-  People know how to take the first step.
-  People know what they need to get started.
-  People know how to contact clubs that encourage new anglers.

Here's what respondents say about benefits:



Here's why people have never tried fishing:



Objective 1

Getting the message out there

Here's our strategy for getting the message out there

We'll prepare a *Let's Fish* promotion campaign introducing angling to people who know little or nothing about it and giving straightforward information that attracts people towards angling and lets them know how to get started. Informed by desk research ⁽¹⁾, the campaign will inform on a range of topics:-

- The opportunities afforded to local communities through angling to experience and learn about the natural environment.
- The health benefits, both physical and mental wellbeing.
- The benefits to persons with a disability to promote it as an activity.
- The benefits to families that come from experiencing angling as a family unit.
- The benefits to local communities. People involved in sport tend to have better developed social networks and a better sense of community identity than those who are not.
- Which discipline? Information on each of angling's five disciplines- trout, salmon, coarse, pike and sea.

We'll adopt a range of strategies to put the message in front of people:-



Accessibility – In communicating our messages we will ensure that they are accessible to as wide a range of abilities as possible both in print and on media.



Online – Create an online resource (website, Facebook) that introduces people to angling, providing just enough information to tell people how to get started, where to go, what equipment to get, where to get it and indicative cost.



App – Develop an app for non-anglers to find out about angling in their local community and how to get started.



Links – Link online resources to relevant organisations' websites – Sport Ireland, angling's representative organisations, sports governing bodies, local authorities.

⁽¹⁾ *The benefits of angling are evidenced in 'Fishing for Answers'; The Final Report of the Social and Community Benefits of Angling Project; Dr Adam Brown; Dr Natalie Djohari; Dr Paul Stolk. Substance, January 2012.*



Objective 2

Helping clubs

Objective 2

Helping clubs

Encouraging and enabling clubs to reach out and involve non-anglers and young people.

There are an estimated 350 angling clubs in Ireland across the five disciplines of trout, salmon, coarse, pike and sea angling. There is not 'one size that fits all' and they differ substantially in terms of membership, governance, facilities, community outreach, marketing, etc. For example, not all clubs cater for young people. Many angling clubs recognise that getting non-anglers involved is essential to help sustain angling but they are unsure how to go about it.

Outcomes



Angling clubs aspire to have a vibrant youth section and actively encourage novices.



Angling clubs have the skills and techniques necessary to successfully attract, welcome and retain novice anglers.



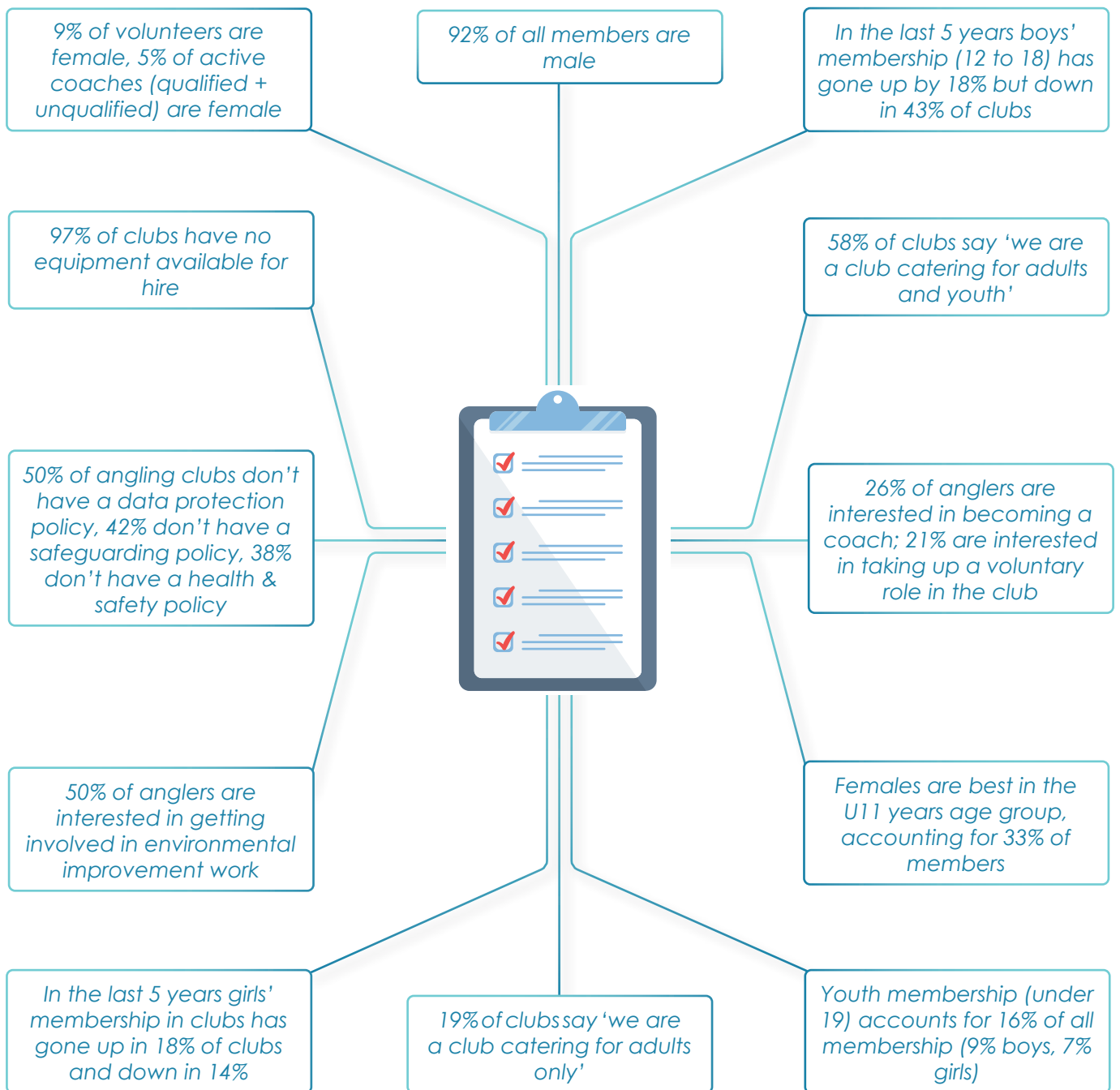
Angling clubs are stronger and more confident.



Angling clubs engage with and are seen to be part of their local community.



Here's what the club survey told us:



Objective 2

Helping clubs

Here's our strategy for helping clubs

- **Governance** – Help clubs review and improve their governance arrangements in relation to attracting novice anglers. We'll prepare a governance toolkit that clubs can adopt and adapt as necessary to align with their Federation's requirements. This will include committee structures, representation on committees (e.g. novices, young people, parents of young children, females, ethnic minorities), policies & procedures, sub-committees, administrative tasks. Through the survey, clubs themselves place little importance on help with club organisation and governance, however they did outline that help would be useful in developing policies.
- **Volunteers** – Clubs will be encouraged to recruit more volunteers, especially female volunteers – currently only 9% of volunteers are females. Opportunities for volunteering in angling clubs should be opened up to non-anglers, individuals who support angling activity and have skill sets that will help clubs' development in general and increase participation across all ages. A toolkit will be developed covering recruitment, Garda vetting, roles, training and ways to recognise volunteers. Volunteers are the life-blood of sports clubs and most sports clubs involve volunteers who are not 'players' but support the club's ethos. Angling clubs' volunteers need to reflect their local community. Volunteer Ireland and similar organisations will be engaged to support this strategic action.
- **Club Development** – Angling clubs often neglect planning for the future, preferring to concentrate on the 'here and now'. Strategic planning is critical to a club's development and sustainability. We'll devise a strategic planning toolkit which will embrace key aspects of club development, to include, but not be limited to (i) programming of courses and events for non-anglers; (ii) facilities development to ensure facilities are age-appropriate for young people and suitable for people with a disability; (iii) governance with suitable representation for and by people of all ages; (iv) development of coaches; (v) promotion, especially to people who have never experienced angling.
- **Coaches** – Across the angling clubs there is a mix of qualified coaches and people 'coaching' with no certified qualification, however, nearly all coaches – 95% – are men. The lack of women involved in coaching – qualified or unqualified – is reflected in membership, where 92% of all members are male. This imbalance is likely to be a barrier in promoting clubs, especially to women and girls as angling is perceived to be a male preserve which may also be a disincentive to parents of children; Only 2% of the clubs' membership are qualified coaches – 48 men, 3 women – whilst nearly half of the clubs have no qualified coaches within their membership. To be able to introduce people to angling, clubs need to have access to qualified coaches, both men and women. Ideally coaches should be club members. We'll put coach development programmes in place, focusing on female members of clubs.
- **Promotion** – Whilst 'Getting the Message Out There' will promote greater awareness of angling to the population in general, angling clubs themselves need to promote opportunities for non-anglers to their local communities – some clubs already do this but many do not, relying on word of mouth and members perhaps bringing along a relative. Clubs should have a Promotion Officer (volunteer), who has the skills and interest in developing printed material, Facebook, club app, website, etc. We'll devise a toolkit for promotion tailored for angling clubs.



Objective 3

Places to fish

Objective 3

Places to fish

Further developing managed fishing locations across the country that are safe and attractive to non-anglers and to young people and their families.

Angling needs to be more accessible to everyone, especially to the young generation. How angling clubs operate in areas such as coaching is critical to improving accessibility for everyone, however, the physical infrastructure also needs to be welcoming and suited to everyone's needs, including those with a disability. Some inland angling locations are naturally less accessible than others, perhaps with no designated parking nearby and no indoor accommodation. Access issues may be as a result of title uncertainty which can hinder access and prevent development.

Places to Fish can support club locations where facility development is permissible – only about a quarter of clubs either lease or own the area where they fish. Funding has previously been made available for stakeholder-led angling development and conservation projects, including 'the provision of infrastructure and equipment to allow for improved access to angling'. IFI's Projects Office work with clubs to help them develop their skills in meeting grant aided project requirements.

This work will continue and through Let's Fish will provide guidance on how the needs of families will be met through physical infrastructure. Given that people trying fishing for the first time are likely to come to a fishing location with their family and may spend some time on site, facilities have to accommodate everyone's needs and offer a pleasant outdoor experience that will encourage repeat visits.

Outcomes



Angling club locations are safe places for families to spend time.



Angling club facilities are able to be used by everyone including those with a disability.



Family groups look forward to visiting and spending time at the angling club.

Here's what the survey told us:

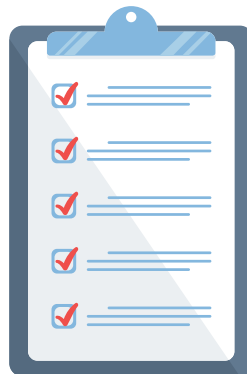
75% of clubs do not have toilets or disabled access.

Nearly half of clubs do not have car parking.

Only 22% of clubs have angling platforms.

69% of clubs do not have a clubhouse.

Of the areas where clubs fish, 73% of clubs have no control, 21% lease the area, 6% are club- owned.



Here's our strategy for places to fish

- We'll devise a 'model' angling facility that includes elements to attract people to try fishing and to enjoy the experience. Subject to funding, IFI will assist clubs to develop elements of the model with the intention of completing the model over a period of time. Sources of funding may vary and not be limited to angling for example through Sports grants or Rural Recreation. Some clubs may have some elements already in place in which case funding can help ensure these elements meet a minimum standard. The model will address six aspects:-
- **Family Friendly Facilities** – Indoor accommodation is an essential element to give families with young children shelter from inclement weather. This could be a prefabricated unit or bricks & mortar, depending on the availability of funding and permissions. We'll prepare a model specification which will consider size, toilet provision (including baby changing), disability, showers, kitchen, general purpose area, office, storage. Alternatively, existing community facilities could be shared or re-purposed to suit.

Objective 3

Places to fish

- **Environmentally Friendly** – Facilities and angling locations will be energy efficient, having due regard to the environment. Let's Fish will promote the ethos of Leave No Trace so that anglers will enjoy the outdoors responsibly: <https://www.leaveonotraceireland.org/>
- **Inclusive** – Facilities must be able to be used by everyone and should embrace the policy of universal access. Indoor accommodation will be able to be accessed by wheelchair users as will all outdoor areas including fishing stands. Vehicle parking areas will have bays for disabled drivers and families. Access pathways will be suitable for wheelchair users and buggies.
- **Safety** – The safety of non-anglers when they visit angling locations and when they are fishing is a top priority given their proximity to open water. To ensure everyone's safety the Places to Fish facilities model will specify the provision of vehicle parking, access control (fencing where possible), signage, fishing stands, life jackets, life belts and first aid equipment. At clubs where jetties are in place, access control to the jetty should also be in place.
- **Welcoming** – Everyone must feel welcome when visiting any sports club. The Places to Fish facilities model will suggest a range of elements which will help make a visit to an angling club an enjoyable experience for non-anglers and for families and groups of young people. The model will be developed to include elements such as a playpark, a picnic area, a dog park (fenced), parking for bicycles and other welcoming features. The model will also advise on fishing equipment that should be available at the club to get a non-angler started. Times when people can come along to try fishing will be scheduled (eg, a weekend morning or afternoon) and publicised with club members available to welcome and show non-anglers the first steps.
- **Education** – As an outdoor recreation activity, angling is ideally placed to teach people about nature and the environment. The Places to Fish model will promote this opportunity within angling clubs by developing templates for signage and interpretive panels to create awareness of the natural surroundings, provide basic information on fish and fishing, educate on the environment and how individuals can help protect and preserve it, and present a history of the location and how angling plays its part. The rationale behind education is to offer much more to novices than fishing making the experience as memorable and beneficial



Objective 4

Let's talk fishing





Objective 4

Let's talk fishing

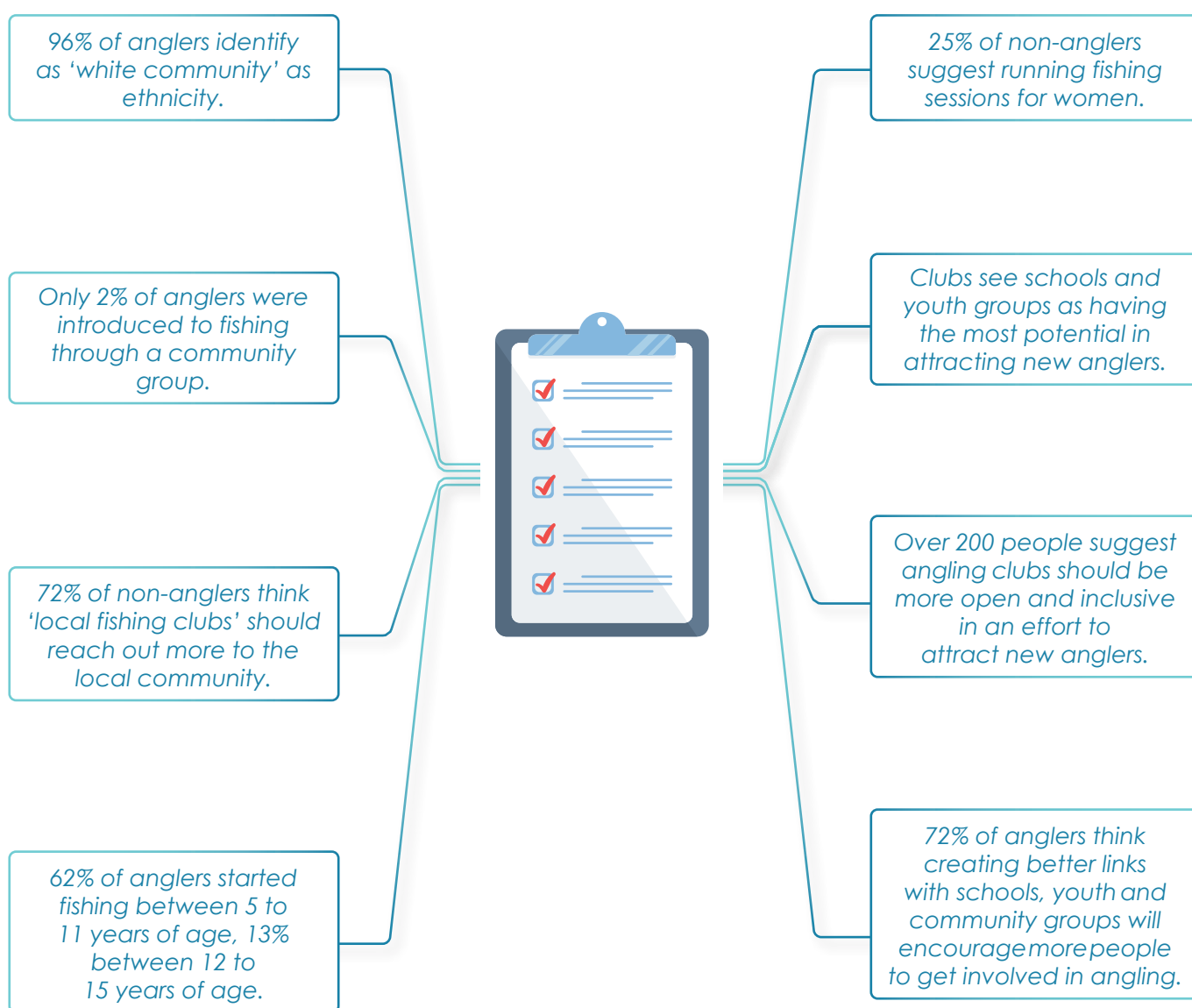
Getting local communities and organisations interested in and involved in fishing.

Whilst fishing is often a solitary activity it is also an ideal activity for groups of people experiencing it for the first time. People are naturally competitive and everyone will want to be the first to catch a fish! As a group they will learn from each other, have fun together and share memories in the following days and weeks. No matter what species you fish for 'Catch and Release' plays an important role. Careful handling and release is just as important when returning undersize fish as when you adopt a no kill approach to angling. Whilst the focus is on fishing there is an opportunity in working with local groups to widen the experience and the attraction by 'teaching' about the natural environment, whether it be the flora and fauna of the area or local environmental issues affecting waterways. The potential in angling clubs liaising with their local communities is really only limited by the members' knowledge and interest. Community outreach can be developed both off-site and on-site, the latter depending on having suitable on-site facilities, including covered accommodation, toilet facilities, etc. As an activity, fishing is highly accessible with minimal skill or coaching input needed to get started. Community outreach activities, whilst practised by the IFI are not high on an angling club's agenda, however they can help to target 'hard to reach' sections of the community.

Outcomes

-  Angling clubs are viewed as an asset by their local community.
-  Angling clubs are the 'go to' organisation for everything to do with fish and fishing. Angling clubs' capacity to engage with their local community is enhanced.
-  Awareness of angling clubs, how they benefit local communities and what they offer is heightened.
-  Angling clubs make a positive contribution to their local communities.

Here's what the survey told us:



Objective 4

Let's talk fishing

Here's our Strategy for Let's Talk Fishing

The idea here is to have qualified coaches, ideally members of angling clubs, to engage groups of novices in their own communities in a standardised approach to introducing people to fishing. This initiative is at the heart of Let's Fish in that clubs both deliver the approach and benefit from it by attracting new members. Importantly it uses the coaching and other resources that exist in angling clubs around the country, simultaneously building capacity and participation. This is a bottom-up approach comprising three stages:-

1. Non-anglers (up to 10 in a group) engage in a land-based introductory session or a series of sessions, tailored to the specific needs of the group. Coaches will lead these sessions.
2. The group is taken to a fishing facility by the coach, linking in with the local club, if the coach is not already a club member. If the club has no coaches within its membership the strategy will support club members to undertake a coaching qualification. The club will have 'signed up' to its involvement in the programme and appropriate governance, policies, youth programmes and insurances will be in place.
3. The pathway for novices participating in the introductory programme through to the club is now established. Clubs with a genuine and keen interest in angling development will be recruited to engage in this approach. Club-based coaches will be developed in response to need and demand.

Here's a sample of the organisations and groups that the strategy will engage with:-

Schools and youth groups - Schools and youth groups offer a 'captive audience' for angling clubs and a shared interest in learning about the natural world in their local area with the potential to link to the curriculum. We'll develop a fishing 'package' for children in the final years of primary education and in the first years of secondary education, ideally age 10-15. IFI Officers already work with schools and youth groups so targeting these organisations will complement and build on existing programmes.

Community groups - Angling clubs need to be an integral part of their community so Let's Talk Fishing is a great opportunity for clubs to make themselves known to local community groups which often look for opportunities to learn a new skill and experience a new activity. Angling suits everyone regardless of age or ability and it doesn't require even a minimum level of fitness. It can be enjoyed equally by able-bodied and people with a disability, so it's an ideal activity for community groups where inclusion is a key principle. Community organisations come in many shapes and forms and they encompass a wide variety of groups including Men's Sheds, ethnic minorities, disability, women's groups, unemployed and more.

Schools transition year - Many secondary schools offer an optional Transition Year (TY) between the Junior Cycle (age 12-15) and the Senior Cycle (age 16-18). Falling between Junior Certification and Leaving Certificate it is a less formal year without exams and is usually a chance for students to try a wider range of subjects, learn new skills and complete some work experience. TY presents opportunities to introduce these young people to angling. We'll develop a TY 'package' that will look to introduce young people to angling in a similar way to the approach for schools, youth & community groups. Given these young people are slightly older and potentially have time away from normal academic studies we'll look to include educational elements within the package. We'll also consider elements that introduce these young people to leadership skills and to the range of tasks required in running voluntary sports clubs.

Women in angling – The survey results evidence of very low involvement by women and girls in angling clubs – only 8% of all club members are female. However, in youth membership (under 19), boys and girls are fairly evenly represented. There is also under-representation of females amongst angling clubs' volunteers, where 9% are females and amongst active coaches (qualified and unqualified) where only 5% are female. To address these disparities we'll develop introductory programmes to angling for adult women that can be delivered by clubs much in the same way as they will deliver programmes focusing on youth. Clubs report little success in attracting women so what's needed is a re-think as to how clubs approach women, ideally involving them as a group rather than as individuals.

Adventure breaks – Whilst angling is not immediately thought of as an adventure activity, being an outdoor nature-based activity means it can be linked to outdoor recreation pursuits. We will look to include angling in domestic adventure breaks packages for families, again linking in with local angling clubs that are set up to facilitate family groups.



Case Studies

Go Fishing

Providing a 'safe' place to fish is key to how IFI delivers its Go Fishing events. Oaklands Lake in New Ross, County Wexford was established to encourage local young people to fish. The layout of Oaklands Lake means young people on Go Fishing events are visible at all times while fishing. A risk assessment resulted in the wearing of protective eyewear, peaked caps and personal flotation devices. Participants in Go Fishing are encouraged to join local angling clubs so they can continue fishing.

Youth Reach Tuam

Youthreach Tuam took part in a tailored 4 week Go Fishing programme for 19 learners designed and delivered by the local IFI Education and Outreach Coordinator. The programme comprised of a mix of classroom and outdoor learning activities. This cumulated in an exciting days fly-fishing where the learners put what they had learned to practice at a safe approved world class venue. Among some of the topics and skills learned by the learners was learning about their local river, its fish and insects, how to dress a fly, how to cast a fly rod, water safety, biosecurity and fish handling. Feedback from the programme was very encouraging: -



'The program was practical, informative and extremely beneficial in suiting the group's needs. There was the perfect balance of awareness raising and practical applications. A thoroughly well-organized program'

Delivering the strategy

Implementation group

Let's Fish will be implemented by an IFI Let's Fish Group governed by IFI's internal principles; it is not anticipated that it needs to be formally constituted. Each of this strategy's objectives will be taken forward by the group. It will reach out to a wide range of interested groups/representatives that can assist and progress the roll out of the strategy. These can include state agencies, angler representative organisations, sport partnerships, voluntary organisations, disability groups and others with specialist skills/knowledge in the areas of the objectives.

Work Packages

Once the Let's Fish Group is established, a work package for each of the objectives can be drawn up. The work packages will present a range of specific actions, each supported by targets, timeframe, responsibility, resources, outputs and outcomes. The work packages will be realistic in their targets and timelines and annual review of progress will enable actions to be re- set as necessary.

There are four key steps that underpin the work packages and the broad timeframe within which they fit. This is the first strategy of its kind for all non-anglers so a good amount of time will be spent in preparation to give the strategy every chance of achieving good outcomes.

Key Steps

The four key steps and the indicative timeline for each one is here presented by way of guidance, recognising that the evolving process may necessitate other smaller steps and shorter or longer timelines.

Key Step	What it looks like
Establish the Let's Fish Group	IFI will oversee this strategy with a team internally who ensure good governance.
Prepare content for each objective	Each objective will have practical steps which will be undertaken to deliver the strategy.
Prepare work packages	Set out tasks/actions, dependencies, schedules.
Deliver work packages	Programmes within each objective can now be delivered through stakeholders who are delivery agents.

Delivering the strategy

Timeline

Months	Months	Months	Months	Months
Establish the Let's Fish Group (LFG)	1 to 2			
Prepare content for each objective		2 to 12		
Prepare implementation plan			6 to 18	
Deliver work packages				12 to 60

Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

The essence of Let's Fish is to grow and sustain angling participation in Ireland, especially amongst the younger generation. The impact of the strategic approach must be measured to be able to demonstrate the success or otherwise of the various interventions. Lack of detailed and accurate information pertaining to angling clubs is an issue when it comes to seeking government support. For this reason, the strategy's actions will be carefully monitored during delivery and evaluated after delivery to assess their effectiveness and impact and to inform future actions and funding programmes. Let's Fish is less about numbers and more about finding out what works in attracting people to angling and keeping them interested. It is about trying things that have not been tried in the past so it is critical that the Let's Fish Group can review and report accurately on the strategy's impact. Quite simply we'll ask 'what did we do, how well did we do it, what difference did it make?'



