Promotion of angling across Dumfries and Galloway

Evaluation Report
Main project funder:

Project was delivered by:

This Project was managed by:

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Final Report: Promotion of Angling across Dumfries and Galloway

Background to the project

South West Scotland has been long recognised as offering good quality affordable angling for a wide range of sea, river and still water fish species. Dumfries and Galloway offers the most diverse angling anywhere in Scotland. Numerous still waters, nine rivers and a varied coastline offers abundant fishing opportunities. There are many fisheries across the region which are under-utilised and could support greater angling. These fisheries are typically fragmented and although they may be well marketed as individual fisheries the region overall is not well marketed as an angling resort. Many of the main organisations promoting Dumfries and Galloway as a tourist destination find it difficult to publicise the angling resource. The Scottish Government approached Galloway Fisheries Trust (GFT) to consider promoting angling at a regional level by having a one stop shop, to encourage the use of internet marketing and to have a medium to encourage best practice to angling for a range of conservation measures including catch and release and biosecurity.

Figure 1: Fishing on the Cree

It was important for the project to cover all the main river catchments and coastal fishing locations in Dumfries and Galloway. The project was co-ordinated by GFT (who cover the Luce, Bladnoch, Cree, Water of Fleet, Dee and Urr) in partnership with the Annan District Salmon Fishery Board (covering the Annan catchment) and Buccleuch Estates (covering the Nith and Border Esk catchments). Before the project started we met with VisitScotland and Destination Dumfries and Galloway so they could comment on the proposed project.
The main aim of this project was to promote the wide range of affordable accessible angling available in SW Scotland as a whole entity by:

- Ensuring four regional Fishpal websites provided consistent, high quality one stop shop for all types of angling
- Improving access at key fisheries
- Developing and promoting fishing as an outdoor pastime
- Encouraging the sustainable use of the regions angling waters
- Promoting Dumfries & Galloway as a top class fishing destination
- To produce and effectively disseminate an encompassing regional fishing leaflet
- Give all Dumfries and Galloway fisheries the opportunity to advertise their businesses on-line
- Increase number of fisheries offering on-line booking facilities
- Set up a ‘Fishing passport project’ for new waters on the Annan catchment
- Increase number of visitor angling days in the region

Figure 2: Returning a rod caught salmon on the River Urr

The cost of this project was £34,809.10 which was covered by a range of funders including:

- Scottish Government = £7,312.60 (cash)
- Galloway Fisheries Trust = £870.25 (cash)
- Annan District Salmon Fishery Board = £870.25 (cash) + £5,700 (in-kind)
- Buccleuch Estate = £3,000 (in-kind)
- LEADER funding = £17,056 (cash)
The project experience

The project started in mid-January 2011 when the steering group of project partners met at Buccleuch Estates to agree what works should take place. It ran until June 2012 taking 17 months to complete the planned works.

The project covered a wide range of works aimed at promoting and better marketing the fishing venues across Dumfries and Galloway which included:

- **Setting up of the River Annan Small Streams Passport (RASSP)** – although similar schemes have run successfully in England for many years, no passport scheme has been tried in Scotland before. If the Annan initiative is successful then this model could be repeated across Scotland. The River Annan is an intimate river that throughout most of its length offers fishing for salmon and sea trout of the highest calibre. Almost the entire river is coverable by anyone with moderate ability with many of the beats offering classic fly water. Depending on the time of year the sea trout fishing at night is an esoteric pleasure that is becoming more and more popular with visitors and all beats allowing 24hr fishing to accommodate this. The salmon fishing is primarily an autumn affair with very large fish (in excess of 30lb) being caught most years. The opportunities for fishing on the river are highly varied and the pricing structure is remarkably competitive, perhaps one fifth of that on like-for-like beats on the better-known east coast rivers.

The RASSP project is a new initiative that has improved access to the Annan's tributaries. These watercourses have been lightly fished for a few years but for the visiting angler finding the fishing and being able to access it has been difficult. The passport scheme builds upon the work that has already been carried out in parts of England in areas such as the West Country, The Wye and Usk, Cumbria, Peak District and the Tyne. Obtaining the fishing is straightforward; all you have to do is purchase a number of vouchers from the River Annan Trust and then redeem them at the chosen fishery. Indeed the vouchers that people use on all the passport schemes operating in the rest of the country are interchangeable so vouchers bought here could, for example, be used on the Usk and vice versa. To use the vouchers anglers simply look online or in the booklet for a fishery that you would like to fish and go there with the requisite amount of vouchers. The angler then pops the vouchers in the box provided and slide a latch to indicate that they are present and gone fishing. If, in the unlikely event, they find that the fishery they have chosen is full there is always another fishery close by which they can visit on the same terms.
The type of fishing that is offered in these fisheries is very different to what will be found on the main river. The main difference is scale, some of the watercourse may only be 6 or 7m wide, but they all hold fish, sometimes a lot of fish. They will suit the type of angler who likes to stalk their fish! Often the fish will be swimming a matter of feet away from you and a clumsy cast or a heavy footfall will cause them to flee for cover, light tackle and a slow and delicate approach is the order of the day. All of these fisheries contain brown trout and although they will not always be the large lunkers that the Annan is now famous for they will be spirited little fighters. All of the fisheries will also contain salmon at certain times of the year (normally October onwards), sometimes these fish will be stale and coloured but nowhere on the Annan is that far away from the sea so there will also be bars of silver present. Some of the fisheries even contain Grayling and Chub and it is likely that fishing for these will be very popular once the word is out. Because it is important to make sure these fisheries are not over exploited all of these fisheries are 100% catch and release. A total of 10 new fisheries have joined the scheme already and it is expected that more will join once they see the success of the scheme. Details regarding this scheme can be found on http://www.fishpal.com/Scotland/Annan/RiverAnnanSmallStreamPassport/index.asp?dom=Annan or http://www.riverannan.co.uk/passport.htm

Project funding was used to produce the main beat signs (see figure 3), beat limit signs, produce a dedicated section about the scheme on the Fishannan website and produce vouchers for anglers.

Figure 3: One of the RASSP boards erected on an Annan fishery
• Production and printing of a booklet regarding all angling in the Annan catchment including the RASSP scheme: A 50 page booklet was compiled which describes the fishing available on the Annan, gives information / prices / contact details for each fishery and useful advice on angling techniques / baits / etc. A total of 2,000 copies were printed and distributed including in the Glasgow Angling Centre and John Norris (angling shop in Penrith).

Figure 4: Annan Brochure

• Improvement of access at 5 fisheries on the Bladnoch, Fleet, Urr and Luce: At the beginning of the project, a small fund was set aside to help improve access for anglers to fisheries within Galloway. During the project, proprietors of river beats that offered fishing through the FishGalloway website were contacted to express an interest in having new styles, gates and bridges erected on their beats and a list was put together of these interests. Because the fund was only small (little more than £3000) we used a scoring system to determine which beats would be addressed over others. Beats that used the FishPal booking system were considered first and this was also used as an incentive to those not using the website as much, to do so. Overall, 20 two-step styles, 6 walk-over styles, 2 bridges and 1 wooden gate were erected by fencers towards the end of the project (Figure 5a, 5b and 5c).
Figure 5a: One of twenty simple two-step styles

Figure 5b: Walk-over style to assist angler access to the River Bladnoch

Figure 5c: Bridge and gate access improvement on the River Luce
Production of high quality images for use in publicity: A review was undertaken of the 4 Fishpal websites and it was noted that the number of good quality images was very limited on the Fishnith, Fishborderesk and Fishgalloway websites. There was a distinct lack of photographs of individual beats or caught fish. Following discussions with the franchise managers of these websites it became apparent that although anglers and beat owners were regularly being requested for pictures they were not being sent through. It was felt that high quality images were essential to be able to promote the local fisheries especially as many of the fisheries were unique and individual and part of their ‘sell’ was the beautiful surroundings and landscape. A professional photographer Ed Baxter was contracted to spend 12 days visiting the Rivers Border Esk, Nith, Urr, Dee, Fleet, Cree, Bladnoch and Luce. In addition a number of waterproof digital cameras were purchased for lending to anglers so that they could collect images of their catches and fishing experiences.

Updating / adding new fisheries and creating new sections for 4 fishpal websites covering all of region: Fishpal, see http://www.fishpal.com/Scotland/index.asp?dom=Scotland is a franchise company that provide high quality websites for marketing and on-line bookings for fishing. In SW Scotland the franchise managers are Annan DSFB for www.fishannan.co.uk, Buccleuch Estates for www.fishnith.co.uk and www.fishborderesk.co.uk and Galloway Fisheries Trust for www.fishgalloway.co.uk These four websites give full catchment coverage of Dumfries and Galloway. All websites were reviewed and as part of this project they were improved with new sections, new fisheries, new photos and more offering on-line bookings. On all the websites, the franchise holders have worked with fishery owners to design and populate fishery description pages including the use of high quality images. Many new fisheries have now joined the websites for free. Fisheries have been encouraged to use the on-line booking facilities. Images collected by Ed Baxter have been used through the relevant websites to promote individual fisheries but also to populate the various information pages. The ‘latest catches’ section is a facility that requires getting anglers/fisheries to record their catches on the day they catch them which informs other anglers where fish are being caught etc. More beats from across the websites have now agreed to use this facility. All existing pages were updated and improved where possible. The websites have been expanded so that instead of catering nearly entirely for salmon angling only they now have dedicated sections and fishery information for local sea angling, coarse angling and trout angling opportunities.
New sections have been created for the websites to cover a range of issues including; information on the local fisheries trust and its work, information for fly fisherman on fly hatches, biosecurity requirements to reduce risk of fish disease transfer, recognition and how to deal with key invasive non-native species, conservation advice on worm fishing / catch & release, grayling fishing pages on Fishnith and Fishannan and Health and Safety pages. The websites have continued to be updated and the franchise managers are providing regular updates through the ‘Fishing reports’ and ‘prospects’ sections.

![Image of Fishing Leaflet](image)

**Figure 6: Angling Leaflet**

- **Production of an eight sided pull out A5 sized fishing leaflet:** A fishing leaflet was designed and printed (100,000 copies) which promotes the region as an angling destination and gives details about the four Fishpal websites, conservation and biosecurity, sea fishing and various contact details. Images collected by Ed Baxter were used in the leaflet. This leaflet is suitable for distribution through the region and across Scotland / England.

Once all of the above project works were completed then there was finally a range of high quality and informed literature and websites which publicise the range of angling across the region. To help to actually market the angling venues a range of marketing events took place including:

- **Launch of the website leaflet:** event took place on 29th May 2012 at Threave House. In order to publicise the new leaflet, we held an event centrally within the region (covering the river catchments involved in this project), and invited key people that
we thought would help best disseminate the information and leaflet presented. These included representatives from VisitScotland, Destination Dumfries and Galloway, Association of Dumfries and Galloway Accommodation Providers (ADGAP) and various tourist attractions/visitor centres throughout the region. The chairman or one representative from each of the rivers District Salmon Fishery Boards were also invited along. A variety of talks were given on the day as shown below.

### Agenda

**Arrival Tea and Coffee**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Presenter</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.30</td>
<td>Introduction to Fishery Promotion Project</td>
<td>Jamie Ribbens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.45</td>
<td>Introduction to FishPal</td>
<td>Iain Wood</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>How to find your way around the FishPal franchise site</td>
<td>Rowan Armstrong</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.20</td>
<td>Freshwater and Still Water Fisheries to the East</td>
<td>Mark Coombs</td>
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<td>11.40</td>
<td>Small stream Passport scheme on the Annan</td>
<td>Nick Chisholm</td>
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<td>12.00</td>
<td>CUNCH provided in Visitor Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>Importance of Biosecurity</td>
<td>Jamie Ribbens</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.15</td>
<td>Why catch and release?</td>
<td>Rowan Armstrong, Nick Chisholm</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.30</td>
<td>New Angling Promotional Material and Gillie App.</td>
<td>Rowan Armstrong, Nick Chisholm, Michael Farns</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>Questions</td>
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Distribution of the new Angling leaflet and Annan fishing booklet: Once leaflets were printed, each franchise manager arranged collection and distribution of leaflets within their river catchment(s). Tourist information centres were targeted first but a vast range of accommodation providers and key tourist attractions were visited as well as libraries and places where locals too would be able to access the leaflet. Fishing shops were amongst the first obvious outlets for the leaflets and key shops including John Norris in Penrith and Galloway Angling Centre out with the region were also targeted and accepted an abundance of leaflets.

Attendance at Royal Highland Show (Edinburgh) and Galloway Country Fair: It was quickly recognised that angling promotion and distribution of leaflets should be done out with the region and arrangements were made for the franchise managers to attend the local and national shows. At this time, part of the marketing fund was put towards creating two pull-up banners (Figure 8 in the background). One of the banners was taken to the Royal Highland Show and set up within the Dumfries and Galloway village (host region for the RHS 2012) Wild Seasons tent (Figure 9) where various organisations and visitor attractions from across Dumfries and Galloway were promoting the iconic species of Dumfries and Galloway (of which salmon was a key species). This was an ideal opportunity to promote fishing in the region whilst so much focus was already being placed on Dumfries and Galloway and its wealth of
natural produce and wildlife experiences. The banners and leaflets were also used and distributed at Wigtown Show, Dumfries Show and Galloway Country Fair which the franchise managers attended during the summer of 2012.

Figure 8: In background - one of two banners produced alongside the fishing leaflet, to help draw attention to fishing opportunities throughout the region

Figure 9: The Dumfries and Galloway Wild Seasons tent at The Royal Highland Show
A total of 111 different fisheries have benefitted from this project covering the river catchments Border Esk, Annan, Nith, Urr, Dee, Water of Fleet, Cree, Bladnoch and Luce. These fisheries ranged from some of the larger sporting estates down to small scale enterprises who were encouraged to market their angling for the first time.

The work was completed within budget although a lot more in-kind had to be provided by Buccleuch Estates, Annan District Salmon Fishery Board and Galloway Fisheries Trust than initially envisaged.

A range of lessons have been learnt during the delivery of this project which have included:

- Problems with staff changes when delivering the project. Buccleuch Estates went through a staff restructuring process during the project which caused some of the delays.
- Need to get fisheries fully signed up. Even though 12 fisheries said they were keen to be involved in the RASSP only 10 actually signed up. A lot of time was spent trying to encouraging them to be involved but to no avail.
- Takes a lot longer to deliver a project when there are multi-partners involved.
- It was difficult to get an even spread of work delivery across all project partners.
- Need to tighten up on estimated costs at application stage. Required various reallocation of budget spend to get it correct. Also proposed method to reclaim mileage was not acceptable to EU rules so had to be reallocated too.

The project is now up and running and the three groups which run the four Fishpal websites have all committed to continue to run them for the foreseeable future. The franchise owners plan to regularly meet together along with other organisations to continue to publicise South West Scotland as an important angling destination and further marketing strategies are being explored now for future years.

The LEADER issue which the project selected to address was ‘develop a diverse and dynamic business base’. This was achieved by working closely with a wide range of fisheries businesses across Dumfries and Galloway to assist in marketing them through the internet and the production of a range of publicity material.