

News

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY RESEARCH PUBLISHED ON IMPACT OF CANOEING ON ANGLING AND FISH STOCKS.

In response to the debate over the compatibility of angling and canoeing the Environment Agency carried out research on the effects of canoeing on fish stocks and angling.

The research concludes that there is no empirical evidence linking canoeing with damage of spawning grounds and stocks, but has identified disturbance caused by canoeists to anglers as an area of conflict. The Environment Agency is considering the use of access agreements to solve the problems of conflicting use and looking at ways of promoting more effective communication between canoeists and anglers.

For copies of the research document 'Effects of Canoeing on Fish Stocks and Angling' Technical Report W266 contact the Environment Agency R&D Dissemination Centre, c/o WRc, Franklin Road, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN5 8YF, Tel: 01793 865000, or e-mail: publications@wrcplc.co.uk

OUR COUNTRYSIDE: THE FUTURE, A FAIR DEAL FOR RURAL ENGLAND

The DETR have released a summary document of the Government's White Paper 'Our Countryside: The Future, A Fair Deal for Rural England'.

For copies contact the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, DETR Free Literature, PO Box no. 236, Wetherby, LS23 7NB or tel: 0870 1226 236.

Further details about the White Paper can be found on the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions website: www.detr.gov.uk

COUNTRYSIDE AGENCY STRATEGY RELEASED

On 22nd January the Countryside Agency published its new strategy 'Towards Tomorrow's Countryside',

to link in with the publication of the Government's White Paper: 'Our Countryside; the future'. It sets out the Agencies priorities for the next decade and covers 8 policy areas. These areas are:

- Rural Assurance – influencing the quality of rural life;
- Countryside Capital – making the most of the natural asset;
- Wider Welcome – opening up more of the countryside for more people, from all backgrounds, to enjoy;
- Market Towns – revitalising rural service centres for the wider countryside;
- Countryside On Your Doorstep – creating attractive, accessible greenspace close to home;
- Finest Countryside – securing the quality of our best landscapes;
- Vital Villages – equipping communities to shape their futures; and
- Local Heritage Initiatives – helping people to care for their landscapes, landmarks and traditions.

The new strategy has been devised to enable the Countryside Agency to effectively cover the 20 key issues that it has identified for action:

Environmental Pressures

- The character and diversity of England's countryside, including its landscape and architecture, are being eroded by industrial agriculture and new buildings that fail to respect their context.
- New farming practices and other factors are reducing biodiversity, reflected in the decline in farm and woodland bird populations.
- Air and water quality are generally improving, but rivers are under pressure with higher demand for water, while soil erosion threatens the future productive use of farmland.
- Rising traffic levels continue to intrude on the countryside's tranquillity. Moreover, road casualties are falling more slowly than in urban areas.

Quality of life under threat

- The closure of rural post offices around 200 or so each year, as well as banks, garages, pubs and village shops, is making it increasingly difficult to find local services in rural areas.
- Heightened migration from cities and suburbs to rural districts is changing the social fabric of countryside communities
- Real incomes of the less well off in the countryside are falling.
- Fear of crime in the countryside is rising, even though the incidence of crime is far less than in urban areas.
- Child care is improving but its provision remains patchy.
- The health of rural residents is generally above the national average, but the increasing remoteness of centralised health facilities disadvantages certain groups and individuals.
- Rural homelessness is growing, and not enough affordable housing is being built to meet needs.
- Opportunities for education and training are improving and very few rural schools are closing.

Challenges to enterprise and business

- Rural areas are falling behind their urban counterparts in the information and communication technology revolution due to delays in installing the necessary infrastructure.
- Public transport provision is getting better and access to a car is also improving but too many people who have no car are still left isolated.
- Fewer new businesses registered in three quarters of rural districts compared to the regional average.
- The prosperity of market towns is declining as services and industries are rationalised which affects surrounding rural areas.
- Employment opportunities are changing with fewer working directly on the land and more working from home or at edge of town locations
- Land based activity is suffering from the crisis in farming.

Everyone's countryside

- Rural and urban people alike value the countryside as a place to relax and play.
- Most in town and country regard the countryside as a healthy and happy place to live, and as a result care deeply about its future.

For copies of the report 'Towards Tomorrow's Countryside' (ISBN 0 86170 6242) contact Countryside Agency Publications, PO Box 125, Wetherby, West Yorkshire, LS23 7EP, Tel: 0870 120 6466, E-mail: twoten.press.net

GREEN AUDIT KIT LAUNCHED

The Countryside Agency and the English Tourism Council have developed the Green Audit Kit "Investing in your business and the environment" as a tool to help small tourism businesses become more sustainable and environmentally friendly. The Green Audit Kit was launched on 29th November 2000.

The Kit covers use of energy and water, purchasing and disposing of materials. It also covers marketing and product improvement whilst illustrating ways to help the environment and save on costs whilst exploiting the commercial advantages of these actions.

Both the Countryside Agency and the English Tourism Council hope that the Kit will help tourism businesses develop in a sustainable manner.

Copies of the Green Audit Kit "Investing in your business and the environment" are available from Regional Tourist Boards free of charge (limited to one copy per person). Additional copies are available from the Countryside Agency Publications Department, Tel: 0870 120 6466. Cost £7.50.

EXTENSION TO PENNINE BRIDLEWAY PROPOSED

The Countryside Agency submitted a recommendation to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions in

November 2000 to extend the Pennine Bridleway further northwards. The proposed extension would add an extra 141 miles to the current bridleway and run through Cumbria and into Northumberland.

Consultation was carried out by the Countryside Agency with landowners, local authorities, statutory and voluntary organisations and interest groups to determine the level of interest in the project. The Countryside Agency is waiting for the decision from the Secretary of State as to whether the proposals will go ahead.

Copies of the submission are available from the Countryside Agency Publications, PO Box 125, Wetherby, West Yorkshire, LS23 7EP. Tel: 0870 120 6466. Copies are priced at £16.

BRITISH WATERWAYS AWARDED TOP TOURISM PRIZE

British Waterways has been awarded the 'Tourism and Heritage Organisation of the Year' by the Good Britain Guide 2001. The Waterways Trust which manages The National Waterways Museum has also received an award as 'Gloucestershire Family Attraction of the Year'.

For more information visit British Waterways on the web at: www.britishwaterways.co.uk

COUNTRYSIDE AND RIGHTS OF WAY (CROW) ACT

On the 30th November the CROW Act received Royal Assent and signalled the start of the mapping process of at least 4000 square miles of England. Mapping of the areas to be designated as open access land in the first step in the process, and wide scale consultation will take place before the full access rights are agreed.

Management plans will be drawn up and published for all Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) by the local authorities responsible for them with guidance from the Countryside Agency. Larger

AONBs may also benefit from the proposed setting up of conservation boards to bring together local authority, parish representatives with national appointed members in the management of these areas. They will take over some of the local authority functions which relate to the AONBs but will not become local planning authorities.

For further information on the CROW Act refer to the articles by Anne Ewins, Andrew Gale, Rachel Cook and John Holmes featured in this issue of Countryside Recreation.

For the online version of the "Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000" visit the HMSO website: www.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/20000037.htm

Hard copies are also available from the Stationery Office, Tel: 0870 600 5522. ISBN 010543700X and costs £15.55. Alternatively it can be ordered from the web at: www.clicktso.com

For more details about the implementation of the CROW Act visit the Countryside Agency website: www.Countryside.gov.uk

MAPPING OPEN ACCESS LAND

On 9th January the Countryside Agency signed a contract with Binnie, Black & Veatch, specialists in environmental consultancy and mapping, to start the mapping programme of 'open country' and common land under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000.

The consultants will be responsible for identifying and mapping the areas that are 'open country' and common land. The Countryside Agency will then consult widely on the maps showing areas to be included in the Act. The new access rights will only come into force when all appeals to this process are heard and resolved, likely to be in 2003. The consultants will also provide a Geographical Information System (GIS) which will help the

Countryside Agency to manage access rights and information.

For further information about the implementation of the CROW Act visit the Countryside Agency website: www.Countryside.gov.uk

COMMUNITY FOREST REGENERATION

The Community Forest Programme presented its Annual Monitoring Report to the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions in December 2000. The report highlights the regeneration and creation of Community Forests around towns and cities across England over the last 12 months .

The highlights for the year 2000 include:

- 1,200 hectares of new woodland planting
- over 1,400 hectares of existing woodland were brought into management, and
- over 1,300 hectares of woodlands were opened up to the public for recreation and access.

The Programme is also concentrating on other related land types and uses associated with community forests; such as opening up non-woodland areas of urban fringe for access and recreation where there is a demand for informal recreation, community involvement and nature conservation. Work is also underway transforming closed landfill sites for land reclamation for forest use.

For more information on the report visit the Community Forest website: www.communityforest.org.uk

CENTRE FOR ECOLOGY AND HYDROLOGY ANNUAL REPORT 1999- 2000

The Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH), Natural Environment Research Council have published their Annual report for 1999-2000.

CEH aim to become the centre of excellence in terrestrial and freshwater sciences through their

directed long term, strategic and integrated research relevant to governments and industry. Their science strategy is based around 9 key programmes:

- Soil and Soil-Vegetation Interactions
- Land Use Science
- Urban Environments
- Freshwater Quality and Ecology
- Biodiversity and Population Processes
- Biocontrol and Biotechnology Research
- Pollution
- Hydrological Extremes and Ecological Response
- Global Change

Copies of this and other CEH publications contact: CEH Publications Office, Directorate, Monks Wood, Abbots Ripton, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE28 2LSF, Tel: 01487 772549. For further information on the research carried out by CEH visit their website at: www.ceh.ac.uk

COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP SCHEME – NEW SCHEME LITERATURE

In January the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) published new guidance on the 'Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

The Countryside Stewardship Scheme is one of 10 schemes within the England Rural Development Programme (ERDP) framework. The other 9 schemes are:

- The Rural Enterprise Scheme (new)
- The Vocational Training Scheme (new)
- The Energy Crops Scheme (new)
- Processing and Marketing Grants (new)
- The Environmentally Sensitive Areas Scheme
- The Organic Farming Scheme
- The Woodland Grant Scheme
- The Farm Woodland Premium Scheme
- The Hill Farm Allowance Scheme (replacing HLCAs)

Copies of the Handbook are available free of charge from MAFF Regional Service Centres. The application form can also be found on MAFF's website at: www.maffweb/aboutmaf/agri-env.countstew

For information about the other ERDP schemes visit the MAFF website at: www.maff.gov.uk

SUPPORT FOR LOCAL PRODUCERS

Country Life Online has launched a campaign to encourage people to support the rural economy and preserve traditional foods. A website has been set up to make it easier for people to buy directly from local farmers markets and farm shops, and enables smaller producers to sell their goods direct to the public.

For further information about Country Life Online visit the site at: www.countrylife.co.uk

LAND REFORM (SCOTLAND) BILL

On 22nd February Scottish Ministers Jim Wallace and Sam Galbraith launched the public consultation on the Land Reform (Scotland) Bill. Part I of this Bill introduces the proposals for legislative change on access in Scotland and the rest of the Bill is concerned mainly with other land reform issues including community 'right to buy' proposals.

The Scottish access proposals are for a general right of access, subject to access being exercised responsibly and to safeguards for privacy, land management and conservation needs. So these are proposals more akin to the Scandinavian approach. There is a consultation also on a draft Scottish Outdoor Access Code, which is an integral part of the access proposals. The Code is the reference point for the definition of responsibility in access, and for those details of the access arrangements which are not included in the primary legislation.

The consultation runs until 18th May. For further details visit the Scottish Executive website: www.scotland.gov.uk.