

We're hooked! People across England flock to fishing hotspots to enhance post-lockdown wellbeing

Fishing is seeing a surprising post-lockdown surge with experts encouraging as many people as possible to take advantage of the activity's mental health and wellbeing benefits this summer.

The Environment Agency has revealed that over 100,000 more people are fishing, with a boom in rod licence sales by nearly a fifth (17%) compared to the same time last year. Fishing retailers have also reported a huge demand for beginners' fishing kits and tackle since lockdown restrictions eased on 13 May.

There are currently over 3/4million anglers with a licence in England and Wales. In light of renewed demand and the wellbeing benefits of fishing, the Environment Agency has set a new target to get one million people fishing by 2025.

"Gone fishing"

Since lockdown restrictions eased, evidence suggests that people are keen to get outside and re-connect with nature after months indoors. In a recent survey from the Angling Trust, it was revealed 99% of survey respondents agreed angling benefits their mental health and wellbeing. Since lockdown restrictions eased, 91% of respondents have already been out angling and many are enjoying the social distancing benefits of fishing.

Half of the Angling Trust's survey respondents say fishing has allowed them to bond with friends and family post-lockdown whilst remaining at a safe distance due to the nature of the sport. More beginners are also taking up the sport as nearly half (42%) of respondents reported taking someone from their family along with them to try fishing for the first time. For any beginners looking to try it out, the Angling Trust recommends searching ["get fishing"](#) online for events in your area and tips on how to get started.

The benefits of fishing to mental health and wellbeing include:

- Creating bonds with friends and family – re-connecting after the intensity of the lockdown period can help combat loneliness, anxiety and depression. Fishing provides a relaxed opportunity to meet-up with family and friends away from the crowds
- Enhancing connections with nature – being near water and connecting with the natural environment offers a relaxing environment for many

- Boosting your self-esteem – learning a new skill can be rewarding and build a sense of achievement. Taking part in the sport is made easy through UK-wide fishing club events planned throughout the summer holidays.
- Discovering new places – with staycations and short UK-based trips planned this summer, increase your sense of happiness by exploring new areas
- Taking time out from day-to-day life – working from home and planning family time can be challenging. Fishing is a socially-distanced activity that all the family can enjoy, or you can enjoy on your own for some quiet time

Heidi Stone, Fisheries Manager at the Environment Agency said:

Fishing licence sales have risen to an exceptional high against the last few years and we're seeing a true revival for the sport as people recognise all it has to offer. As lockdown restrictions have eased there has been a boom in licence sales as now, more than ever, people have a desire to get outdoors and escape their daily stresses.

Fishing is a sport that can be done by a person of any age or ability and it provides a great opportunity for families to try something new during the school holidays.

The Mental Health Foundation has backed the Environment Agency's call to fish, encouraging the pursuit of outdoor activities like fishing to help people deal with the impact of the pandemic since lockdown restrictions eased.

Dr Antonis Kousoulis, Director of the Mental Health Foundation, said:

Growing evidence suggests that spending time in 'green' and 'blue' spaces has a very positive effect on our mental health, providing protective and restorative benefits.

Fishing remains one of the most popular outdoor activities in England and it is important for people's mental health that they can continue to pursue this activity in a safe way both during and after the pandemic.

Clive Copeland, Head of Participation at the Angling Trust said:

After an understandably quiet period during lockdown, we have seen

huge demand on angling clubs, coaches and fisheries since restrictions have eased.

We've known for a long time that the wellbeing benefits of our sport are considerable and are very keen to promote the mental wellbeing elements of fishing through our work with Sport England and the Environment Agency. Going fishing helps recovery from and prevention of mental health issues, involves spending time by the water – which is brilliant for relaxation and aids concentration – it's a fantastic way to spend time with family and enjoy an activity together.

We've been working flat out ensuring that we meet demand and get as many people as possible involved in the sport at beautiful beginner-friendly locations around the country which are listed on our website ['Get Fishing'](#) along with videos, top-tips and advice perfect for anyone who wants to give fishing a go. Now is a great time to try fishing – you can experience angling in a safe and positive way outdoors, in nature.

The Canal & River Trust, which is running over 150 outdoor introductory courses for newcomers as part of its ['Let's Fish' campaign](#) this summer, believes demand for fishing has skyrocketed.

John Ellis, National Fisheries and Angling Manager at the Canal & River Trust said:

We've seen record numbers of people take up fishing since lockdown, many of whom are completely new to the activity and some of whom have taken up the sport through family members and friends at local clubs.

Others have not known how to get started and that where [Let's Fish](#) comes in. Half the population live within 5 miles of a Trust owned fishery and already through our Let's Fish events we've seen people from all walks of life try fishing as a way of re-connecting with nature, from young children with their parents or grandparents to young women and older people who have felt isolated and are keen to try something new.

Mat Woods, Brand Manager at fishing retailer Korum said:

When fishing was given the green light post-lockdown, tackle companies had to help many tackle shops get back up to speed, as initially they were still 'officially' closed outside of mail order business.

As stores re-opened properly, trade propelled to dizzying new heights and for many in the industry, this saw their stocks of key

items selling at record levels. For some, this meant shortages and being out of stock of some products. Many have kept the wheels in motion and made the most of the boom in our industry. It's great to see so many new people fishing as often as they are. Long may it continue.

The Environment Agency works to promote fishing and make it as accessible as possible. The income generated from fishing licence sales funds essential work to maintain, improve and develop fisheries, fish habitats and angling. Income is also used to fund projects in collaboration with partners to benefit the angling community.

The Environment Agency is calling on all to give the sport a go and see the benefits for themselves. [Find out more about how to get a licence.](#)