



Isle of Man
Government

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Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture

Reservoir Fishing Survey 2019: summary of responses

Background

In order to assist with improvement and promotion of the reservoir fishery, a survey was conducted 17th June to 9th September (inc) 2019 in order to gather views/suggestions from both resident and non-resident anglers on the fishing available at the Island's six stocked reservoirs. The survey was advertised via social media and via signage at the reservoirs, and anglers were able to submit responses either via SurveyMonkey or via hard copy questionnaires (copy attached) available at all reservoirs except Ballure, which was not stocked during 2019 due to inspection and maintenance by Manx Utilities necessitating it being drained.

Results

A total of 61 responses were received. Two respondents also engaged in verbal and written correspondence with Inland Fisheries about their concerns.

Demographics

95% of respondents were male, 64% were >45yrs of age, whilst 12% were ≤25yrs. The vast majority of those ≥16yrs either work full-time (52%) or are retired (33%).

Four (7%) of respondents were visitors to the Island. Two of these indicated that the reservoir fishing and/or the Island's other fishing opportunities influenced their decision to visit.

33% of respondents had experience of stillwater trout fishing elsewhere in the British Isles within the last two years.

A substantial proportion of respondents had also done other forms of recreational fishing on the Island within recent years as illustrated in Fig. 1.

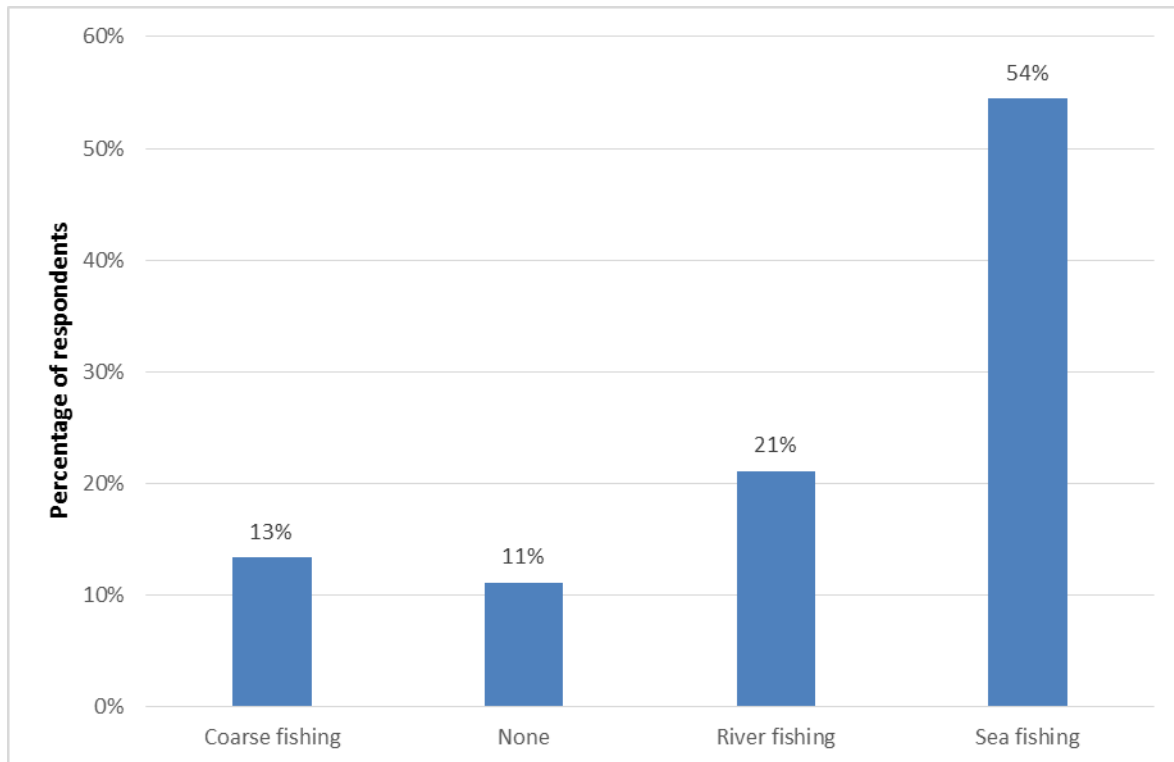


Fig. 1. Percentage of reservoir survey respondents engaging in other forms of recreational fishing.

Reservoir usage

The majority (77%) of respondents fish throughout the open season (10th Mar-31st Jan) with the remainder fishing only during late spring to early autumn. As illustrated in Fig. 2, most of the respondents fished frequently with 80% fishing at least two or three times/month.

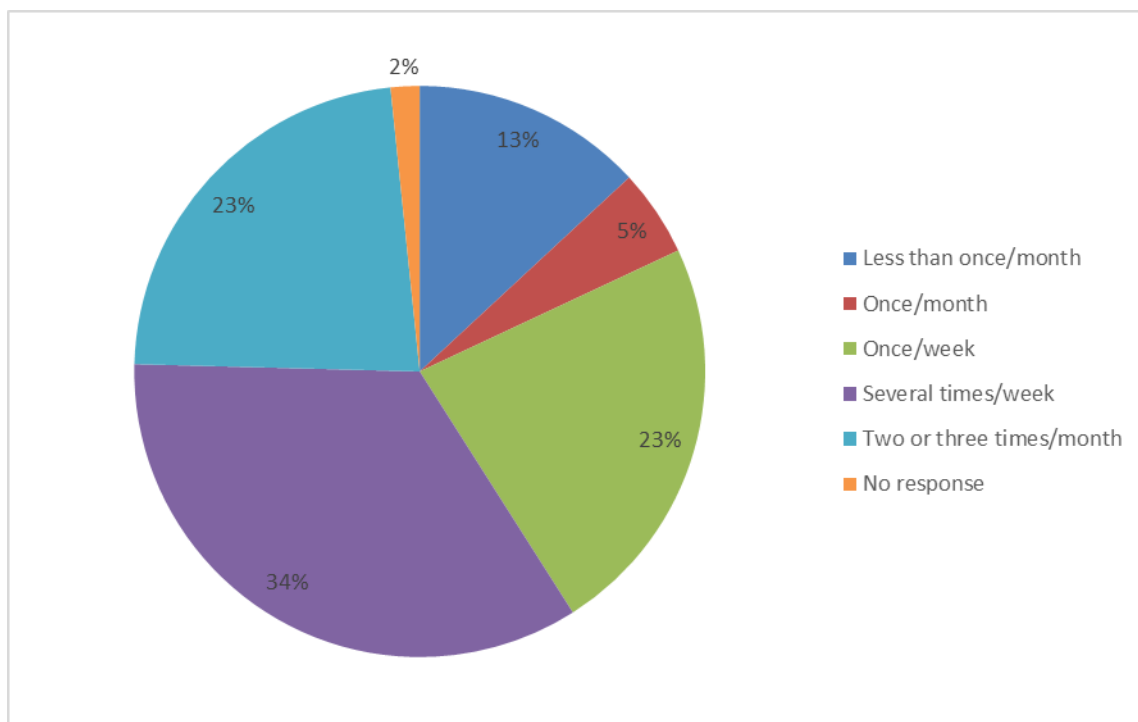


Fig. 2. Frequency of respondents' fishing trips.

As illustrated in Fig. 3, the majority of respondents had fished several of the reservoirs in recent seasons. Ballure was visited by the fewest respondents and by none of the four visiting

anglers. However, as illustrated in Fig. 4, it was not the least favourite among the respondents, two of whom fished only at Ballure.

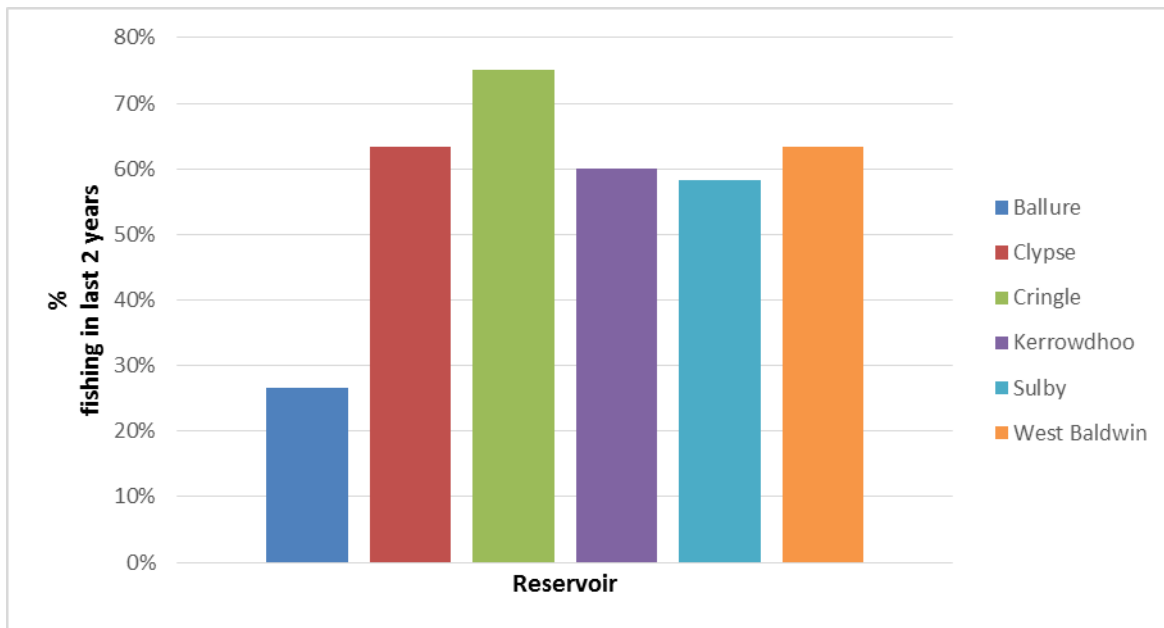


Fig. 3. Percentage of respondents fishing each of the reservoirs within the last two years.

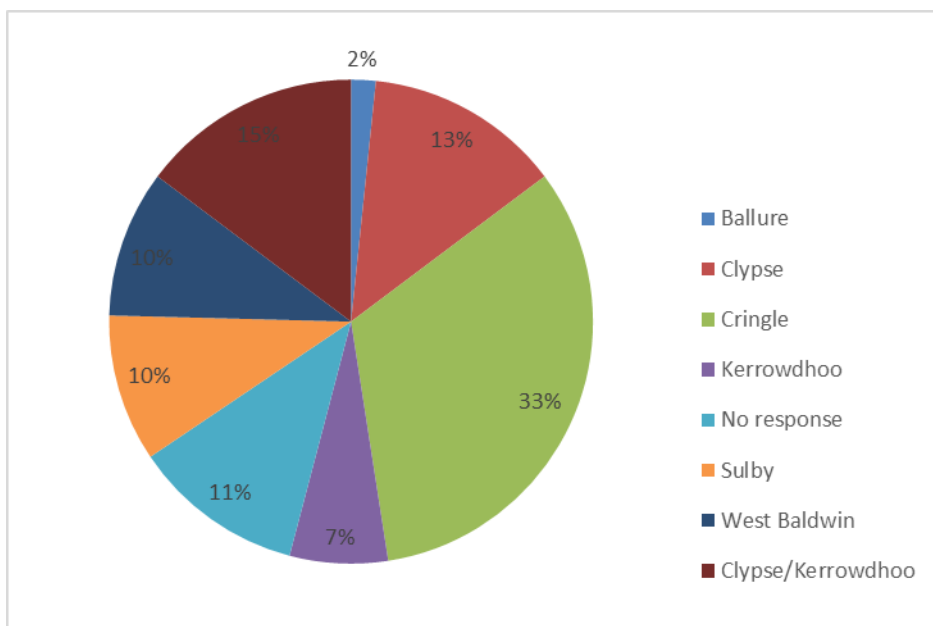


Fig. 4. Survey respondents' favourite reservoir.

As illustrated in Fig. 5, respondents gave a variety of reasons for favouring any one particular reservoir, the three most common being proximity to their residence, aesthetics and bankside access.

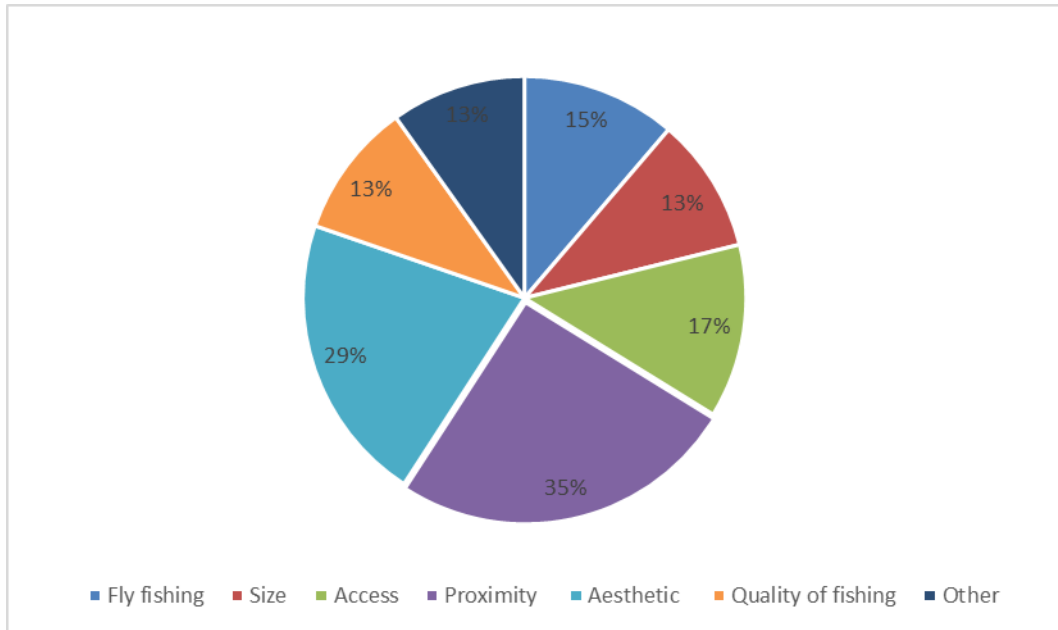


Fig. 5. Respondents' reasons for stating their favourite reservoir.

Perceived quality of the fishery

Fig. 6 illustrates respondents' opinion of the overall quality of the reservoir fishery. The majority (77%) of total respondents rated the fishery as either excellent or very good and several were very complimentary in their comments. However, 10% rated it poor or terrible with two anglers expressing serious concerns about catch rates, particularly at West Baldwin. All of the visiting anglers and the resident anglers with recent experience of stillwater trout fishing elsewhere in the British Isles rated the fishery as either excellent or very good.

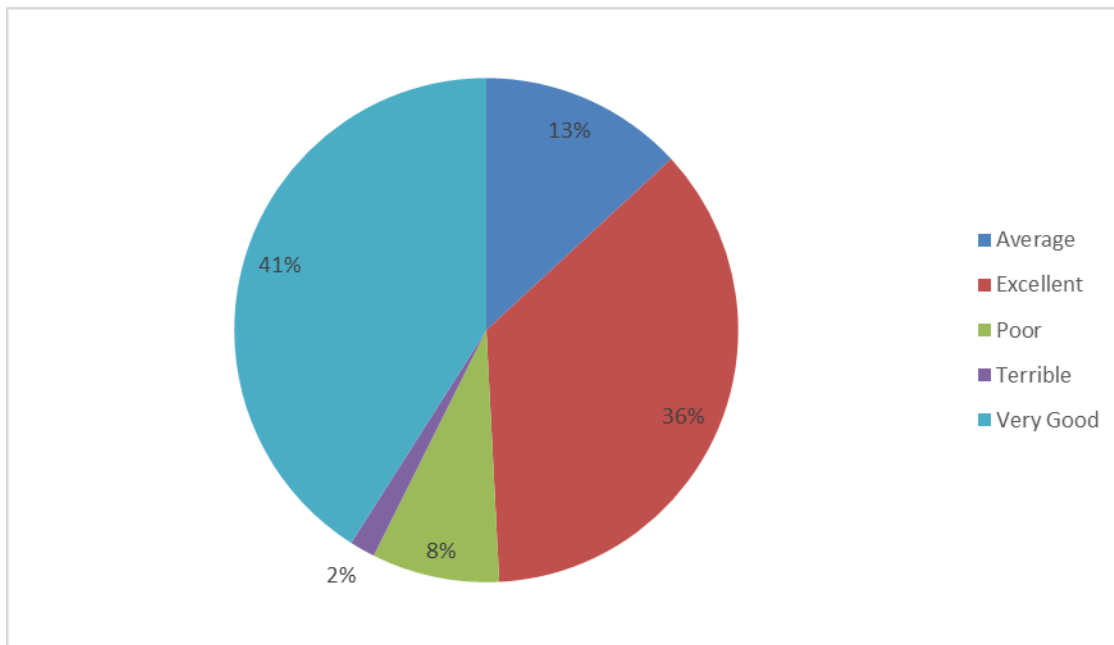


Fig. 6. Respondent's opinion of the overall quality of the fishery.

Anglers were asked to comment on the size of the rainbow trout stocked to the reservoirs. Trout are usually stocked at a minimum size of 2lb in order to minimise predation by cormorants. However, in two recent seasons (including the current one) some stocking of fish ≥ 1 lb has been allowed in order to make up numbers following incidents, e.g. flooding, causing losses at the fish farm. These smaller fish have proven popular with some anglers, who rate

them highly both for sport and for the table but the survey results (see Fig. 7) indicate that this is a minority view.

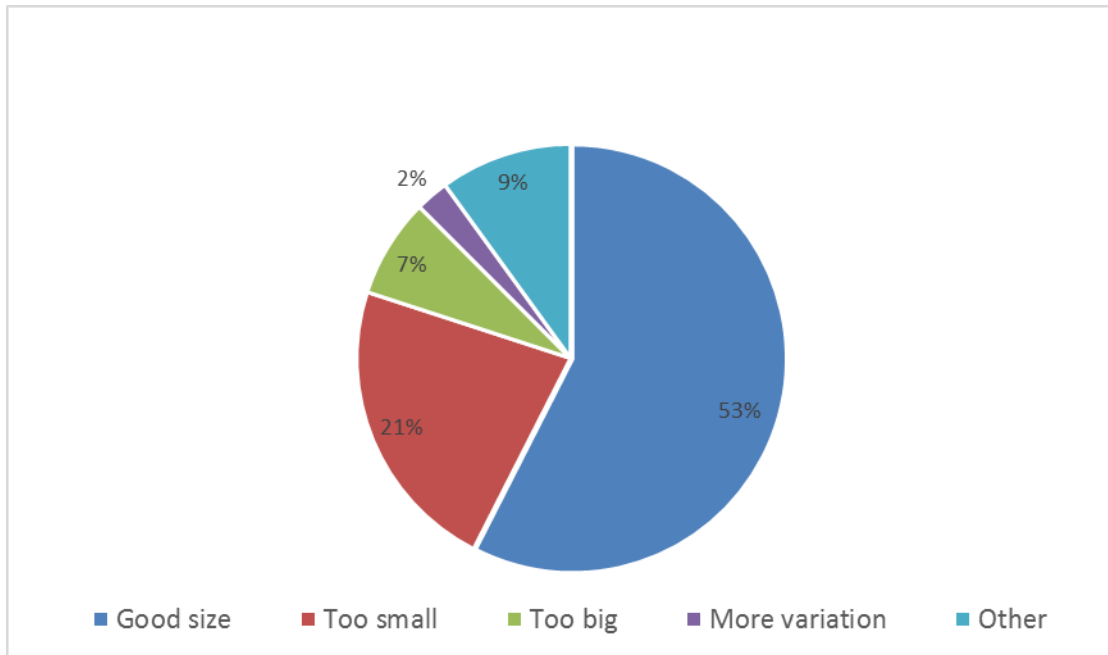


Fig. 7. Respondents' comments on size of trout stocked to the reservoirs.

Anglers were also asked for their suggestions for improving the fishery, and these are summarised in Fig. 8. Expanding the area of accessible water via provision of further platforms, management of aquatic and bankside vegetation and/or allowing boat fishing was requested by 43% of respondents. When asked what would encourage them to fish more often, other than changes to personal circumstances, reduced licence prices and/or more payment options was the most commonly cited reason given (see Fig. 9).

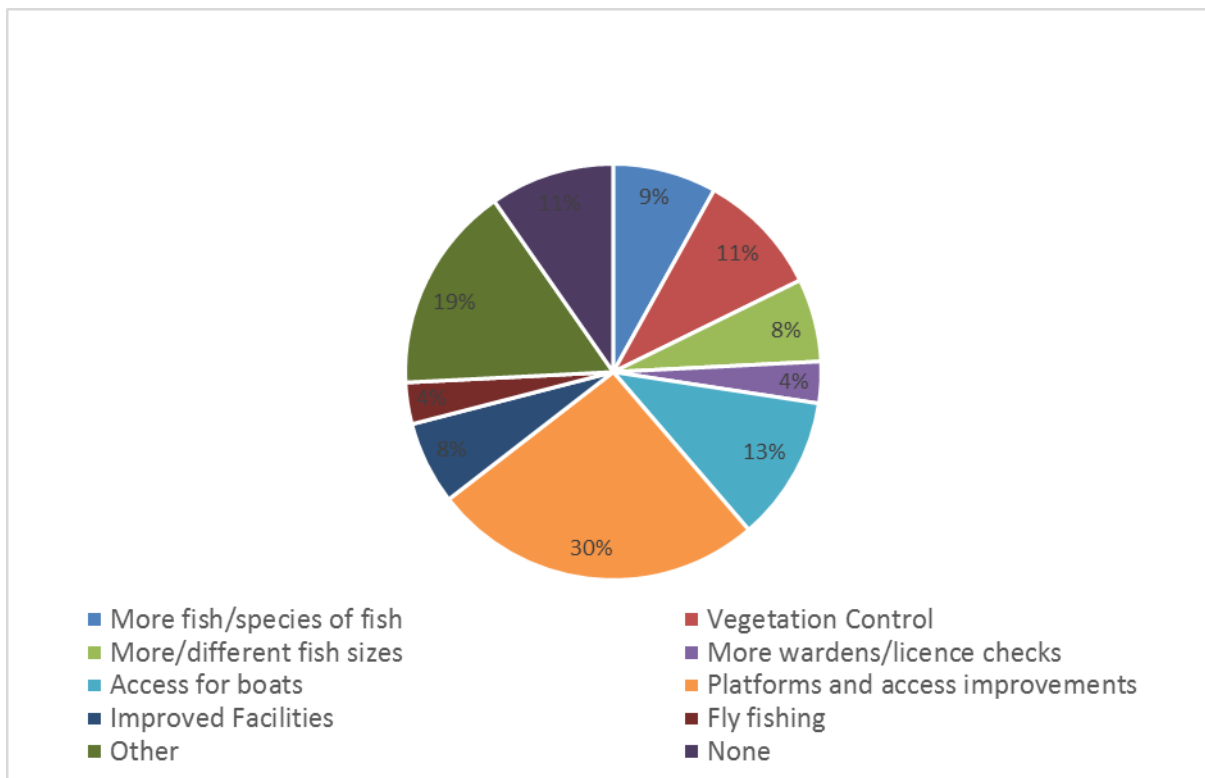


Fig. 8. Respondents' suggestions for improvements to the fishery.

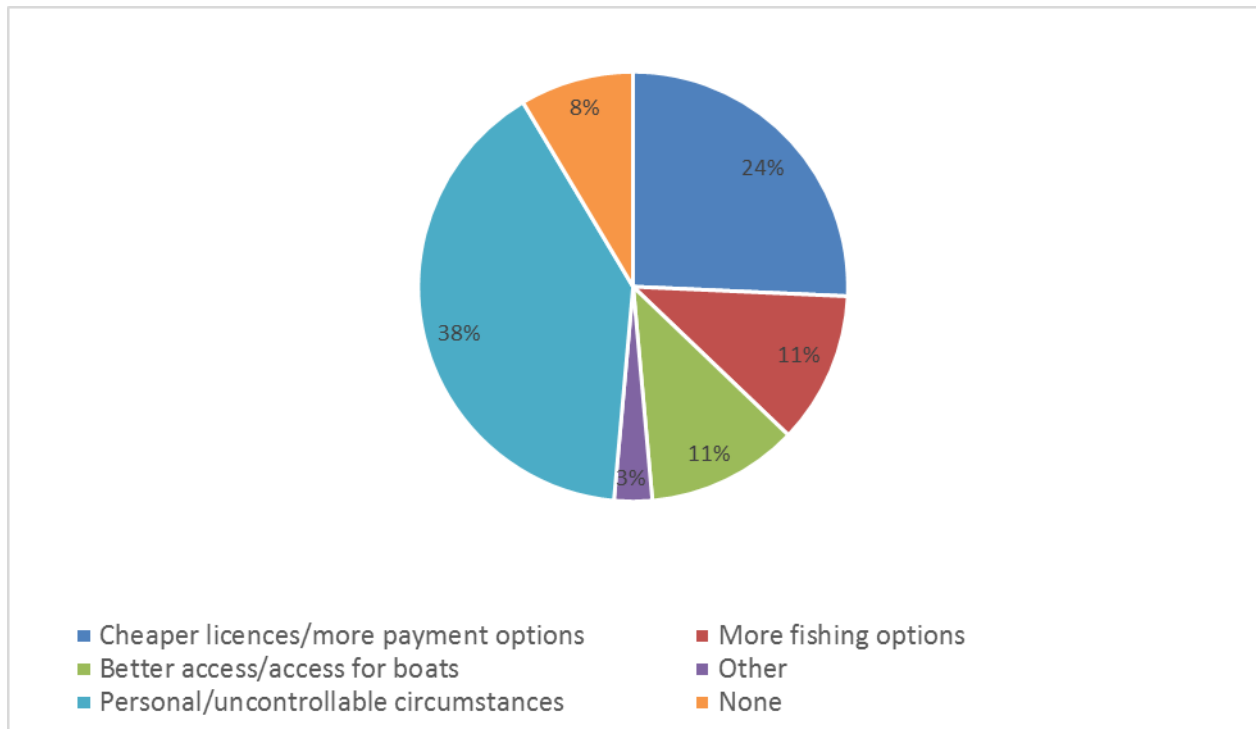


Fig. 9. Factors which would encourage respondents to fish more often.

Conclusion and proposed actions

The survey has indicated that the majority of anglers, and especially those with experience of stillwater trout fishing elsewhere in the British Isles, have a very positive view of the reservoir fishery. However, there is clearly scope for improvement and a need to address the concerns of some anglers with regard to catch rates.

The total numbers of fish available for reservoir stocking is set by the Cornaa fish farm lease agreement between DEFA and Troutlodge. The requirement for stock fish has to be balanced alongside Troutlodge's operational requirements; therefore, the scope to increase the numbers of fish stocked is limited. However, there are potential actions, which could aid catch rates as well as improve the overall appeal of the fishery:

- Trout tend to concentrate in different areas of a reservoir at different times of the day depending on various environmental factors. Expanding the area of accessible water as requested by a substantial proportion of survey respondents would therefore likely aid catch rates and could be achieved in a number of ways:
 - In recent years, DEFA, with the support of the landowner Manx Utilities, has installed an access stile, an additional pedestrian gateway and three fishing platforms (one of them wheelchair-accessible) at West Baldwin, and two platforms (one wheelchair-accessible) have been installed at Cringle reservoir. These have proven popular with anglers, and there is scope for further platform construction providing Manx Utilities can be satisfied that other reservoir user-groups would not be negatively-impacted.
 - Fishery Officers have increased bankside access to some extent in recent years via trimming of vegetation. Further improvements could be achieved by securing the support of Manx Utilities for e.g. cutting paths through shrubbery; trimming of branches and/or relocation of tree planting to allow more room for fly-casting.
 - Some members of the angling community have for many years expressed a desire for boat fishing at the reservoirs and the Isle of Man Fly Fishers has had Manx Utilities' conditional consent for its members to boat-fish at West Baldwin in recent seasons. Manx Utilities has previously been understandably reluctant to consider open access to boat users due to health and safety concerns, and

open access would also pose an issue for fisheries enforcement. However, further liaison with the authority and the fishing clubs would appear worthwhile to gain clarity on the potential for club-run boat fishing at West Baldwin and Sulby.

- Given the great variation in size of the reservoirs and the fixed number of stockfish available, some reservoirs will inevitably remain more heavily stocked than others. This need not necessarily be regarded as negative. Anglers vary in their preferences with regard to the ease with which they're likely to hook a fish and some prefer the challenge provided by a more lightly stocked water. For instance, the Isle of Man Fly Fishers hosts a heat of the Sierra Pairs UK Fly Fishing competition each year at Sulby and requests that the reservoir is not stocked within a week of the event in order to provide challenging conditions. However, feedback both from the survey and elsewhere does indicate quite widespread concern about catch rates at West Baldwin and this will be taken into consideration when reviewing the distribution of fish.
- One of the survey respondents suggested that children, whose licences are issued free of charge, should have a lower bag limit than paying anglers, a point which has been raised with fishery officers on occasions in the past. This is worth consideration, especially given that the Concession Reservoir Season licence available to anglers who are ≥65yrs or registered as disabled is subject to a reduced bag limit. However, such a change to regulations would require further consultation prior to seeking approval of Tynwald.

Various other constructive suggestions regarding both improvement and promotion of the fishery were made by one or more anglers and these will be taken into consideration when reviewing policies, strategies, legislation and promotional material.

A query raised by a disabled survey respondent regarding the licensing system is being subject to equality impact screening and appropriate action will be taken.

If you require this document in an alternative format and/or language please contact us to discuss your needs:

Postal address: Fisheries Division, DEFA, Thie Slieau Whallian, Foxdale Road, St Johns, IM9 5AS

Email: Fisheries@gov.im

Tel. (01624) 685857

Reservoir Fishing Survey

The Inland Fisheries Section of the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture is seeking views from both resident and non-resident anglers on the fishing available at the six stocked (rainbow trout) reservoirs.

Completed questionnaires may be posted in the dedicated boxes sited at the reservoirs or delivered to: Fisheries Directorate, DEFA, Thie Slieau Whallian, Foxdale Road, St Johns, IM9 5AS. Scanned copies may be emailed to fisheries@gov.im

Alternatively, the questionnaire can be completed via 'Survey Monkey' at bit.ly/ReservoirSurvey2019

Your feedback is much appreciated and will assist in targeting our resources to improve and promote the fishery.

Deadline for responses is 5pm Monday 9th September 2019

1. Which reservoirs have you fished in the last 2 years? (circle all that apply)

Clypse Kerrowdhoo Cringle West Baldwin Ballure Sulby

2. Which is your favourite reservoir to fish, and why?

3. How would you rate the overall quality of the fishing at the reservoirs? (please circle)

Excellent Very good Average Poor Terrible

4. Do you have any comments regarding the sizes of the rainbow trout supplied to the reservoirs?

5. Have you been stillwater trout fishing elsewhere in the British Isles in the last 2 years?

If yes, please state locations.

6. What improvements, if any, would you like to see made to the Island's reservoir fishery?
(if your comments refer to a particular reservoir(s), please specify which)

7. Do you go fishing at the reservoirs throughout the whole season (10th Mar – 31st Jan)?

If 'No', please state the period of the year during which you tend to fish (e.g. Apr-Oct)

8. On average, how often do you fish the Island's reservoirs during the season/stated period? (please circle)

Several times/week

Once/week

Two or three times/month

Once/month

Less than once/month

9. What, if anything, would encourage you to fish the Island's reservoirs more often?

10. What other types of recreational fishing have you done on the Isle of Man in the last two years? (please circle all that apply)

River fishing

Coarse fishing

Sea fishing

None

11. What is your age?

12. Are you?

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

13. If you are 16 years or older, how would you describe your employment status?
(e.g. full-time worker; retired; full-time student)

14. Are you a resident or a visitor to the Island?

15. Please enter the first part of your postcode (e.g. IM1; CH49)

16. If you are a visiting angler, why did you visit the Isle of Man (tick all that apply)?

- Mainly because of the reservoir fishing
- Partly because of the reservoir fishing
- Mainly because of the Island's other fishing opportunities
- Partly because of the Island's other fishing opportunities
- Other (please specify, e.g. business trip; visiting family)

17. Are there any other comments/suggestions you would like to make about the Island's reservoir fishery?

Thank you very much for your time!

