

Enjoying Water

Identifying new and improved opportunities for people to enjoy water related sport and recreation in London and the South East

Background

The Government report 'Water-based Sport and Recreation: The Facts, 2001' clearly shows that the demand for water-related sport and recreation in England and Wales outstrips supply. The report highlights the need for strategic planning at a regional level to identify both existing resources and new opportunities to cater for demand.

But, creating more recreational opportunities on rivers and coastal waters is full of challenges: Just how do we utilise new growth areas? How do we ensure access for all? How do we minimise the impact of increased participation on the environment? How will climate change alter our landscape and what will the knock on effects be for water related activities?

In order to answer such questions and put the environment firmly at the heart of all future plans to develop water-related sport and leisure, the Environment Agency, is heading a project to assess and shape provision for water-related sport and recreation needs in the South East. Called **Enjoying Water**, this strategic planning project is supported by a range of partners with expertise in sport and recreation, business, health, leisure, tourism and the natural environment.

What will the project do?

Brighton University are the project consultants working with an Agency project team and drawing on their experience of similar work in Wales, the South West and East of England.

The main areas of work are:

- *Auditing* existing water-related recreational facilities and use and understanding the current drivers.
- *Collating* Environment Agency plans and strategies and also data on river flows, water quality and rises in sea level. The plans and policies of other organisations will also be reviewed along with information on climate change and how this may impact on water related sport and recreation in the future.
- *Consulting* via workshops involving a wide range of interest groups, including sporting and governing bodies, health professionals, conservation agencies, landowners, grassroots organisations and local authorities. These will take place in January and March 2010 and will gather views on current and future provision for water-related sport and recreation.
- *Listening* to people: Anyone with a keen interest in watersports and leisure pursuits, ranging from boaters and paddlers to ramblers and anglers will be encouraged to have their say early next year by logging onto www.brighton.ac.uk/waterrecreation and commenting on the opinions expressed and issues identified at the workshops. We want to create a debate about the right way to improve access and participation and we want as many people as possible to take part.

Ultimately, the **Enjoying Water** work will help decision makers such as local authorities, planners and governing bodies take an informed view on sport and leisure development. It will help them for example, to assess how facilities built for the London Olympic and Paralympic Games can benefit the nation well beyond the closing ceremony and help funding bodies decide where money is needed most.

Get involved

To find out more about Enjoying Water or to get involved in the consultation process, visit the project website: www.brighton.ac.uk/waterrecreation

Contact us at EnjoyingWater@environment-agency.gov.uk

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