

Offshore wind farms are fish sanctuaries

FISHERIES minister Richard Benyon has said offshore wind farms are creating havens for fish.

The Conservative MP was responding to a written question from Labour MP Jim Cunningham last week asking whether artificial reefs could be created around wind farms.

Mr Benyon said: "Both ongoing monitoring at offshore wind farm sites (UK and overseas) and research studies have shown increases in fish numbers around the footprints of offshore wind farms."

"However, it is still unclear whether offshore wind farms simply attract fish from elsewhere or whether they have the potential to increase the number of fish within the population."

Country park plans for lake

PLANS have been submitted to make improvements to a series of angling hotspots located at a popular beauty spot.

Nottinghamshire's Newstead and Annesley Country Park has drawn fishermen from all over the county in recent years and a community-led project has now revealed the intention to begin essential maintenance to the banks and also introduce a series of plant life to marginal areas.

Local council officials will need to give the project the go-ahead before work can be undertaken, with a decision expected in the coming months.

New festival for Stafford

ONE of the nation's best commercial fisheries has revealed plans to host a brand new festival next year.

Devon's Stafford Moor attracts thousands of match anglers from all over the country, but officials have moved to boost their calendar of events with a veterans tournament for anglers aged 50 and above.

The competition will start on April 6 and run for five days, with a big pay-out for the winners at the end.

For more details visit www.staffordmoor.co.uk or call Andy on 01805 804360

ALL THE MATCH NEWS, DATES AND RESULTS START PAGE 85

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THE PAST 12 months have been very interesting to say the least. First, I quit my old job. Next, I set up a new business, back in the fishing tackle industry. I also established my own coaching school – and both, I'm pleased to report, have gone from strength to strength.

The year 2012 has been a good one for river fishing, which is what I love to do. Many rivers are fishing as well as, if not better, than they have for years, and contrary to what some people would have us believe, not everyone is fishing exclusively on commercials these days.

If you've not been on a river for a while, do yourself a favour and give them a go. There are loads of fish to be caught and sport can be much better on moving water than it is on lakes and pools at this time of year.

My personal coaching days on the River Wye have been extremely enjoyable, but it's fascinating how often I'm asked the same questions every time. Here are the six that came up most during the year.

SPEND TIME PLUMBING

Q How do you go about working out the depth on a venue you have never been to before?

A In my experience, most anglers don't spend anywhere near enough time plumbing the depth, yet it's one of the most important aspects of a river fishing session.

The easiest way is to fix a small but very buoyant float (I use a small balsa Speci Waggler) on to the line with two rubbers, top and bottom, and then tie a heavy plummet or bomb to the end of the mainline.

Next, cast the bomb or plummet well downstream and work it back upstream towards you. You will feel the weight hit the bottom and when it does, slacken off the tension. What you want to see is the float appearing above the surface for a second or two before disappearing as the flow takes it back under. Keep adding depth until you see it, then repeat at different distances out. After a few minutes you will build up a picture of the depth and contours of the riverbed. Now is the time to select the right float.

WHEN TO USE A BULK
Q Do you ever bulk shot together when you are stick float fishing?
A This is another question that comes up virtually every time. The answer is 99 per cent 'no' and the only time I ever do it is with my Shallow Water sticks when I'm fishing in depths of less than four feet for barbel and chub in fast boily water. Even then it's usually a strung-out shooting pattern but it's always worth trying with the shot all bulked together. I've caught very big fish like this using bunches of maggots.

CHANGE THAT DEPTH!

Q On your website you have a guide for selecting the correct size of stick float for a given depth, but once you've got the right size float on, what depth do you start at and how often do you change the depth?

A This question came up virtually every time I went floatfishing with someone over the past 12 months. Once I have plumbed the depth and settled on a distance out from the bank I make a note of the depth by holding the line against the rod and looking where the float comes to. The rig is then set to alter the depth. The distance, which should be close to the exact depth.

I start by running the rig through at this depth and change things around every three or four casts to start with. This usually means adding or taking off depth in six-inch stages until I can get the rig to run through correctly.

The nearest shot underneath the float is usually about two feet away, so I can move the float around to fish off the bottom without having to move shot.



No moving shot to alter the depth.
Bulk shooting is only done with these floats.



Regularly fill spools to the lip with new line.

LINE MUST BE PERFECT

Q How often do I need to change my line?

A A lot of people I have fished with this year just don't do it often enough! Monofilament line lasts a fair amount of time, but if you're fishing every week, especially in the summer months, I would recommend you change it every two or three months.

The other big concern for me after seeing a lot of anglers' reels is that the spools are filled nowhere near correctly. I always fill mine right up to the lip of the spool as casting and control is so much easier than with an underfilled spool.



Halibut hookers and groundbait are deadly.

FEEDER MUST HOLD BOTTOM

Q Is it important to make the feeder hold the bottom in fast flow?

A In my experience a lot of anglers just don't use anywhere near heavy enough feeders in fast-flowing rivers.

As a result the feeder often rolls round and only comes to rest when it's in a snag.

When you are fishing baits like pellets it is vital that the feeder stays put where you cast it, or you will end up with feed everywhere.

Accuracy is a key issue here as well, of course.

There are some very good feeders on the market now but the one main problem is the loadings, which often just aren't heavy enough. You can buy extra weights to fix to these feeders but the good news is that I'm currently developing a range of my own feeders that will have the loading already attached, so it will be a much easier process to select the correct weight.



Dave Harrell

BRITAIN'S BEST RIVER ANGLER TELLS ALL – ONLY IN **AnglingTimes**

MORE INFO
Dave Harrell is recognised as one of the country's best-ever river anglers and has devoted his life to learning different skills on running water. He has fished for England at World and European level and now owns his own tackle company, Dave Harrell Angling. For details of the product range go to: www.daveharrellangling.com He is also available for one-to-one and group coaching sessions on the River Wye throughout the river season. For more details contact Dave at: info@daveharrellangling.com You can also follow Dave's daily and weekly exploits on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/DaveHarrellAngling and on Twitter at: [@dave_harrell](https://twitter.com/dave_harrell)

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