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START AUDIO

Interviewer: If we could start with you introducing yourself and your role here at the fisheries.

Cliff: My name’s Cliff and I’m a wildlife fisheries ranger.

Interviewer: Could you talk to me a little bit about your history with the site and how long you’ve been here.

Cliff: I’ve been here, I’d imagine… Let’s think. Sixteen to eighteen years, maybe longer.

Interviewer: Always in the same role?

Cliff: No, what it was… I was, well, how can I put this without getting myself upset? I ended up losing my wife and I was left a single parent and I wanted to be a good role model for my son. What I decided to do… While he was at school, I had to be around as well because he had \_\_\_[0:0:55] so I had to be around for him and whatever else. I took up a role here and inquired about being a voluntary manager. I was a voluntary manager for six years and then when an opportunity came up for a position, for a full time role with Thames Water, I applied for it and I was lucky enough to be awarded the position.

Interviewer: Excellent. Can you talk to me about how the site has changed over that period, or if it’s changed over that period in terms of how it’s used?

Cliff: I don’t think it’s changed that much. At the moment, it’s going through a change because of the wetness project but I don’t actually think the place has changed or its use has changed over time. You can still get fishermen, you still get the wildlife people come in – bird watchers and nature lover type things. Other than that I don’t really think its usage has changed that much.

Interviewer: Okay. Can you talk to me a little bit about the majority of the people who use the site at the moment and why they come here.

Cliff: Fishermen come here obviously because this is one of the best places in the country to catch English carp. People come here for their lunch breaks, to get away from the stresses and strains of life. It’s sort of… I once described it as an oasis in the middle of a major metropolitan city so to speak.

Interviewer: What do you think, on that point, what do you think are the benefits? I know we’ve spoken a lot in the past when we were going round, you spoke very passionately about what this site brings for people. Could you talk to me about that now?

Cliff: I don’t know. A lot of our customers have been here since they were children so they are sort of passing on their knowledge to the youth. They are very passionate about it. Obviously they are a bit worried about the change but we have tried our best to reassure them that we are going to keep it much the same as always. People just love the place because it is an oasis in the middle of… It’s an escape.

Interviewer: If it opens up to a wider audience and local communities are encouraged to come in, what sort of benefits do you think they will get from this?

Cliff: Hopefully they will get the same sort of experience as everybody else does – a nice peaceful tranquil… An oasis, an escape from the everyday hustle and bustle.

Interviewer: Do you think that there is anything particular or anything special about this being a water-based site?

Cliff: In what sort of context do you mean?

Interviewer: Is there any particular quality to the experience, because it’s dominated by water that it affects…

Cliff: I think so because water can be anything… Especially in different cultures around the world. We get different cultures come here offering different things to the water. You get certain cultures that offer a small gift to their chosen gods as it were. They’ll put coconuts on the water and things like that.

Other people find it a very relaxing, almost to the point of meditation. If you’re sitting there staring at the water, all your troubles can be like a tight elastic band and can suddenly start unflowing. That’s just by looking at water. We do get a lot of people walking around doing that.

Interviewer: So it’s almost quite a spiritual experience.

Cliff: I think so, yes. But water has always been associated, especially flowing water, has always been associated with spiritualism.

Interviewer: Do you think that there is a hope that in opening it to a wider audience and that with more people experiencing it, that it might secure a more sustainable relationship with water?

Cliff: I don’t know. What do you mean by sustainable, between the customers or…?

Interviewer: In terms of people valuing it more, not wasting it, understanding...

Cliff: I hope so but again it depends on that person’s personal background.

Interviewer: If we could move on. We’ve spoken about the benefits of the site and the potential benefits that communities could get from it? Do you think there are any disadvantages in it being opened in the way that it’s going to be opened? Or risks perhaps?

Cliff: The only disadvantage or risk is maybe… The only concern I have is that it could become a victim of its own success.

Interviewer: Can you talk a bit more about that?

Cliff: What I mean about that is at the moment, it’s a very tranquil, peaceful sort of place. At different times of the year, people come over for different kinds of things at different times of the year but if you’ve got a vast majority of people here all the time then the whole set up of the place and the ambience of the place becomes slightly different. It goes from being a personal oasis to becoming a major focus point. That’s what I mean by a victim of its own success.

Interviewer: Are there any other risks in it opening up to a greater number of people?

Cliff: I don’t know. There may be more accidents possibly. [Interruption 0:7:10]

Interviewer: In terms of, they are the risks and they are the challenges, you spoke there about the first risk there about it being a victim of its own success. Talk to me a little bit about the identity of the place.

Cliff: As I said, it’s a very sort of… As I say, it has an oasis feel. It can become a very personal place to the individual. It can also become a place where friends meet and rest, recuperate and socialize in a natural setting.

Interviewer: Do you think the opening up of the site will affect the identity of the local area? How people perceive the local area? This part of London?

Cliff: I don’t know. It’s difficult to say really. I think a few people might be surprised that this actually exists here. A lot of people who have come here have mentioned to me that they’ve lived here for years and never knew this place existed. That’s the sort of thing.

Interviewer: So from their perspective, it’s an asset in their local community they didn’t even know they had.

Cliff: That’s right. They come here and they love it just the way it is really. They love the pathways and the wildness of it. Some of them have voiced concerns about it becoming just another park. It has its own identity here which separates it away from that.

Interviewer: Yes, it’s a very distinct space. It’s not a public park.

Cliff: No. It’s got its own identity, which separates it from anywhere else. I don’t think there’s anywhere else in London where you can actually come and be like this. It’s always been open to the public the way it is but with the way it’s being promoted now, is it a sign? Is it going to be a victim of its own success?

Interviewer: What sort of things do you think could be put in place to prevent that from happening? The way that people experience it.

Cliff: I don’t know. To become a victim of its own success, there would have to be loads of people here. The only way you could stop that is to have less people and leave it as it is. Things have got to change but I think it’s going to lose its unique identity.

Interviewer: Let’s talk a little bit now about this being a privately owned operational site. Do you think that affects the identity of it or how people will experience it?

Cliff: I think with it being a privately-owned space, people view it as, “That’s a company” sort of thing without realising that they can come in and see another side of the company. It’s just a shame that a lot of people don’t realise that this has been open for so long and now they can come in and see different side of it.

Interviewer: Why do you think that is?

Cliff: People just see signs, don’t they? It’s a faceless corporation. You need to get an inquisitive individual who comes in and then they’re pleasantly surprised and they bring their families and all that sort of stuff, it’s great.

Interviewer: What do you think, from a Thames Water perspective, what are the advantages for them of opening up this site?

Cliff: Well, they’re not just going to be another faceless corporation. They’re actually going to see their drinking water in action, their rangers in action, their staff in action I suppose and so many uses that the water goes to. It’s not only for drinking.

Interviewer: Is that an important message about understanding that you come here and people being able to see that this is where a lot of London’s drinking water comes from?

Cliff: Yes I think so because a lot of people don’t even know. They’ve got no idea. I’d imagine that the average person on the street, if you asked them where their drinking water came from, their answer would be, “Out of the tap.” They’ve got no idea of it falling from the sky, going into rivers, the source, being pumped up into reservoirs, going into a system of reservoirs to take the particles out and so on and so on. They’ve got no idea at all. Most people just think, “Turn on the tap and it’s there,” but one day, that’s going to get less.

Interviewer: What happens when it doesn’t come out of the tap?

Cliff: That’s it. That’s when…

Interviewer: Do you think they will be some of the messages that will be coming across in the interpretation boards and things like that here?

Cliff: I hope so. I thought, if there were little message boards around, how would you explain it? How I would explain it would be something like a board about that big, not posters, but cut at an angle like that and then you could have wildlife on there, the water source on there and information. As you walk around the site, you could have these little information bulletin boards on a post, done on a trunk I suppose, a nice wood setting. If you’re looking at where the egrets are, you could have information about egrets. If you’re looking at the kingfishers’ site, you could have information about kingfishers and tie that in with the water.

Interviewer: That’s important.

Cliff: And also you’d have to change the information on there as well.

Interviewer: You’re talking there about educating people. Do you think there is a real opportunity to educate people about what is here and why it’s here?

Cliff: Yes, about the water and the wildlife and that sort of stuff. We’ve got the fishing academy here which was, in my personal view, was really needed because… I’m not quite sure what happened but people my age, we all know how to fish, we all know how to camp, we all know everything there is to know about being outside but there seems to be a generation gap that I’ve noticed. It’s not that your children don’t know how to fish or know anything about wildlife but the parents didn’t either which is why I put it forward that we shouldn’t only teach children, we should teach the parents because it’s better for the family unit if the father teaches the son how to fish.

Interviewer: The academy and the reservoirs and the plans to open Watham Forest Wetland can bring that?

Cliff: Yes, it can. In the academy itself, we’ve got information up about where the water comes from and the fish and what species they are and all that. We probably need some more information about birds because it’s all tied in. it has to be an equal balance. The fishermen and the wildlife people rely on the water and the water relies on the people.

Interviewer: Because it is a man-controlled site.

Cliff: That’s right. It’s got to find its own equilibrium, so to speak. A balance between the water, the wildlife and the customers.

Interviewer: Do you think there are any barriers, Cliff, to people feeling like this is their space, a space for them to enjoy?

Cliff: Yes, we have that already. We have individuals come here… The only concerns I’ve really heard are from some of our female visitors. They are concerned about when it all opens up. They don’t think they are going to feel as safe as they feel now but all we can try to do is put those fears to rest. You can’t say nothing will happen because you don’t know whether it will or not.

Interviewer: That safety or security issue is around the increased volume of people or is it to do with the role of people?

Cliff: Volume of people and access, do you know what I mean? If there are more places to get in, there are more places to get out. But the majority… I’ve never heard any of our female customers say that they don’t feel safe here, ever. I’ve had them ask me, “Is it still going to be as safe?”

Interviewer: Why do you think they feel safe at the moment?

Cliff: There are only two points of entry and after a while, the regular female birdwatcher or even the elderly guys as well, they all get to know the other customers. It’s sort of like, the fishermen will tell the bird watchers and the nature lovers where they’ve seen this and they’ve seen that. The birdwatchers and the nature lovers will tell the fishermen, “We’ve see this and that over there.” It’s an exchange of information and it’s almost like a meeting of two tribes. Usually, if you met those two groups of people in the pub, they’d probably be not talking to each other. It does bring different views together. I think that’s the main thing.

Interviewer: That’s interesting, isn’t it? That’s a real positive.

Cliff: I get it as well when I drive around. There’s somebody there at the end of the day. They know that I will go and check. I will go and introduce myself. We’ve got a guy who comes over, he’s from Afghanistan but he just comes over and sits at the water and looks at it for hours. You do get some concerns of people saying, “Who’s that? What’s he doing?” But now they’ve got used to him, it’s okay. It’s a new face. Because some people are fishing and some people are birdwatching, they can’t understand meditation.

Interviewer: Just being here.

Cliff: I actually know why he’s here. I do. His wife doesn’t know he smokes.

Interviewer: It’s an escape. That’s brilliant.

Cliff: I said to him, “You do meditation, don’t you?” I said, “I didn’t think you were smoking.” He said, “I don’t.” I said, “Well I don’t and I can smell it.”

Interviewer: I think she probably does know.

Cliff: That’s what I thought. I thought, “She’s got to know if I can smell if.” He said no. He said he’s got a few kids as well.

Interviewer: That’s his escape. That’s his quiet time.

Cliff: That’s it, yes.

Interviewer: We spoke about the benefits. We spoke about some risks and challenges. We spoke about the importance of it being a water space and the benefits of it for the community – well-being and education. When it is open, do you think that people should have a sense of responsibility for the site? Do you think there is a sense of expectation?

Cliff: Yes there should be. Abide by the safety rules obviously and the wellbeing of themselves and everybody else. You’ll probably have to put round more information because people think, in the summer, a reservoir is the same as a lake. They’re two totally different features.

Interviewer: There’s that health and safety risk, the risk of a reservoir and it being a no swimming site.

Cliff: Yes because what it is, is in a lake, you get thermoclines. In a reservoir, you don’t get that. We’re not in a moving thing where it always moves, you can go swimming in a really deep lake in the summer and be absolutely fine but if you go swimming in a really deep reservoir in the summer, you’re going to clamp up from hypothermia and then you’re going to drown. Two totally different creatures. We may have to make people aware of that.

Interviewer: So the education is about this particular water?

Cliff: Yes. It doesn’t only apply here. It applies to any water, really. A lot of people don’t realise that you’re more likely to drown in fresh water than you are salt because you’re more buoyant in salt water than you are fresh. In my personal experience here, we’ve had automatic inlet and outlet pipes on the Lockwood and you can swim in water but you can’t swim across water but you can’t swim across bubbles. Luckily he was okay but annoyingly, people will get into an argument with us… My personal thing that I know that works is you say, “Mate, you’ve got to get out of there because you’re going to die.”

Interviewer: It poses a very real risk.

Cliff: You just have to tell them straight because otherwise you get into an argument with them and whatever else. I’ve tried all that and it doesn’t work. You’ve just got to tell them straight. “Mate you really have to get out of there because you are going to die.” They come out and they \_\_\_[0:21.44]. “Yeah, mate! Honestly.”

Interviewer: So that isn’t a common popular understanding of the risks of this sort of freshwater site.

Cliff: We have automated… We have the \_\_\_[0:22:01] fenced off but we do have automated pumps as well. On the Lockwood you have water in and water out.

Interviewer: And there’s a good chance that you could get pulled under?

Cliff: Yes. All you can do is put up more signage and make sure people are aware. At the end of the say, people are going to make their own choices no matter what you do.

Interviewer: Of course. We spoke about the motivations for Thames Water of opening this up, what about the motivations… It’s a really interesting and complex partnership of people who have come together to make it so. What is Waltham Forest’s motivations for this site being open?

Cliff: I don’t know. It will probably give more residents of Waltham Forest another free space I suppose. By free I don’t mean free financially I mean free space.

Interviewer: Open space.

Cliff: Freedom for the individual, friends and family.

Interviewer: And for London Wildlife Trust?

Cliff: I don’t know because they will be educate some more schools and people. They can encourage some more wildlife at different times.

Interviewer: Do you think the opening of this site plays a role in the wider regeneration of this part of London?

Cliff: Yes, I think so.

Interviewer: In what sort of way do you think it plays into the story of regeneration?

Cliff: Well just the story of change I suppose and evolution. Things have to evolve. If one part evolves, the other part has to move with it and keep pace.

Interviewer: You’ve already mentioned the swimming but do you think there are other things that people will want do on site that they won’t be allowed to that people often do in green spaces?

Cliff: Yes. Barbeques, getting drunk, going swimming.

Interviewer: So convincing people that that’s not okay here?

Cliff: It’s not a good idea. One because alcohol on a hot summers day and cold water does not mix. Barbeques and wildlife do not mix. It might be good for the fox for scraps but if a fire kicks in, that’s it.

It’s just educating people though, isn’t it? We do things differently from down in Cornwall, because I was a ranger there. The Cornish range and the range of Thames Water are two totally different things.

Interviewer: Talk to me about that a bit then. What’s the difference between the way you approach communicating with and educating people?

Cliff: On the moors, when I was a ranger there, your main role is to make sure that everyone who visits the waters is safe. You have to check on the individual and make sure that they’re all right. You can use a Land Rover but I preferred a motorbike over the Land Rover and over the motorbike, I preferred the horse. You go out for work in the morning but you only have a certain amount of range. I used to go out for days at a time and go further and further and further and work my way back. You come across an individual, you make sure you give them any information you can. You make sure they’re okay. You steer them away from bogs and stuff like that. You do check on the wildlife there and the sheep for poachers and things like that.

Interviewer: How does that vary from here?

Cliff: I don’t know if it’s just Thames Water but I think the city’s view on poaching is not taken very seriously I don’t think. In Cornwall, you can pick up the phone and say, “Poacher” and you’ve got everybody out. In London, you say that and they’re not very interested. That’s the difference.

Interviewer: That’s interesting, isn’t it?

Do you think, we spoke about the risks and we spoke about some of the things that fishermen are concerned about. Do you think there are likely to be any conflicts or any tensions with different users?

Cliff: There’s always conflict of interest. The ones that have been here for years, the generations of families who’ve been customers, they’ve seen how it’s always been so they’re going to be a bit frosty, shall we say, about change. Then you’re going to get the new visitors who aren’t going to appreciate this… As I say, it’s got to meet its own balance. There’s always conflict so it’s got to meet its own balance, whether it’s with the walkers or the wildlife lovers, bird watchers or the fishermen, the cyclists, the dogs. I can’t see how they can let dogs on site because the dangers are still there for the dogs.

Interviewer: I think it’ll be a no dog site.

Cliff: Because of the algae.

Cyclists – I think a lot of people are worried about, if we let cyclists through the site is cyclists damaging their equipment, cyclists injuring themselves and I think what a lot of us, a couple of the elderly ladies here have said they are worried about what they call, “speedy muggers.” Some of these old ladies, pardon the term, I don’t know how old they are, older, pensioners, not only females, but these are the ones that have said it to me. Some of them have binoculars and they have £500 around their necks.

Interviewer: Binoculars are a lot, aren’t they?

Cliff: A reasonable price is £500. They are a little bit concerned. But what we say as well is, “It hasn’t happened yet.”

Interviewer: Of course, the cyclists will be told to keep to that one cycle way so…

Cliff: Yes but that’s like saying, “Stay on the piste”, isn’t it?”

Interviewer: You’re quite right.

Cliff: As soon as you say to someone, “You can’t do that”, they want to do it. It you put a sign up and say, “You can’t do that,” they want to do it. It’s like if you put a big red sign up and a big red button and say, “Don’t press this,” someone’s going to go…

Interviewer: “What happens if I press it.”

Cliff: One of the ways that they hope to get around that is with the number of volunteers on the site. Could you talk about that? The growing number of people on the site.

Cliff: We if there’s going to be more visitors, we’re going to need more volunteers. It just depends what role the volunteers are going to have. It hasn’t exactly been communicated to us.

Interviewer: My understanding is that they will just be guiding people and telling people about the wildlife and if people aren’t doing the right thing, suggesting to them, “These are the rules.”

Cliff: That’s going to be interesting. That’s going to be very interesting.

Interviewer: Because traditionally, they would then need to call you guys if there were any problems?

Cliff: That’s right because people recognise the male authority.

Interviewer: Whereas users at the moment are very clear about your role and who you are.

Cliff: And what we can do. They know that ultimately, we can say, “Out.” We can give any amount of time we like. We can say a day, a week, a month, a year, to life, in extreme cases.

My main concern really is, “Are they training a volunteer to do my job.” That would be my main concern but that would be interesting as well.

Interviewer: I can see your concerns but I think their role is predominantly around communicating the wildlife.

Cliff: We’ve been told that they’re going to be trained in using the boat so that takes a job away from us.

Interviewer: What do you use the boat for at the moment?

Cliff: At the moment, it’s used for animal rescue and clearing the islands of debris. Thankfully, not yet, but for rescuing people, but thankfully that’s never happened.

Interviewer: So there needs to be clarity, doesn’t there, that that isn’t the case?

Cliff: Yes, there needs to be. Because I had a discussion, a heated discussion, about volunteers going in the boat in winter. The person that I was talking to said they were trying to get them a wetsuit. I was advising them that you can’t put anybody in a wetsuit in the winter. It just went on for ages and the more I said he couldn’t do it, the more irate he was getting. I said, “At the end of the day, if Thames can’t put an employee of theirs in the water in a wet suit, I don’t understand how you can put a volunteer.” He was missing the point. The term wet suit means, “You get wet.” You have to use a dry suit with an under suit. He backtracked but then he understood. I was trying to get through to him, “We have these rules and these rules are in place for our safety.” Thames Water supply us with dry suits and with an undergarment suit for all different weather conditions. The guy was really insistent that he was going to put his volunteers in the water, in the winter, in a wet suit. It was like, “This guy obviously doesn’t do diving.” I was thinking, “I’d like to take you ice diving with me, in a wet suit. I really would.”

Interviewer: So there is a risk there to the volunteers as well?

Cliff: Of course there is. I mean, it’s not just-

Interviewer: It’s not just he users.

Cliff: No but with the volunteers, it’s different because what volunteers are you going to get in? You wouldn’t get me in to volunteer in an office, because I wouldn’t know my elbow from my other elbow, shall we say? So if you get somebody from an office into my world… I can walk around the moors and walk around everything whereas someone from an office will probably end up up to their neck in mire. That’s the difference, it’s experience.

Interviewer: So that experience and that training is…

Cliff: Training is one thing. Training just teaches you how to do something in a specific way, it doesn’t teach you how to survive.

Interviewer: So volunteer management is going to be crucial?

Cliff: Yes, it is because you just see things. If you’re out in a boat and you hear a crack, you’re going to think, “What’s that?” You’re not going to think that the tree underneath is going to come down on top.

Interviewer: So it’s like you said, the knowledge of being outside, the skills, knowledge and experience of a ranger are very different to-

Cliff: Yes, you can train somebody to be a ranger but how good they are as a ranger is another kettle of fish.

Interviewer: Yes and I think the focus is around that they should be ambassadors for the site not just that they should be smiley, welcoming faces that guide them to different points.

Cliff: We ought to be their backup as you said. You could train me to be in an office but I would never be… I just couldn’t do it. You could train them to be a ranger but you couldn’t leave them outdoors for a week in the middle of nowhere and all they’ve got is their horse. It just isn’t going to happen.

Interviewer: I’m making sure that I’ve got everything.

One of my questions is around how people get involved in shaping the site? So it opens up, they hope it’s… If people have questions, if people have concerns or they want to be involved in shaping it, do you think there will be routes to, or opportunities for shaping it?

Cliff: I don’t see why not, why they shouldn’t be volunteer work pies. Get people hands-on, they love it. I have a whole host of skills that I can teach people. I can teach them, I don’t suppose you’d ever need it here but \_\_\_[0:36:12]. I can teach them how to do that and those will stand for hundreds of years, they do. And the bush lane as well, you know when you have a row of trees and you cut them so that you have a living wall. I can teach them how to do all that.

Interviewer: Do you think being taught on this site by rangers, by other experts as well, do you think that gives people a sense of ownership? Does it give them a sense of belonging in this space?

Cliff: Yes I think so. There is loads of stuff you can do here and I really don’t understand why they don’t. We have so many blackberry bushes, we could have, in the summer, jam making courses for instance. We have so much willow, you could have weaving with willow, you could make panel fencing, baskets, you could make eel traps. These are skills that I think a ranger should know. That’s what I’m saying, these are skills that are not taught in being a ranger. These are skills that I’ve grown up with. Because all the resources are here, you can do it here.

Interviewer: So there’s a wonderful opportunity for exchange between rangers and volunteers or rangers and users.

Cliff: That’s right.

Interviewer: It would be fabulous, wouldn’t it?

Cliff: Yes, I mean we have so many trout here. I do charity days in my big yurt. I’ve got an Arabian tent. We could do other things here. We could have barbeque days. Cook some fish up!

I did suggest something here once and it was really badly frowned on. It’s a multicultural major metropolitan city, we want to welcome all these people, and we’ve got trout fishing. I said, “Why don’t we do a carp one.” They said, “We’ve got carp fishing.” I said, “No, a carp to take to eat.” They nearly had a heart attack, especially the boss. What was his name… Mr [Aylard 0:37:17], he nearly had a heart attack. I was like, “Well you wanted ideas and if you get people here poaching them anyway.” Why don’t they just stock one place where people can pay their money to take that fish?

Interviewer: In the same way they did with trout fishing?

Cliff: Yes. That’s a form of racism. “You can eat this but you can’t eat that.” You’re not racist out there but you’re being racist in here. I’m not saying Thames Water is, I’m just saying fishermen’s attitudes.

Interviewer: That’s interesting because with the gentleman I was speaking to earlier, I was saying, “That’s interesting because we don’t, as a nation, eat carp. Why is that? Why is that? Because if people are poaching it, then someone’s eating it. Therefore, it’s obviously of interest and value to some people.” He was very resistant to that. He said, “If I go into fishmongers and I see carp, that’s not okay.” He said, “That’s my sport. That’s upsetting to me.” There are very different values about the fish.

Cliff: See I was brought up with Mrs Beeston and that teaches you how to cook everything, including dogs. It does honestly, from minnows, gudgeon, it teaches you cook everything including dog. It just depends where you are. If you’re hungry enough, you’ll eat anything.

Interviewer: It’s those different cultural values, expressing them and acknowledging them. Particularly, as you say, in such a diverse city.

Cliff: You’re right. At the end of the day, the reason why people eat these things is because they eat the fish that’s around them. We eat the fish we do because we have a choice. But if you’re in the middle of a landlocked country in the middle of nowhere and the only fish around you are going to be pike and carp-

Interviewer: Then that’s what you eat.

Cliff: Then that’s what you eat. In places like Canada and Alaska, there’s pike, carp, deer and bear and that’s it.

Interviewer: It’s about familiarity, isn’t it? And it’s about attachments and the different ways that we experience those things with different animals.

Cliff: That’s right. We can teach them about sport. I’ve talked to some of our customers from overseas, I taught them how to do it overseas. A lot of them use… Because they are catching fish for food, they use the same rigs, with half a dozen hooks on. You get half a dozen fish picking up one of them and they’re all fighting over each other. That’s fine if you’re going to eat them but if it’s for sport, you don’t.

You just educate them. They come back and they’ve bought all the latest gear and they’re proper… They put some of our carp fishermen to shame in terms of equipment. When you get talking to them, you say a big carp, plenty to eat, and they say, “No, no, no.” They’re only interested in eating-

Interviewer: The juveniles because they’re the tasty ones.

Cliff: We do the same. A lot of people do the same with sea fishing. If you catch a big old bass, you put it back. You’re like, “In you go, son.”

Interviewer: It’s true.

Cliff: It’s all about regeneration, isn’t it?

Interviewer: Having a sustainable relationship with it.

Cliff: That’s what it’s all about at the end of the day with people drinking water. It’s all about sustaining, do you know what I mean?

Interviewer: Talking about that. One of the questions that I haven’t asked, and I’m just checking at the questions, is that, is there a fear that different groups won’t benefit when it opens up and won’t feel comfortable?

Cliff: I think that ultimately they are going to be the people who aren’t comfortable with themselves and who they are, who knows? I mean, you’ve either got to be…

Interviewer: You mean in terms of being happy in nature or not happy in nature.

Cliff: And happy around other people and sharing… Different interests, conflicts of interest. You’ve got to understand. It doesn’t matter. If you can’t adjust yourself in any situation, you aren’t going to fit in anywhere, it doesn’t matter where you are.

Interviewer: And the growing number of people will affect that.

Cliff: Yes.

Interviewer: I guess my last question was around what is perhaps your happiest or most memorable moments here?

Cliff: One of my most memorable. Well one day, I was sitting in this office and it was closed season and all of a sudden, over the back there, I could see from here, all of the herrings flew up. I said to a colleague here at the time. I said, “Someone’s over there during closed season.” They said, “No he’s not, no he’s not.” I said to him, “Look, I’m telling you. Those herrings don’t all fly up at this time of day for no reason at all.” I said, “Somebody over there has just disturbing them probably over on the islands.” “No, it’s alright, it’s alright.” I said, “Come on then, we’ll go and have a look.” We drove round there and there was this young lady swimming in the lake. I said to her, “Look, please come out.” She got out and she was stark naked. She wasn’t embarrassed, she wasn’t ashamed. In our culture, you’ve got to cover up. She got out and she was trying to talk to me. It was very difficult. She was a very beautiful woman. Trying to talk to her and keep a straight face without smiling or going red or anything and pointing out the dangers.

Interviewer: So that was a very memorable experience.

Cliff: Yes, that was one that…

Interviewer: What would for you, a last comment I guess, would be what do you value the most about this space or this environment?

Cliff: I don’t know how to put it. It’s the escape really. Sometimes I can imagine that I’m back down on the moors. Some little peace somewhere. That’s it. \_\_\_[0:44:39]. This bit of England, my little bit here is Cornwall.

Interviewer: That’s lovely. Thank you so much for your time.

END AUDIO

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