**File: WWFFG8Feb2016.WMA  
Duration: 1:10:08  
Date: 22/03/2016  
Typist: 801**

START AUDIO

Interviewer: Shall we start by just going around the room. If you could just introduce yourself and your connection to the site. Your experience of the site. Your history of the site, I guess.

Male: My name is Del, Del [Byron 0:00:14], 76 years of age. I’m a fisherman and also an honorary bailiff of the Walthamstow reservoirs.

Male: Okay. My name is Dave Jarvis. I am also a fly fisherman on the site, a regular visitor and also the chairman of the Walthamstow Fly-Fishers club.

Male: I’m Raymond Taylor. I’m 50 years since 1952. I’m 77 and this is my main source of relaxation and pleasure, fly-fishing. I’ve worked in here for five years, bailiff. That’s about it really.

Interviewer: I’d like to start, then, to get into the interesting stuff, to talk about why you come here. What is your motivation for coming to this site?

Male: Relaxation. Good company. I suppose the surroundings.

Male: And catching fish occasionally.

Male: Occasionally (Laughter).

Interviewer: Do you want to expand on that?

Male: Yes. Basically the same. I’m still working but I get a lot of time off because of my work and the time off, I spend here. So basically, this is my second home. I have three or four days off a week, which generally, like last week, I had four days off, I had four days here. So it is my second home.  
  
I love the site. Obviously, why I’m here today, obviously I am agreeing with promoting the site and would like it to be looked after. Because as I say, I’ve been here since I was 12 years old, I’m 57 now and, you know, I’ve seen a lot of changes – sometimes not for the better – but we’d like to keep the site as I find it refreshing and relaxing and obviously, a break away from the norm of my work.  
  
Because I find it very important.

Male: Yes. Matches what David said, it’s a bit of a second home almost. Yes, I mean, it’s a wonderful area, so local, only East London. I’m surprised that it’s not – I don’t know, it will be – I’m surprised it’s not used a lot more.  
  
I’ve fished here since 1952. Now, I do mostly trout fishing but I’ve seen it develop. In fact, I stopped first carping here in about 1970 with a couple of the others that are working here. Yes, I just think it’s a wonderful environment so close to this side of London.  
  
I think we’re just a little bit frightened, a little bit jealous really. We don’t want other people here. It’s our little-

Male: It’s our second home.

Male: We would like to see it stay much the same. I think one of the worries. People generally don’t understand anglers. People look at anglers, like that old saying, you know “A worm on one end and a fool on the other” and they think just any piece of water – and I’ve had this before – you know, “Oh, it’s wet. That will do”.  
  
You know, it’s like in all activities, there’s’ people that do it just to get away from the missus. And there’s people to do it because it’s a total, absorbing interest, regardless of what it is. You know, whether people who are coming \_\_\_[0:04:32], been all over the world.  
  
People are totally absorbed at looking at birds, or whatever. And angling, if you’re going to do it properly, or seriously, it’s the same. It’s not just fish and the environment but it’s entomology, understanding the ways of the lake, how it’s affected by the wind and the weather and the temperature.  
  
We get this – and I’ve had it before – where they say “Oh, we’re shutting off that site” and we’re saying “Hold on, that’s perhaps our best bank. It’s the most consistent”. “Well, the rest of it’s wet. That’s as good as there”, “But it’s not like that”. People don’t understand, they think “Oh, why don’t we fish this instead of walking around to there”. But this is not what we do. It’s not what we want.

Interviewer: So what is special about here? What is- ?

Male: Well, first of all, I think what Ray said. It’s quite local.

Male: It’s unique.

Male: Yes, it is unique. What I say, it is unique, and it’s quite local. When Wetlands first discovered this, they said it was a jewel in the crown. But it’s been our jewel in the crown for like [Crosstalk 0:06:03]

Male: 50, 60 years.

Male: Exactly. And they’ve just discovered it. Well we discovered it 40, 50 years ago. Yes. Basically, as Ray is saying, we don’t feel approached on. I feel that the site needed some sort of-

Male: Engagement.

Male: Improvement.

Male: And obviously funding. Because that’s what’s happened now. We’re all fishermen, so on a fisherman point of view with that, I think, comes along worries about how will it affect us. So that would be, I think, all of our general concern, how will affect our fishing.  
  
How will it affect our freedom as well? Because like Ray says, it’s absorbing, \_\_\_[0:07:05] wants to break away from the norm of people who are working, people who are retired and it’s a relaxing – I wouldn’t call it a sport, people call it a sport – it’s more of an outlet I would say.

Male: If you’re serious, it’s a dedication in a way.

Male: As I say, with that, I think the main concern with opening this up, as you say, will be how will it affect not only us but the environment, you know, the environment of the site, because, as I say, we’ve all seen environmental effects of the site over the last 40, 50 years, especially with the cormorants.  
  
You must appreciate that opening up the site to more people will affect, to some effect, the wildlife, which will be the birds, the wild [fell 0:08:13] that are on the site at the moment, you know.  
  
And also, as I say, from a fly-fishing point of view and obviously with the coarse fishermen, how will that affect their privacy? Because don’t forget, we’ve been on the site, we’re probably the oldest residents amongst the fish.   
  
But yes, I would say, point this at the general as how will this affect our freedom and what we’ve had for – I don’t know now – since the early ‘50s. Probably late ‘40s this was opened up to the fishermen wasn’t it?

Male: Well. Yes.

Male: ‘50s?

Male: About ’58.

Male: [Crosstalk 0:08:58] Well, in the early days, to get a day’s fishing on here was really, really difficult.

Male: [Crosstalk] spaces.

Male: That’s right.

Male: I mean a season ticket in those days was a guinea. You’re too young to know what that was. But a day ticket, you had to go through the water board, Rosebery Avenue and that used to cost a shilling a day – which in those days was quite a bit of money – but the chances, and I can remember, in what was the closed season in those days, March, June, you’d write off to Rosebery Avenue requesting a day and “Wow, that was it, we’ve got a day in Walthamstow in October”, you know?  
  
And it was really, it was very, very strict. Season tickets were an impossibility and then I think by the ‘60s you could get a ticket on the gate. Then it sort of opened up and by the ‘70s this was like a thousand people a day in here, could be quite a possibility.

Interviewer: Why was it attracting so many people? Why is it [Crosstalk 0:10:15].

Male: Because it was so good. It was exactly that. It was special. It was special.

Male: [Crosstalk].

Male: The quality, the quality of fish. See, and this is always, always – I’ve been to thousands of meetings over the years, I’ve been in dozens and dozens – people, unless they fish and fish properly, do not understand what angling, serious angling is.  
  
It’s like people say “I’ve done bird-watching”. What? You walk out in the rain just to look at some scruffy old sparrow? Why? And people say “I go hill walking”. What? You go up on Yorkshire Moors in the wind and the rain and the snow? What on earth do you want to do that for?   
  
Unless it’s your thing and that’s what you do, people don’t understand and the attitude is “Oh, look at them”, you know “Don’t want to go out”. And they do it here on the television like “Oh we go fishing and get away from the missus”. You know, you hear that on fishing programmes.

Male: The thing is, Ray, this is my main concern with this place is \_\_\_[0:11:35]. The faces of people who come on to the site, how they take care of the fish.

Male: No.

Male: The site, in general. That could be a major concern with the amount of buildings that are going up around this area, and we know from years ago how this was poached.

Male: Yes.

Male: And the extra gates are going here, there and everywhere. Everybody and their brother can be walking in here and it’s not going to be policed as us three would like it. Because we’ve all done it, we’ve all come back at night and roamed around done whatever. But that’s my main concern.

Male: Which is all to do with actually, you know, what I said, with the site getting spoiled or in general, what they’re saying about gates opening up, more people coming in. How will it affect- because don’t forget, it will affect the-  
  
Wetlands are trying to save the environment, which all three of us are 100% percent in agreement with. But with that, what they’re doing could come back to bite them.

Male: It can become over-exploited and I think, perhaps at first, there will be a lot of, you know, people just coming in to see what it’s all about. I think people don’t appreciate the environment as much as perhaps us older ones do.  
  
Well I’ve bailiffed it a lot of years, haven’t it? I’m in since the ‘60s and…

Interviewer: What’s your motivation for doing that? You’ve both bailiffed and why was that an important job for you?

Male: So to keep the environment and-

Male: We love this site. We love the site.

Male: Looking after it.

Male: We love the freedom of the site. Walking around. Even if you’re not fishing, walking around, the wildlife, yes? It’s just second nature to us, it’s in our hearts to look after this place.

Male: It’s also we’ve passed on our experience. New youngsters in here, new people coming in here, people who wanted to know what it was about and what the fishing was about, where and how to fish it. That was in our experience and passed that on.  
  
Also, you know, like anywhere, keeping an eye on the place. See that people weren’t misbehaving, leaving rubbish. We used to clear up enough of that. And you know, say to people “It’s just not on. We’re not having you misbehaving. We’re not having you lighting fires over here. We’re not having you leaving rubbish. If you want to do that, go home”.  
  
I’ve said endless times to people, you know “Do you throw that rubbish down in your living room when you’re finished?” “No”, “Well why do you do it here? Take it home”.

Interviewer: Who do you think might be doing that sort of role going forward?

Male: It could be that man there. The man who knows for a long, long time. I’m just using that as an example. But it can be somebody you’ve known for years.  
  
[Crosstalk 0:15:12] we’ve seen it. As a bailiff, I’ve gone around and I haven’t got power to say “You’re barred” but I can take it back to the rangers, in particular, in my experience, mainly \_\_\_. Go back to \_\_\_, “Look, I’ve spoken to him once before, this is now the second time. What can we do?”  
  
I can’t virtually say “I want him barred” but if I could have that right, I would bar him on the spot.

Male: I’ve said that a few times.

Interviewer: Will you continue doing this job?

Male: Most certainly.

Interviewer: Yes? And are new people through to bailiff?

Male: No.

Male: No.

Male: There’s going to be another question tomorrow night.

Interviewer: Okay. Why is that? Why do you think that people aren’t coming [Crosstalk 0:16:03].

Male: There’s a little bit of a separation. So you’ve got a few \_\_\_, you’ve got coarse-fishing, which is carp fishing, generally with bait and then you’ve got fly-fishing. So fly-fishing is trout, we just fish for trout here on a fly-line. With coarse-fishing, it’s done with bait, bottom fishing etc.   
  
So it is a completely different type of fishing.

Male: Separate entities isn’t it?

Male: They are separate entities. We’re all in the same boat, but they are separate types. So when we say this, not on the carp-fishing side, we’ve got Derek, is an honorary bailiff. We’ve got no honorary bailiffs on the fly-fishing side.

Male: I’ve tried, but they-

Male: We know, we know. But obviously that’s nothing to do with you but this is all to do with protecting the environment, the site, the fishing and, not to make it, but to keep it a pleasant place. And as you say, when you asked about “Oh, how do you feel about opening up the site?” this is exactly what we’re saying.   
  
We feel that there could be infiltrations from the general public that don’t appreciate the site. Then it becomes a problem.

Male: Can I explain what honorary bailiffs are?

Interviewer: Yes. That would be brilliant.

Male: Right. Well an honorary bailiff is not affiliated with Walthamstow Reservoirs as such. The only reason or Thames Water. I am a fisherman first and foremost.  
  
Over a period of time, I got asked if I wanted to be a bailiff, an honorary bailiff. I do it of my own volition, seven days a week. I \_\_\_[0:18:09] a lot, my wife is \_\_\_ hospital, but I was here seven days a week doing it of my own volition, voluntarily.  
  
And it’s very difficult. I would think on the fly-fishing side, like Ray used to do it, you do it as a fisherman in a different \_\_\_, but as the secretary of the site, as a fisherman of the site, they do it, but I do it officially, unofficially. Does that make sense?  
  
I do it free of charge, I don’t get paid. Because we all, three of us, are the same of mind, we want to maintain what we’ve got here and we’re \_\_\_[0:18:50]. So my 50 years that I’ve been coming here.

Interviewer: What I’m trying to understand behind that is why aren’t there new bailiffs coming through? Why aren’t they interested?

Male: Different attitude to fishing. From a fly-fishing side-

Male: I think you’ll probably have to ask Thames Water that, really. I think you’re going to have to ask Thames Water that. That’s something that we can’t answer, something that I’m pushing through, something that I want to speak to Thames Water tomorrow night during the meeting.  
  
So it will come up again because I’m quite concerned because I’m over here quite a lot fishing. I see a lot. I’m not saying that the other bailiffs don’t see it. They won’t see it, they can’t be on each other’s thing all the time.  
  
I do see things and I feel that, being more bailiffs on site, it would promote and keep the environment as it is and that’s why. We’re not talking about vigilantes. We’re talking about just to keep it.  
  
Obviously we don’t want to go to people and in this day and age, it is a risk. And it’s a risk for Derek and he knows that. Especially if you go up to someone that’s quite volatile – and we’ve had it recently. It could be a problem.  
  
But yes, with the Wetlands, we understand there’s going to be volunteers, but they must appreciate of what the site needs. What it needs to be protected, you know. And as well, not just people coming on site and causing damage or it’s affecting, or poaching or not paying their way.  
  
But also, the site as a whole when the site is closed. Because we’re talking about stealing fish which is a lot of money. Carp that have grown on the site which are worth thousands of pounds.

Male: Another way would be, is that these so-called volunteers, a lot of them, from what I can make out are non-fishermen. How do they understand if they went on to the fly-fishing side of the reservoir, would they understand that, that man there is doing something wrong?

Male: Exactly that.

Male: If he comes on my side, would he know that there is something wrong?

Interviewer: Okay. So there needs to be some education there?

Male: Yes.

Male: Yes, most definitely.

Male: [Crosstalk 0:21:36] got understanding of both sides of this fishery.

Male: See, when you look back far enough, we’re old enough, we’ve done an apprenticeship. We’ve grown up with this. If you look back long enough, angling was a bigger sport than it is now.  
  
Over here there used to be thousands of- the fishing has changed over here, but if you looked back and went back, say, to the ‘60s or even in the ‘70s, birdwatchers were a strange breed. Blokes walking around with binoculars, you know “There’s something weird about these people” and that’s been accepted now.  
  
But so many now, the youngsters, they’re not brought in at an early age and they’re not taught. People don’t have that sense same sense of care.

Male: Well, we were brought up on the [Crosstalk 0:22:42].

Male: I mean, you know, if I sort of- really it would be silly. We look on these reservoirs, they’re ours. They’re not Thames’, they’re ours. This place is mine, you know.  
  
And I don’t want other people here, in a way.

Male: With that, what Ray said, is why we’re sitting in the building now. Because we, as a club, start fly-fishing for younger people. So to start fishing on site. Then Thames Water promoted this quite a lot, then they said “Yes, we agree with it” and then the community needs an academy which was this, it’s built for youngsters to take it up.  
  
Also, what Ray’s saying, it’s to start them off on an early age. But I don’t know. To a certain extent, I don’t think it’s got to the stage where I think Thames Water and other people on the site has got what it wants to. Because I don’t think – as Ray said – the young people are not taking it up.

Interviewer: So you’re not getting the number?

Male: No. To take – like birdwatching – you see a lot of elderly walking around. You won’t see youngsters of 17, 18 or 19 that go fishing. You see a lot of youngsters today fishing, but a lot of birdwatchers don’t, but we want to bring that onto the site because basically, they are the next generation.

Male: You’re right. To do fishing on this site, you’ve got to have the right equipment.

Male: That’s right.

Male: And the equipment isn’t cheap. So that’s a barrier for a start.

Male: That’s right.

Male: Some of us sort of go and have a pint and something up there knows, rather than spend £200 on a fishing reel, on a rod. Yes? This is why, I think we haven’t got the youngsters coming through.

Male: It was cheap years ago.

Male: This here, is for the academy.

Male: This is relatively cheap.

Male: But I can no longer use that equipment to teach any of the young boys, yes? You’ve got to have a [police chain 0:25:14]. Not that I’ve done anything wrong \_\_\_ the past, but, then you’ve got to go one, two, three types of schooling to get there.  
  
We’ve been brought up with that. So I think it’s a downfall, but on top of it now, we’ve got professional people coming in to do this. This is on the coarse side, not the fly. But they also have tutors on your side but it’s not a cheap hobby.  
  
And I think that is off-putting for a lot of youngsters. Unless you get – sorry if I went past there – unless you get people like me, I’ve just spent a few quid on another \_\_\_[0:26:00]. So I did the last lot away. Unless people get a lot of stuff handed down, they can’t all of a sudden come up with 5, 6, £800 to do fishing.

Male: I’ll tell you what the change is. The changes in the methods and style of fishing. Go back in my younger days, you could go to almost any lake, any river. There were lots of small, silver fish, lots of perch, lots of roach, bleak \_\_\_[0:26:37] the Lea.  
  
It was easy, it was comparatively cheap, although fish and tackling that day weren’t as cheap as they are now. But everybody now, especially in these parts of the country where they don’t have fishing clubs like they used to, everything is promoted for carp.  
  
And when you look around, you go in a shop and they go “Oh yes, you need this and this and this” and then they start talking £2,000, plus the fact that even if they go in to that, the so-called modern angler has been so indoctrinated into 500 weight of gear to go fishing for a day – which is a load of rubbish – they can’t travel.  
  
So unless they’ve got a parent of somebody that’s going to deliver them down to this site, leave them here for the day – which can’t be youngsters anyway, under 15 have to be parented – they’re not going to come here. We haven’t got the river anymore so they can’t come down and sit here and learn this.  
  
Now once the people that have been using this tackle in this pond. If they want to take that type of fishing up further, it’s not here. Because you can’t go out on to the reservoirs. There are virtually no silver fish and very few smaller fish. The perch are not here, the roach are not here the bream are not here. Not in that sense.  
  
Yes big specimen ones, not roach or perch, but there are big, big bream. But it’s a specialised game. Youngsters get bored easy. They see a fish, they want to catch fish, they want to do something. And that is not on this site.  
  
Now you’re talking going to a commercial fishery. Most of those are carp. But again, a lot of them are no accessible. You can’t get on the train and just go up the Lea – that doesn’t work anymore – the Lea is not like that anymore.  
  
So it comes down to if the parents are not interested, the kids can’t go. You go onto a site, it’s going to cost them £10-12 a time to fish. Now if they’re going on to what I call zombie fishing, the carp fishing, they’re all indoctrinated into “Boilies for bait” all this expense and I don’t know, £10 for a packet of boilies.  
  
It becomes a very expensive day out and I think the expense is killing a lot of it for youngsters. If they don’t go somewhere and catch fish in their first few visits, they give up. They chuck it.

Interviewer: They’re not going to be [Crosstalk 0:29:48].

Male: Another thing we’re overlooking, Ray, as well, I don’t know, I think. In our days, we were all brought up fishing the River Lea. Now today, the fish in the River Lea are non-existent. People that are fishing the River Lea now, it’s not safe for a youngster to go down there and fish.

Male: They get mugged.

Male: They get mugged, they lose their gear and they get into serious trouble. So that’s enough of an off-put. You see, where, as I say when we were kids, my old man used to leave me down there at 10 o’clock.   
  
I was ten years of age, my old man used to leave there at night and come pick me up in the morning, yes? But you can’t do that now. I mean even I will not fish- I know there’s a lovely place on the Lea where there’s some nice fish. I will not go down [Crosstalk 0:30:48]. It’s not safe.

Interviewer: Can I ask you, you captured some real serious barriers to people coming in to fishing there and coming on to the site. I’d like – because you value the site so much – to get your thoughts on what you think other people will benefit from the site being- the extending of the opening. What do you think people will get from it? What are the benefits for other people?

Male: Nothing.

Male: Nothing.

Male: Nothing at all ma’am. I’m sorry.

Interviewer: Why?

Male: Put it this way. Put it on the other end. Nowadays, you’ve got youngsters that are playing their iPads, you’ve got PlayStations and you’ve got Xbox. If you want to take young children out and learn, you take them to the park.  
  
I’ve got grand-children, if I take them out, I take them to farms, and take them to swings. I would not bring them here. They can see the wildlife, they can see ducks and whatever they want to see, I feel that that’s quite important, they can see that in a park.  
  
So why would a person – and as well, this is very important, very important – why would a person, which this is what’s coming up, pay £5 in the car park to bring their children onto an open site to see just water and a few wild fell when they can drive down to a local park, park outside, they’ve got all the meters, we’re going to have a cafeteria here, but they’ve got a cafeteria, they’ve got shelter and they’ve got swings, yes?  
  
I’m not saying bring swings on the site because that’s a complete no-no. But that is the comparison. So when they’re promoting the site, which this is a big question that hasn’t been asked yet, is that the parking, they’re going to be charging for parking on the site, which they are saying is going to be approximately £5 a day.  
  
We’re not knowing yet. We don’t know if they’re going to change that or not, I don’t know. So why would someone from the outside, come on to the site, pay £5 a day to come around and walk around to see a couple of wild fell, the reed beds and that.  
  
Because don’t forget. This is not going to be instant. These [reeds 0:33:05] that \_\_\_ people in, it’s going to take a long, long time for the wildlife to settle, to know that they’ve got some sort of establishment here. That doesn’t come overnight.  
  
so the fact remains, that would be the first milestone and that is a very important milestone that I’d like to bring up because they are trying to open it to the public and obviously for fishermen, like we’ve just explained, not so much on the fly-side but on the coarse-side, especially fishing on this site, the money that you’ve got to put up to actually buy equipment.   
  
And secondly, as a general public, to come on to the site and be charged £5 in the car park to walk around. So if it was you, and you went to, say, to see \_\_\_[0:33:50], “Well you’re going to have to pay £5 to park your car on the car park”. You can’t park anywhere else. You can’t park on this side.  
  
Then, if people start doing that – parking over the roads, parking on your likes like Ray said before – you’ve got other problems. Then you’ll get residents and you’ll get the local authorities saying “You can’t do this, you can’t do that”.  
  
So that is a very, very big milestone, to charge people to come onto the site, which they’re trying to open up, they’re trying to promote it, but then again, what they’re doing by trying to promote the site, promote people coming onto the site, they’re actually [chairing 0:34:28] it the other way by charging people to park in the car park.

Male: And also, [Crosstalk] say this one thing. The more people that come here, the less they are going to see because what is here is going to go anyway. It will disappear. Because there will be too much disturbance going on.  
  
Whereas a fisherman will sit there for hours on end, he might walk up and say hello, but they sit there and concentrate on their fishing. Then you’ve got kids, people running about. The wildlife, the birds and whatever, the foxes, the squirrels, everything. They’re going to go.

Male: They always seem – and it always happens – they seem to get this idea that places need hundreds of people to come in and walk around. But what you do, you degrade the environment in noise, people.  
  
It’s something like, you could say “Oh, well I can’t see the birds for the trees”, “Oh, we can solve that. We’ll cut down the trees”. You know, it has that effect. You come here.  
  
See, this site has been open to the public for, supposedly a pound. For free. And not that many people, they don’t flock in here. It’s for the serious. You get birds here, you get divers and stuff that come in here in the winter.  
  
So a lot of people come down especially just to see that. You get groups of birdwatchers that this is one of their sites. So they tick and list the birds on these sites that they come down. But it’s not flocked out by the general public wanting to walk around.

Interviewer: Why do you think that is?

Male: Sorry?

Interviewer: Why do you think that is?

Male: Well, because it’s mono-cultured. I know you’re trying to put it more reed-beds. But you’re not going to get thousands of bitterns flocking in here, it’s just not going to happen.  
  
You know, Lee Valley Park have been trying that for 20 years. You get them there in the winter. We get the old bittern turns up here in the winter.

Male: And \_\_\_[0:36:48] are non-existent.

Male: Yes. You know, it is not a wetlands. It’s mono-cultured reservoirs. They are just mono-cultured- I know you’re putting mud-banks with reeds, but you haven’t got shingled banks, you haven’t got marshland, you haven’t got- the environment isn’t going to change a tiny bit in two and three and a little bit in the end at one.  
  
But if you look, they’re putting reeds at the end of number one, which is the most public spot on the whole reservoir, because everybody that comes in there, is going to pass the end of that piece. I mean you’re not going to have bitterns walking around there when there’s 50 people wandering past there all day long.  
  
So you’re not really changing the environment, generally, I think. When it first happens, I think, possibly, people go “Let’s go down and see”.  
  
I mean, I talk to people in Walthamstow. “Reservoirs? What reservoirs?” “Haven’t you ever been- ?” “No”. “Well, why not?” “I don’t know it’s there”. And then I talk to nearly everybody.

Male: [Crosstalk 0:38:08] people saying they didn’t know this was a bird sanctuary and in this [Crosstalk].

Male: [Crosstalk] But I talked to a lot of people who come in and walk around and I say to them “What do you think of the site?” “Oh yes, it’s lovely, it’s quiet” and I said “Well, that’s going to spoil it, isn’t it? The quietness. If you’ve got lots of people”. Maybe, but I think that will fade off, but that won’t last.  
  
People come up “Yes, it’s nice. I’ve seen it. It’s not that nice. I wouldn’t come in here as a regular thing just to walk around”.

Interviewer: Can I ask about it being – you said it’s not a wetlands – but can I ask about it? Is there anything particular or special for you about this being water site? About it being such a major feature of this landscape?

Male: Well I was going to say fishing, it’s our getaway, it’s our quietness, it’s out-

Male: What you were saying before, it’s as, to the fishermen, generally they’re the general occupants of the site really. At the moment, I know or Ray knows a few more, I know of four birdwatchers that come on site, probably regularly, twice a week, but they’re four and I’ve been here, Ray’s been here a lot longer than I have but that’s it. And you haven’t got a flock of people coming in here.  
  
Obviously when it’s promoted more, it will be advertised more, maybe you will, but I feel, I do feel, what is there going to be here for them to see? Because basically, what, as well, Derek said, is that they’re going against the grain.  
  
These wetlands – so-called wetlands – it’s not a wetlands, it’s cultured and you can’t just bring this wildlife overnight, you know.

Interviewer: But can I ask about it being, for you, as fishermen, what it means-

Male: It’s an oasis in London. It’s an oasis for us. Where on earth-

Male: There’s not a site and we’re in London.

Male: We haven’t got a site-

Male: There’s not a site like this in London.

Male: There is no-

Male: I would say there’s not a site like this in probably… If you say a city, I would say in, probably, southern England, if not the UK. I haven’t seen one. You do get other reservoirs, but they’re not, generally, near main cities.   
  
Well, we’re still within London. We’re nowhere on the borders, but we’re still in London and there’s not a site like this for fishermen to come along. It takes me quarter of an hour in the car, it takes Ray quarter of an hour, it takes Derek – he lives locally-  
  
There’s not a site like this and you’ve got reservoirs – large reservoirs – all over the UK but they are basically, generally, right out in the countryside that are not near major cities.

Interviewer: Does it change your relationship with water? Being in and around water?

Male: Most certainly.

Male: Of course it does.

Male: Most certainly.

Male: It’s relaxing. It’s calming. I mean, I’ve got a few problems at the moment but I can come down here and I can escape from-

Male: It is an escape generally.

Male: And alright, I know when I sort of pack up or I do whatever I’m doing and go back, anything else, I’ll drive out of here.

Male: Back in the [Crosstalk 0:41:38].

Male: But while I’m here, I’m focused on this. Yes? I think as well, that’s for a lot- well, say it is for me as well, it is a great relaxation, it’s a break away. When you said though, that it’s an escape, it is. It’s an escape.  
  
Because you can be something \_\_\_[0:42:00] and you come over here and it’s gone. And that’s what fishing is. And as I say, it’s quite an important site as I say, because there are not many sites like this that are open to fishermen and the variety of fishing they’ve got here, it used to be a lot, lot better.  
  
\_\_\_ to the fishing they’ve got here, and basically you’re on London’s doorstep basically. I think Wetlands has promoted that they’ve actually said those words, you know “It’s an oasis on your doorstep” and that’s what it is.

Interviewer: And Ray, you were going to talk to me about what Del was saying there about how it affects your relationship with water, being in this space?

Male: Well, I don’t know I think we have a love / hate relationship. I mean some people like being around water and water is – what’s the word, not addictive – it’s like people who want to go down and watch the tide come in and sit there and listen to the waves. And it has that effect.  
  
It is a great getaway really, I suppose, if you put it that way. But here, the importance of this place, is like Dave said, it’s where it is, it’s what it is.  
  
I mean, to be honest, if this – I know we’re coming back to this and it may never… Alright, I’m slightly [invalid 0:43:26] but if they were going to charge for £5 to come in, and [Marlon] I know he’s saying it’s not going to be quite up there, I would have to stop.  
  
Because two things. One is that I wouldn’t afford the fee-

Male: Well, you will have a disability thing anyway so you would probably [Crosstalk 0:43:51].

Male: Well, I don’t know, I can’t get a blue badge. But the other thing is that-

Male: Well it wouldn’t stop there though, will it?

Male: No.

Male: It wouldn’t stop that way.

Male: Well it would,

Male: Well they’re supposedly going to charge for people to come here. If you’re a family man and you’ve got kids, alright, you come here, you pay your £5. Now if they open up that restaurant and terrace around here, they’re going to go in there, the kids are going to want an orange drink, they want a bun, they want this, they want that.

Male: It’s not the fiver is it?

Male: No, that’s £10-£15 already started.

Male: That’s the same everywhere.

Male: People with families, young people with families, haven’t got that sort of money spare, to walk around for them to see nothing. And that’s my honest opinion. Once they’ve been here, “Thank you very much”.

Male: That will be it. It will be a one-off. Which basically \_\_\_[0:44:46] I don’t want it to be because I want to see this site promoted and be up kept and nice. But we probably feel it’s going to be a white elephant.  
  
But that would be up to the people that are funding this. I know this is lottery funded as well, but the actual societies that are running this, to see that it doesn’t go that way. But like the points I’ve mentioned, I’m just comparing where, you know, if you want to take your kids or your grand-children, you would take them somewhere there’d be a lot of interest for them and not dangerous either.  
  
Don’t forget this site, although it’s a beautiful site, it also can be treacherous. You know, it’s treacherous. There’s steep banks, it’s not environmentally friendly for young children, which there’s going to be areas I know that are going to be sealed off and when they do eventually bring – I think it’s going be class-children, schools – but it will mainly be around the pump house.

Male: \_\_\_[0:45:59]? \_\_\_ next to the pump house, that’s dangerous. The other thing, Thames do have a restriction, no child under eight on-site.  
  
Now anybody with youngsters or push-chairs, that means they can’t come on site and I don’t think it’s safe for them and according to Thames regulation as it stands, I think it’s 15. 16 and under 16 you have to be accompanied. So they can’t come on site either. So it’s not promotional-  
  
Secondly, Dave said he would like to see it promoted to keep it going. Personally, I would like not to see it promoted. If it means that to keep it going, so be it.

Interviewer: That bring us on to the fact that it’s privately owned private space. Does that affect how people experience- ?

Male: Thames Water have done virtually nothing for this site.

Male: No.

Male: Over all the years that I’ve – sorry – we’ve been here. Now are they passing the buck here by handing this work over to the National Trust hoping they maintain this, do this and whatever?  
  
I just say – and as I’ve said earlier – I don’t think it’s going to happen, I think it’s going to be a white elephant. It’s like everything else \_\_\_[0:47:24] these people come over.   
  
You know they’re talking about putting flower-beds along the road here to make this place more attractive. You know [Longley], there’s no road here, altering the boundaries of the reservoirs, altering the boundaries of it so they can put the flowerbed pots things in, to make it look-

Male: What? Moving the fencing?

Male: Yes. But why?

Male: See I think that-

Interviewer: Is there an issue? I mean, Del was saying there that you feel that, you know, as a privately owned space, you explained there, your thoughts about what it means, how that will affect people’s experience of it.  
  
So it is a privately owned site, it’s not like a traditional public park that you’re talking about there, so how does that affect how people are going to experience this?

Male: I don’t really think-

Male: There will be, wouldn’t there?

Male: No.

Male: When they open it up, it will be. It will be open to the public and it will be like a public park. So people will then draw comparisons, yes? They will compare their comparisons.  
  
And although the three of us – I love nature, I have been brought up with nature – I personally wouldn’t bring my children or my grand-children here to learn about wildlife or anything else, because basically, I can take them somewhere elsewhere to a swings or to a farm where they’ll learn it as quick.  
  
This is an open space. Yes, you’ve got wildlife here, but you need to keep youngsters – I’m talking about as well, not just young children, we’re talking about teenagers as well – you need to keep them occupied and keep them interested. There’s not going to be that much here for them to infiltrate that interest.  
  
You can’t bring wildlife on here and keep them here. It’s not a zoo. It’s not a zoo.

Male: This is – I believe – this has been a working site and still is a working site. The health and safety aspect of it is going to go right out of the window.

Male: Yes. This will happen-

Male: There’s lorries coming through. There’s diggers coming through. There’s God know how much [Crosstalk 0:49:42].

Male: When it’s open to the public, I don’t know how-

Male: Well the traffic is supposed to be stopping through this road. Only work vehicles. But how are they going to go about that when there’s public on site, I don’t know.

Interviewer: That is a challenge. Can I take you on to now- all three of you are very involved in this site. So you’ve had ways to be involved, you’ve had roots to be involved, either through chair of the fly-fishing local group, through being a bailiff.   
  
What ways would you encourage them, to find ways for people to get involved, to be as passionate, to be as informed as you? What ways can they do that?

Male: I don’t think [Crosstalk 0:50:30] do that [Jo] because society is a lot different. When we’re coming to round fishing, we’re older people and I think you will see on-site, you see on-site the general – there are youngsters that are fishermen – but the general people that come on-site are quite, you know, middle-aged to elderly. Because they’ve come up from the old school.  
  
We were brought up different. Society is different now. The pricing of fishing is a lot different now, you know? So it would be very different – I’m talking on a fishing point of view. I’m not talking as a main public coming in here to look at the site and the environment.  
  
But from that point of view, yes, it is a lot different to when we grew up. It was a lot cheaper in my day than what it is now. So yes.

Interviewer: So you don’t think- ?

Male: I think what the main trouble is – and it’s not only fishing, it’s the countryside in general, nation-general – the technology age is coming. It’s not exciting for them anymore. They want to be shooting and killing everybody on their iPads and all the things.

Male: Exactly. That’s what I just said. They’ve got other things. Society is different. Children are different to what they were years ago.

Male: Again, back to what you said, encouraging people on here, unfortunately, we’re encouraging the wrong type and with that note, I’m going to have to go. And without putting a name to it, we all know what we’re talking about. We’re getting the wrong type of person on this site.

Interviewer: Del, before you go, may I ask you just to sign the form? Is that alright? It’s just a consent form. Thank you very much.

Male: You can’t make people become what you’re looking for. You’re either brought into it by your parents or you’ve grown up with it. I mean, things have changed haven’t they?  
  
In our days, if you like, putting it similarly, like, when we were kids, we got a sweet, different jam. Now, all they want is going to McDonalds. I mean, it’s changed in its way.  
  
I think, I remember when we were kids, it was like jam sandwich, bottle of \_\_\_[0:52:54], you had a little fishing rod and we were at the fence. It cost you a penny on the bus from the Baker’s Arms [Crosstalk] and we’d fish there [Crosstalk]  
  
I don’t know, you either are here or you are not. I can still remember. I can just still remember-

Male: Sorry. I’m going back to the office but [Crosstalk 0:53:17].

Interviewer: I hope everything is okay. Thank you for your time.

Male: How will we know or how- well \_\_\_. What will become of this meeting?

Interviewer: So this information will be part of the work that we write up, as part of our reports. The report will be shared with the London Wildlife Trust and it will be shared with Thames Water so that they know the ideas about the concerns you have for the site. But also the opportunities for this site.

Male: In fact, will it become public knowledge?

Interviewer: Yes, but without your name. You name is not [Crosstalk 0:53:54]

Male: You’ve used a false haven’t you thought?

Interviewer: (Laughter). Take care. I hope everything is okay.

Male: I don’t know, it is like people who love football. I can’t stand it. So you either are or you are not. You can’t make football supporters, you can’t make anglers. You either are or you are not.  
  
And I can still remember my first fish ever. You know? A roach up at the Rising Sun Pond in the forest. And I’m talking of, now, 67 years ago.   
  
And it has this thing. I can still remember, you know, your first \_\_\_[0:54:40], October 3rd 1954, £4 from Fisher’s Queen. It has that sort of thing. You can’t stop it. And it’s just there.

Interviewer: Very important to you.

Male: Yes. It’s just there. And this is not happening anymore. It’s not coming in. Kids are – I taught hundreds over the years – some of them, I mean, you know, Bob who is now 70-ish. No, he’s a bit younger. But I taught Bob.  
  
I had the second – if you like – not a fishermen club but a specimen club where we went for big fish only. I started the second one ever in this country, the West Essex Specimen Club, 1955 or ’56. We ran a group.  
  
And a few year ago, I was in the valley and a bloke said to me “You’re [Ray 0:55:48] aren’t you?” “Yes”. Because I’ve changed \_\_\_ do but he kept on that specimen \_\_ and I said “Yes”. He said “Don’t you recognise me?” He said “I’m Bob \_\_\_”.  
  
And he was the youngster that tagged on to our club.

Interviewer: And he still remembered that?

Male: And he’s still with it. And he-

Male: It’s like if I asked you Jo, if I asked you Jo, in general, would you say that there were a lot of youngsters coming through that are in to nature, that are in to environmental- they are not. They are not.  
  
If someone was to tell me and if all the National Trust or the Wildlife or whatever wants to tell me that there is, then they will prove it when they try and open up this. There is going to be proof because that children today in which I said is society is changed.  
  
Where we would naturally go into it, I’m bored of it, all on my side, my family are fishermen anyway. But on a general point where you asked, is that society is different now and I personally feel I want the site to be up kept. That’s why I think yes it should be promoted in a right way.  
  
Not for, you know, a promotion in another way, but the society is not there for people to come on site and want to learn. And you should know that yourself.

Male: As they say, it’s not cool anymore, is it? I got birdwatching. Can you imagine a 16 year old going “Oh, what do you do?” “I go birdwatching”.

Male: Yes, and then they would have a few looks wouldn’t they?

Interviewer: But can I ask you then? I have just two further questions. One of them is how you feel the extending of the opening of the site affects the identity. Will it affect the identity of the area? Will it affect how people perceive this part of London?

Male: I think generally speaking, I think alright, in the first of it, there’s a lot of advertising, things go on, people will go “Oh, let’s go and have a look” but I think it will just come back to the same core. You know, you’re not going to get thousands of people go suddenly “Oh, we’ll take up fishing” or “Oh, we’ll take up birdwatching”.  
  
If they’re not into it, they’re not into it. And I think it will just come back down to this steady level of interested people and you don’t see it – as Dave said – you don’t see- although I’ve got a vast, vast group of birdwatching friends, very few of their kids, very few outsiders-  
  
I did the [warden 0:58:42] job up at Fisher’s Green for seven or eight years. Didn’t watch. Very few youngsters. If their parents are not interested, they don’t get there.

Male: Where you say \_\_\_ of the place, earth, I don’t know. I really can’t see – I was going to say the identity.

Interviewer: How you feel about the area? Will you start- so you have a perception of what it feels like and the identity of this part of London now, will it opening up affect that?

Male: Yes.

Male: Well if it changes.

Male: I’m worried that it will.

Male: If it changes.

Male: Well, we’re selfish to our benefit. We’re fishermen. What we were concerned in the first place is when Wetlands took over Barn Elms and basically, the fishing there stopped, they closed the fishing.  
  
So when you say identity, I would worry that the identity from the fishing perception on this site would be affected. And that would be a major concern.

Male: You see, one of the things that will happen is that – and it’s happened in a lot of places and commercials – when a lot of the small commercial fisheries opened up, it was slightly the more serious angler that first went there to see what it was about.  
  
But you see. If you look at it your way, if you were going fishing and it’s nice and it’s quiet and it’s the getaway – if that’s what it is – if you’re birdwatching, it’s the quietness, it’s the getaway, nothing is disturbing the birds. Then what are you going to do? Bloody load of kids running around, bikes all up your back. What are you going to do?

Interviewer: Okay. So it’s a very different space \_\_\_[1:00:38] very quiet and then there is a risk that there will be disturbance.

Male: Yes.

Interviewer: I have one final question. I wanted to finish on a fun and interesting note and I wondered if you could both tell me perhaps the most interesting or most enjoyable or most memorable experience you have of being on this site?

Male: I suppose as with Ray, like Ray just said about catching the fish, that when we started fly-fishing was basically that was my memorable thing, when someone said to me – and I remember I was coarse fishing – and I came over quite a young lad, you know. What I’d done is my mate looked after my gear and then I went over to the fly-reservoirs and then I caught my first fish on a rod.  
  
And I remember that, and from there – because I was a coarse-fisherman, which I used to fill to Coppermill [string 1:01:6] here at the top for barbell and chub and from there, I sold all my course tackles and took up fly-fishing. But that was the start.  
  
Although it doesn’t stop me doing, like, I still do it now. I still do free-lining and I do that type of- I still go fishing for carp in the summer, but that would be an experience and I would like other people to enjoy it. That’s why we do have and I do sit with and I start fly-fishing.  
  
You know, I’ve seen it on occasions which we’ve got a guy and you see a person that catches his first trout, that he’s been taught on the fly-line and you can see, you know. These guys are coming here now and they are hooked.  
  
It is the most – well they say – it is the most, which it is, they call it a sport, we call it a sport, it is a sport I suppose, but they say it’s the most participated sport there is in the UK. Everybody thought it would be football but it’s not, its fishing.

Male: Yes, it’s \_\_\_[1:03:00]. They’re not-

Male: Because there’s people participating in it. You know, there are people watching football, but there are people participating in fishing. So yes, it is very important to this site.   
  
As you say, that’s probably my experience, I’ve had other experiences which are quite a lot of bull but they would be quite- ones that require time to explain it. But they are laughs, but they are personal things that happened with reservoirs are funny.

Male: But when you say memorable, never is it singular. Never. See, now Dave fishes one way and I don’t fish that way because I want to fish different and catch fish differently. But no day is \_\_\_[1:03:51]. It doesn’t matter some days whether you catch a fish or not, but you could be sitting there and nothing happening.  
  
And a kingfisher lands on your rod. Which they do. I’ve had kingfishers as close as this. Now that may make that day a lousing fishing day, but it’s a very memorable day which I just [Crosstalk].  
  
So every day. There is not a singular day. Dave could say “I’ve caught 20 fish” to Dave’s method. Now I don’t fish Dave’s method and I may only catch two. Now Dave’s caught more than me, but it doesn’t mean he’s had a better day than me.

Male: No, exactly.

Male: So the experience of each.

Male: Yes. He landed on my bag last week, a robin. Look how tame that was. Now that was my day. That was my day. I wasn’t worried about the fish. And I text, I sent that one all around.  
  
That robin actually took bread out of my hand but I couldn’t get a picture. As soon as I got the camera out, he was gone. But he was tame and he knew I was eating, I was eating my sandwiches and a cup of tea but that’s an experience, like Ray’s saying.  
  
You know, I know I caught fish that day, but if I never caught a fish, that would be-

Interviewer: Amazing.

Male: It is, isn’t it?

Male: You’re also doing it in one day. You’re talking of anglers, birdwatchers. But you see we’re quite integrated. Anglers are nearly all birdwatchers.  
  
I mean, if you go back long enough, who were the first eyes and ears of the countryside? They weren’t birdwatchers – very few in those days. It was anglers.  
  
If there were problems, it was anglers. If you found a sheep in a ditch, it was probably anglers that went and got the farmer. If there was fish dying off somewhere or something else, it was anglers.  
  
Anglers, in those days were the ears and we’ve grown up to that. I’ve say and I’ve sat quiet at a place where I’ve caught some very, very big trout, 20-odd pounds and I heard a movement and I sat there. What’s coming out? And I’ve had mink, I’ve had stoats walk across my boots.  
  
I woke up – well, I woke up, I did really – I was fishing in the valley early in this time of year but it was a lovely, sunny day and I settled down, thought the fishing was going to be very slow. I sat down fishing for carp there.  
  
I was sat in there and I had wellie boots on and my feet were on the edge by my toes were out of the water and I looked and there was a grass snake curled up at the end of my boot. You know. I’ve got grass snakes in my garden, in my pond so it was nothing new. But that closeness that’s there.  
  
I mean there are a lot of anglers, there are other’s but don’t appreciate that.

Interviewer: How close it is to nature. Is that [Crosstalk 1:07:00]?

Male: I think that is a good point Jo. That is a good point. You’re closer to nature. You’re not only fishing, you’re close to nature, which you say, when you say about, you know, what would be a memorable thing, it’s like Ray said, if you don’t catch anything, it’s something like that, like what I said. It’s like he’s just said.   
  
But I think that is a good point, what you said and I will say that in whole, not just “Oh, I’ve seen that, I’ve seen that”, closes to nature would probably be a very-

Male: It’s integral. I mean look at Charlie. Charlie is in his ‘80s, he can’t come over here anymore. Charlie is there, what does he do? He comes over here, he can’t seem to make up his gear so do it for him, same as what’s his name, John \_\_\_[1:07:56] – he’s died now, but he was 90-odd, 93.  
  
So we’ll make up their gear and he’d very rarely ever catch anything but he used to come over here and bring chicken-bits didn’t he? In the height of his days, sit there and the old fox used to come around and she’d sit right beside him and feed it by hand. That was his great day.  
  
Great. It used to follow him around and they were always coming around. You know, it’s all integral. It doesn’t matter and I mean, as I say, I’ve fished from Alaska to Florida back to Indonesia. I’ve fished in Germany, in France, Holland, I’ve fished all over the place, Denmark, Spain. And it doesn’t matter, it’s just there.  
  
I mean, I’ve been to Kenya, I’ve seen the elephants and all that, but it’s just what it is. This is just as important. I know I’m not going to go over there and see elephants and giraffes and rhinos what we’re doing now.

Male: It is true.

END AUDIO

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