

Health advice unchanged even though plenty less fish in the sea

The government will not be altering public health advice to eat more fish after international development campaigners backed a report that criticised the policy.

The Past and Future of Fish Consumption report by York University science professor Callum Roberts and Dr Ruth Thurston of Queensland University contends that “governments need to consider carefully the social and environmental implications of greater fish consumption until demand is balanced with sustainable methods of production”.

The authors believe many developed nations are continuing to aspire to consume more fish than they produce.

The report reveals that the UK lands only a fifth per cent of the fish that we are recommended to eat. Fish farming has boosted stocks but most of the difference between demand and supply is made up by imports from places where many poor people rely on fish to eat, such as West Africa.

Three billion people rely on fish as a vital source of animal protein. According to the report, many fisheries around the world are so intensively exploited that stocks cannot be maintained.

Because of its health benefits, the government recommends eating at least two portions of fish a week, of which one should be oily fish. But this level of consumption may threaten marine biodiversity and ocean health, according to Roberts, who said: “We can start by establishing more UK marine-protected areas as this helps restock fish in the

sea. Then the UK should play a stronger European role to ensure fish imports are from sustainable fisheries.

“While supermarkets have made some progress in sourcing fish from fisheries with high sustainable standards and low environmental impact there is still much work for them to do.”

Roberts said fish farming, seen by many as the solution to low fishing stocks, is neither sustainable nor environmentally friendly.

The scientist urged “nations with limited domestic fish supplies to think carefully about the implications of promoting greater fish consumption in a world where many are already protein deficient”.

This view is backed by anti-poverty charity War on Want, whose executive director John Hilary said: “Some of Africa’s least wealthy countries such as Sierra Leone, Ghana, Guinea Bissau and Mauritania are losing out from overfishing. Morocco has worsened its occupation of Western Sahara through a trade deal that permits EU vessels to fish in the territory’s waters.”

A Public Health England spokesperson said: “We are not recommending any changes. The advice derives from a broad review of scientific evidence showing fish consumption at these levels would lead to significant public health benefits.

“The UK government is also working closely with fishermen and at EU level to ensure the sustainability of our fish stocks.”

MARK METCALF

• It is now approaching 40 years since the first Deeply Vale Festival was held in a secluded wooded valley between Rochdale, Bury and Rossendale.

• Set up by a bunch of counter-culture idealists and hippies as a free music celebration, the inaugural gathering took place in August 1976 and attracted around 300 punters. A year later, 3,000 people descended on the idyllic glen to hear performances by progressive rock acts like Spike, Moonchild and Pegasus, the latter featuring Andy McCluskey, later of Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark.

• By 1978, the audience had swollen to 20,000, with similar numbers attending the following year. But the rapid growth proved to be its undoing. Faced with strong opposition from landowners and irate councillors, 1980’s event was forced to relocate to the less picturesque locale of Pickup Bank, near Darwen. It ran for just one more year before organisers reluctantly pulled the plug.

• **Pot for payment**

• “Once we grew to 20,000 people the authorities started to say that we needed running drinking water and a means of escape for an ambulance. Also, the neighbouring farmers were putting pressure on the landowners not to allow it,” recalled Chris Hewitt, one of the festival’s founding fathers. He cites the event’s inclusion of new wave and punk bands alongside “prog, psych, folk and even religious groups” as one of the many things that made Deeply Vale stand out in the 1970s free festival movement.

• “The southern festival elite had a strong intolerance to punk whereas we embraced it. There wasn’t the same separation in the North West because there weren’t really enough punks to fill a punk gig and there weren’t enough prog heads to fill a prog gig. There was a big crossover and that was reflected in Deeply Vale,” said Hewitt, who has collected together an exhaustive archive of photographs, recordings and memorabilia in a definitive 272-page book and six CD box set.

• For modern-day festival-



Lift the

goers below the age of 25, the anarchic, patchouli-scented, free-spirited ethos of Deeply Vale will appear almost alien compared to today’s exorbitantly priced, corporate branded live music business. Back then, toilet facilities were few and far between, performers received pot in lieu of payment and the idea of a curfew was non-existent.

Something special

It could have been a disaster, but out of the chaos came something special, with The Fall, Durutti Column, Here and Now, Wilful Damage, Steve



Top: The Ruts typified the hippy-punk crossover of Deeply Vale. Below: teepees at the site near Rochdale in 1978, the third Deeply Vale Festival

e Vale on spirit of the age

Hillage, The Ruts, Hawkwind's Nik Turner, Misty in Roots and John Peel favourites Tractor – who provided the PA for the first year – among the impressive list of artists who played the event during its short history.

“We mixed big name bands like Steve Hillage that were playing venues like the Manchester Apollo with young up and coming groups from council estates who had never done a gig before,” said Hewitt. “It was a pivotal moment in that

it inspired a lot of people in the audience to think: ‘I can do that.’”

Among those watching was a young Ian Brown, an eight-year-old Jimi Goodwin of Doves, future Smiths bassist Andy Rourke, David Gedge of The Wedding Present, members of The Chameleons and broadcasters Andy Kershaw and Marc Riley, all of whom attended Deeply Vale/Pickup Bank during its six-year run.

“In a funny, raggedy, dope and cider-befuddled way,

Deeply Vale was the North West's Glastonbury,” DJ and broadcaster Stuart Maconie wrote in *Q Magazine*. “[It] was the crucible of north Lancashire's gently anarchistic counter-culture around the mid 1970s and beyond.”

Deeply Vale may be a distant memory but its legacy lives on in the buoyant festival market it helped ferment, as well as the North West's renowned music scene – not bad going for an event that began with a bare-faced lie to the site's landowner.

“The first year, we got permission from the farmer for 10 of us to camp there for a birthday party,” remembered Hewitt with a chuckle.

“We never actually told him that we were planning a free festival. After it, he did say: ‘You've got a lot of friends, haven't you?’”

The Deeply Vale Box Set is available to buy now from www.tractor-ozit.com

RICHARD SMIRKE

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