

Notes of the National Angling Advisory Group meeting

held on Tuesday 12 July 2016

at Canal & River Trust Fazeley Office

1. Attendees and apologies for absence

In attendance were David Kent (Chairman), Paul Breslin, Caroline Killeavy, John Ellis, Rod Bracey, Tony Campbell, Peter Fieldhouse, John Johnson, Dick Pilkinton and John Sutton. Apologies for absence were received from John Castle. The chairman welcomed Paul Breslin to his first NAAG meeting.

2. Notes of previous meeting of 22 March 2016 and matters arising

The group confirmed the accuracy of the notes of the meeting of 22 March. The issue of angling ambassadors was raised. JE agreed that the number of upcoming events and shows where the F&A team would be present would help focus moving this matter forward. He agreed to update the group at the November meeting.

3. National Fisheries & Angling Managers' report

3.1 Angling and filming on Trust property

As a direct result of concerns raised by NAAG, JE produced an [information blog](#) on this topic. It was published during April.

3.2 Cormorant scaring & shooting update

JE has had a short meeting with Jake Devoile (AT Fisheries Management Adviser) with a view to focussing on options for scaring on canal fisheries. JD has recently produced a report for JE's perusal and JE agreed to bring forward at the November meeting. JE has also met with the Natural England lead wildlife management adviser for East of England with a view to the Grand Union Canal being included in an area site permit along with all four reservoirs at Tring.

It has recently come to our attention that the shooting of piscivorous birds under licence has been taking place for some number of years at two further reservoirs in the North West. The waterway manager and JE have agreed to formalise the position.

3.3 River Severn Estuary Shad project

A good news announcement was expected later in July concerning both the HLF and LIFE bids.

3.4 Elver passage River Severn

Whilst it is still hoped the above work can be undertaken during the summer of 2016, the requisite low flow summer water level conditions have been conspicuous by their absence and thus the work may need to be deferred.

3.5 Canal & River Trust/AT Canal Pairs, Junior & Stillwater Championships 2016 update

The first canal pairs' heat held on the Shropshire Union on 02 July has sold out. JE confirmed that generally sales were equivalent to or ahead of the 2015 event. Last years' process for venue nomination/selection would be repeated with calls for venues for 2017 being publicised during September. Angling Trust were exploring options for holding the 2017 Division 1 National in the North East. It was agreed that JE, PB and DK would meet up during August to assess the suitability of potential venues.

3.6 Angling Trust Angling Improvement Fund

The Trust submitted a successful bid for the development of a community angling club based at Blacon, near Chester and were granted £3600 for a combination of club set up costs, pegging, coaching and purchase of fishing equipment. One other organisation also submitted a bid on the Trust's canal network. We are now in discussions with Angling Trust regarding the feasibility of taking this particular project forward. The next tranche of money (some £200,000) has now been released with a focus on projects relating to access and predator control.

3.7 Website and digital media update

Highlights include:

- The F&A Team made the final of the internal Waterways Alive Awards for its promotion of fisheries & angling using various forms of digital media.
- Facebook followers at circa 8200, making the page the second most liked Trust page and highest of the individual team pages.
- Individual website visits in May reached 13,000 and it's the first time we have broken the 10,000 barrier, with a similar figure in June.
- Angling Heroes series, won by Ivan Marks in the public vote, generated a high level of interest on social media.
- The Launch of my favourite canal peg series is imminent.
- Since August 2016 we have produced a total of 42 F&A team blogs covering a range of fisheries & angling related topics.
- History & Heritage blogs are ongoing on a monthly basis.
- The weekly Match Results Column was launched on 28 February and is attracting a reasonable following, although not all our clubs are taking the opportunity to promote themselves and their upcoming events through this medium. We will seek to promote further on an on-going basis.

3.8 Canal fishing for beginners video series

Filming for the above took place on the Shropshire Union Canal on 02 June. It features 2014 Trust/AT Canal Pairs champions Simon Mottram and Simon Preece teaching two young anglers, Felix and Freddie Bennett, how to catch their first canal fish. The [videos](#) will be promoted as part of Go Fish/National Fishing Month.

3.9 GO Fish/National Fishing Campaign update

The Trust, in partnership with various clubs, are holding around 25 events during National Fishing Month. Full details can be found [here](#).

3.10 Environmental Appraisal: Fisheries Component

The Trust's national environment manager is leading the review of the whole process. The F&A team have now inputted into more than 20 short form appraisals. We expect feedback shortly as to how these have been amended. It has been agreed that the fisheries and angling team will validate those appraisals which involve the draining or lowering of water and work where fish habitat or the customer product is significantly impacted. The team have emphasised the need for improved levels of consultation with the customer club when any work taking place impacts on their rented fishery and their ability to use the fishery.

3.11 Crick Boat Show

For the first time the F&A team attended the above event. Our display included a fish tank and live canal fish which proved extremely popular with the public – anglers and non-anglers alike and made a significant contribution to helping the Trust recruit a record number of friends for any event. We plan to use the fish tank resource at other events going forward including the Royal Welsh Show, some Go Fish events as well as summer and winter open days

3.12 Natural England

NE have recently appointed a fisheries technical specialist, David Ottewell. We have arranged to meet up with him in August to discuss a wide range issues of mutual interest. It was agreed that JE would make the group aware of the main topic areas of discussion prior to the meeting and he asked for feedback on any areas omitted.

3.13 Drayton Reservoir platform & walkway replacement project

The Trust has invested circa £300,000 in the project, delivered on budget by the fisheries management term contractor. Richard Parry formally re-opened the fishery on 04 July, although much of the fishery was re-opened to customers on 29 April.

3.14 Motherless minnows (Sunbleak) on the Bridgwater & Taunton

They are confirmed as being present in this waterway.

3.15 Facebook training for angling club officers

As identified in the FAAPs, four club officials in the South East Waterway received basic instruction on getting started during June. This has helped the club get going on Facebook so that it can better communicate with individual members and also helps the Trust by allowing the club to disseminate Trust information to its membership.

3.16 The benefits of angling. Project research. Update on the South East waterway proposals

The project is now being led by JE and Angela Northern (research manager) with input from Dick Pilkinton on behalf of NAAG. The Trust have committed to fund the research and Adam Brown of Substance is now in the process of fine tuning the questions. We have selected 25 clubs in the South East Waterway for one to one interviews during July and August.

4. An Introduction to Paul Breslin

Paul gave a short presentation to the group. He highlighted his experience in his previous roles with the Environment Agency. He would cover the four northern waterways. The group welcomed Paul aboard and felt that the customer clubs in the north would have increasing confidence going forward in the Trusts' commitment to its' fisheries & angling function.

5. Standard Angling Agreement Document

5.1 Events Registration

JE outlined the amended proposals, namely:

- 101 participants and over – the event would need to go through the formal events application process.
- 100 participants or fewer – here would be a requirement for all events (not just those with 50 or more participants) to notify the Trust via Chris Stanley. This would include taster sessions as well as match fishing events.

The group welcomed these proposals as it would help avoid clashes with third party events.

5.2 Safeguarding

The group considered a proposal to include a clause in the standard angling agreement requiring clubs to only use AT Level 2 licenced coaches for youth engagement work. This was set in the context of the Trust's recent drive toward more robust processes and procedures in relation to safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults. The group felt that to place such a rigorous requirement on clubs would prohibit wider levels of young engagement, although most of

those in the room who represented organisations currently involved in coaching did comply with the 'Level 2' standards.

CK to consider the comments made and will implement an alternative robust but sensible approach to protecting the young people and vulnerable adults on our waterways.

5.3 Other proposed amendments

These were all agreed as appropriate. JE confirmed that all new agreements now entered into would be based on this new legal document.

6. Waterway Wanderers update

The group welcomed the growth in income of the past 15 months or so. This may have come about through a combination of enhanced presence on social media, the improved website and a persistent dialogue with the angling press, who were no longer advertising Waterway Wanderers' fisheries as free to fish. The group advised of the need to have an online purchasing facility available as soon as practically possible. JE agreed with this advice and confirmed that he would aim to incorporate this into the next business planning round.

7. Waterway Fisheries & Angling Action Plans

It was confirmed that:

- All 13 documents have now been completed to the same national format and uploaded onto the fishing pages of the website.
- A meeting to set up the South East Waterway Steering Group was held in April 2016. The initial proposed steering group has now evolved into quite a large group of interested waterway clubs.
- The River Lee already has a steering group in situ which continues to meet periodically.

It was advised that, led by the regional fisheries & angling team contact, it would be useful for every waterway to establish its' own steering group with a view to seeing how local actions and highlighted flagship projects can be taken forward.

8. Stoppage programme and stoppage notices

The information in the previously circulated paper was welcomed. It was agreed that JE would produce a blog based on this information and circulate this to all the angling club secretaries on the database.

9. Beam scales & weigh baskets

Following recent criticism on social media, members were asked to provide the Trust with guidance on the relative merits of plastic coated weigh baskets verses weigh slings in terms of fish welfare. Members concurred that this was a judgement call for individual customer clubs to make. Whatever method they chose for weighing in match catches, fish welfare considerations should always be at the forefront of the match organiser's mind.

10. What could or should NAAG do to influence Trust policy on towpath behaviour?

Following discussions which highlighted various ongoing issues, it was agreed to invite Dick Vincent, national towpath ranger, to the next meeting. Dick has led on the Trusts' Share the space, drop your pace campaign. JE agreed to circulate links to the work that Dick had done so far.

In advance of the next meeting delegates agreed to pull together various areas/issues that could usefully be expanded as part of the campaign for the benefit both of anglers and those encountering anglers along our waterways.

11. Any other business

11.1 Non-native species

JE confirmed that the Trusts' fisheries contractors had captured two non-native catfish on the first day of the roach restoration project electrofishing programme. These had been successfully rehomed in a manner compliant with current legislation. DP asked for guidance on what to do if non-native species were captured during National Fishing Month/Go Fish and other taster sessions. It was agreed that organisers should take keepnets as temporary holding measures and then do what is legally required with the fish under current legislation once the public were off site. Debate moved to the topic of advice to individual anglers in the event of their capture of a non-native species. JE reiterated the wording of the Trusts' site permits in as far as it impacted on the Trust and controlling clubs alike. JE agreed to discuss with the EA and the Trusts' fisheries management term contractor, options of a collection and rehoming facility. He agreed to report back on progress at the next meeting.

11.2 Winter moorings

DP raised the above matter for discussion. He was concerned about the lack of consultation on the winter mooring sites before publication. It appears likely that the sites listed will be very similar to those adopted last year. DP pointed out that a small number of the South East Waterway sites identified last year had caused a problem for clubs. It was advised that clubs should raise any concerns with the mooring team once the site details were in the public domain.

The group welcomed the ongoing principle of the five metre rule which was very much in the spirit of the share the space, drop the pace principles. Members of the group felt that it would be useful for anglers to know about this inclusion on the mooring permit. They asked whether something could be mentioned in any future press release/announcement. It was also suggested that JE consider covering the matter in an article on the website or in Anglers Update.

11.3 England Fisheries Group update

JE confirmed that current short term focus was very much connected with the five point salmon plan. It was also reported that rod licence sales were 5.3% down at the end of May 2016 with a 24% drop in junior rod licence sales. There had been nine formal objections to the new rod licence proposals (four later withdrawn). The matter was now on the desk of the Minister.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 23rd November at the Trust's Fazeley office.