



# ANGLING TRUST

## Angling Trust South Yorkshire Fisheries Forum

November 22nd 2017

### Warmsworth Community Centre

40 Low Road West, Warmsworth, DN4 9LE

In Association with The Environment Agency

Meeting notes and Q&A:

**The Environment Agency Working for You:** Joanne Kay, Fisheries Team Leader for the region will give an update on the team's work locally to protect and improve our fisheries.

Q - Impacted clay and silt is a major problem on the Dearne.

A – The Don Rivers Trust are trying to create more meanders in the river to improve flow.

Q – Floating Pennywort is preventing us from fishing certain places.

A – There is a meeting about Pennywort in December.

Q – What is happening with crayfish on the lower Rother?

A – We don't issue licences to trap them, there was evidence that people were seeding other rivers to harvest them. Northumbria and North Yorkshire aren't affected yet and are frightened about them being spread.

Q – People who are going to seed other rivers with crayfish aren't bothered about applying for a licence.

A – In the South-East evidence was licenced trappers were seeding other rivers because there was a legal market.

*John Cheyne – On the Thames there are guys trapping crayfish, making lots of money. Trapping doesn't seem to make any difference to the amount of numbers of them.*

*Mark Owen, AT, Head of Fresh water – DEFRA/CEFAS are doing a lot of research on trapping and eradication. There have been trials by CEFAS and anglers via the Angling Trust on stillwaters that suggest that some trapping methods if carefully controlled can be successful. Trials carried out on tributary of the Exe have also suggested that removing large males, sterilizing them and returning them to the water may help reduce numbers.*

Q – My concern with crayfish is fish recruitment and them eating fish eggs, and the silt they cause from digging adding to the problem of diffuse pollution covering spawning sites. I've seen people on Facebook catching a lot of big barbel but I don't see many smaller ones.

A – Yes those are some of the biggest issues are rivers face from invasive crayfish.

Q – I've been a bailiff on the Don for 30 years and I don't feel there is enough enforcement on the banks.

A – Giles Evans, AT, Fisheries Enforcement Manager – I've been out on patrol today with the EA in Doncaster. We have an intelligence sharing process implemented between EA, AT and Police, please report fishery crime, any incident to 0800 807060. When a hotspot has been identified it will trigger a response.

Q – I've seen a guy with fyke nets on the Don and when I ask him about the nets, he says he's fishing for crayfish.

A- Again we need this sort of information to be reported via the hotline 0800807060 in a timely and accurate manor.

Q – It's not true that club bailiffs can check a rod licence?

A – A club bailiff can ask to see a licence if it's in the club rules, but can only enforce the club rule in the same way as they would for any other type of club rule breaking.

Q – What danger are Zebra Mussels to the environment?

A – They really cling to infrastructure and outlets and consume large amounts of microscopic life that usually supports invertebrates and fry. Quagga Mussels are like them but on steroids and their impact is much greater.

Q – How did you find the Demon Shrimp in the Rother? If your sampling on there can we see the results, please?

A- (Jo Kay) I'm not sure if it was via our normal monitoring regime or if we were specifically looking for them.

Q – Young anglers use social media, why don't you use it for enforcement incidents?

A – We do use it and people in our communications department are looking at Facebook.

*John Cheyne – There are a lot of people wanting to talk about past and present problems on Facebook and a lot of it isn't factual. "A mate of mine told me he knows a bloke who saw..." Is not evidence. Intelligence needs to be accurate.*

*Giles Evans – By ringing 0800 807060 and giving first hand details it's authentic.*

Q – What is the rod licence evasion rate for the region?

A – Approx. 5%. Which is just below the national average. The good news is we have seen a 51.3% increase in junior licences since the change came in.

Q – We would like to invite everyone here tonight come to our next Don Consultative meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> January. Please come a long and join us.

Q - Those that you catch without a licence, why aren't they fined more?

A – The offenders need to be prosecuted and the fine is down to the magistrates. Dillip Sarkar who is National Enforcement Manager for the Angling Trust has been working hard to educate Magistrates about the seriousness of fisheries crime and has recently had a 3 page article published on the subject in the Magistrates Journal. The good news is that in many instances the fines are getting larger.

Q – I don't see many fines being given to Eastern European anglers, are they in the category of too hard to prosecute? They are taking fish for the pot and I feel like there is a too hard to prosecute box!!

A – There isn't any bias what so ever, all offence reports get sent to Warrington where the EA team that deal with prosecutions work. Every case is handled in the same manner no matter what the race, creed, colour or sex of the anglers involved.

Q – The Don is under serious threat of pollution; Yorkshire Water are self-monitoring.

A – The good news is we are starting to see some seriously big fines for Water Companies. When Thames Water were fined a record £20 million this year it sent a strong message. Unfortunately all the money from the fine went to the treasury, rather than back into rehabilitating the river, **but there was an agreement for funds to go to fishing clubs and rivers trusts.**

**A Fishery Re-Born:** Paul Coxon and members from the Friends of York Railway Pond Club talk about how the Angling Improvement Fund (AIF) has helped them to revitalise a local stillwater.

*Unfortunately, Paul couldn't make it a long on the evening, so John Cheyne delivered Paul's presentation.*

Q – Can any organisation apply to The Angling Improvement Fund (AIF)?

A – Yes, all kinds of fishing clubs, organisations and fisheries can bid.

Q – I find it incredible that licence money is being given to commercial fisheries.

A – There are some not for profit commercial fisheries and when commercial fisheries submit an application we expect large sums of matched funding, which subsequently subsidizes the match funding required by small clubs and organisations.

*Mark Owen, AT, Head of Freshwater: 60% of AIF awards go to small clubs. £1million has been awarded and gone out so far. In a couple of weeks, we will be announcing the next themes. There will also be a new online application process to make the whole application process easier.*

Q – I don't understand the need for Cormorant Watch 2. We all know where Cormorants are.....on our lakes and rivers eating our fish stocks.

A – Cormorant Watch 1 was very successful and made the minister listen. As we push the government to increase the numbers of cormorants that can be legally shot we need to show once again how much anglers feel that this is an issue. Details of overnight roosting numbers and sites are also very important to us as it gives a much more accurate reflection of the real number of birds in the country.

Q – I never go fishing and not see one. How much closer are we to getting them on the general licence?

A – We have never stopped trying to get them on general licence, at the last review the minister said if we can show evidence for a need to increase he would look at increasing. We have shown him the need and evidence now. On 28<sup>th</sup> November Mark Owen and Mark Lloyd will be meeting the minister.

**Coarse Fish Close Season Debate:** John Cheyne of the Angling Trust leads a discussion about the current coarse fish close season which will offer all attendees the opportunity to have their say and debate the issues.

*John asked for a show of hands for who would support: Abolition of current close season, Keep the close season as it is, Amend the current close season and Who doesn't have an opinion, would need more data.*

Results:

Abolish - 4 hands

Keep the same - 3 hands

Amend - 8 hands

No opinion/need more info - 7 hands

**Statements made for Abolish:**

If it's ok for stillwaters, why not rivers too? There doesn't seem to have been any issues for fish stocks on stillwaters or canals since the close season was lifted.

There are so many cormorants and otters eating our fish stocks, having angler's present scares them off, so a lot of damage is done in the close season.

Anglers presence on the rivers deters fisheries crime.

**Statements made for retaining the current close season:**

It doesn't hurt to give the fish and river banks a rest and the time to recover.

I like the traditional aspect of the close season.

Spawning fish need to be protected.

**Statements for amend:**

The first two weeks of the close season are often the best two weeks of the year as fish feed heavily before spawning, we should move the start of the season to April 1st

It needs to be extended till the end of June, some years chub and barbel are still carrying eggs and milt at the end of June.

Change it to all of May and all of June instead.

I would extend it to canals and stillwaters. We should bring back the close season on all waters

We moan about cormorants and otters, but it's ok for anglers to go and catch 40lb of barbel that are full of eggs or milt. As for boats and canoes they also have their part to play they should be kept off the rivers during the close season too.

