

RFCANews

No. 45

July 2018

This season is proving to be one for the sun worshipper but not the salmon angler with rivers at record low and no sign of rain. The fear is that we get a thunderstorm and have a major fish kill. For those of you with long memories it reminds me of 1976 when I never got my salmon rods out.

Some clubs have given advice to members that given the stress on fish it would be a good idea not to fish. We have had several reports of dead fish up and down the river so let us do everything we can to minimise the stress. If you are out walking the river please report any pollution since in these low water conditions that could be a disaster.

Counter Movements

Waddow/Locks Counts 2018

	Waddow		Locks	
	Up	Down	Up	Down
January	2	18	1	5
February	4	1	1	2
March	9	2	7	1
April	12	5	18	9
May				
June				
July				
August				
September				
October				
November				
December				
Totals				

Pollution

With our current extremely low flows any pollution will have a disastrous effect on the river, particularly so with so few anglers out on the river. Our Pollution Officer for the Ribble and Hodder is keeping a watch. Given how few Fishery Officers and Pollution Officers there are it is crucial that all anglers keep their eyes open and report any pollution to the E.A. on 0800 80 70 60 and then to Fred Higham (Ribble and Hodder) on **01200 423314** and Graham Parkes (Calder) on **07861 696 813**.

Put simply if we do not report pollution it will probably not get reported.

Poaching

Exactly the same advice applies for poaching. Use the same number for the E.A. and then contact the RFCA Anti-Poaching Officer Grant Hinks on **07930 807 980**. **Grant has all the contacts with the EA and the Police.** I will keep on saying this it is now the responsibility of anglers and clubs to report pollution and poaching since we can now no longer rely on the E.A. given the cuts they have had.

Hot Weather Precautions

We have sent out advice regarding fishing in the extreme weather conditions and a further update is attached.

Byelaw Consultation

If any member hasn't yet received an acknowledgement or response from the E.A. regarding the April consultation please be advised that the E.A. are dealing with these as fast as they can. WE have been advised that there have been over 800 objections - however if it is taking so long it would appear that there have been considerably more.

If you have heard nothing you should contact the E.A. using the email addresses that you used to send in the objection/response to check as to what is happening.

If you have received a response please read it carefully as there are two different wordings in circulation. One requiring you to confirm your objection or it will be withdrawn and one that states if you do not respond then your objection will be sent to the Minister.

Our advice is Respond by confirming your original opposition to the imposition of mandatory regulations.

The E.A. have already indicated that they are updating the rivers classifications to reflect the 2017 data. However that data is also flawed and from our figures is still an under representation of the true catch - this can be by as much as 25%.

8 weekly meeting with E.A.

Despite no angling the work of the RFCA goes on. Below are the minutes of the last 8 weekly meeting with the **E.A.** They give a flavour of what is happening to our catchment and what is required to defend it.

1. Works to Waddow Fish Pass

JW. Wished to record thanks on behalf of fisheries for the work carried out on Waddow fish pass. Time would tell if the structure would perform as envisaged. DB. Described the features and function and said the modification, although heavy, was installed easily enough.

2. Future of Locks Fish Pass

DB. Said the facility was no longer used by the fisheries function to collect data. The most recent public risk assessment flagged up issues with the electricity supply and the options available were to flatten the shed and start again by basing the electrical supply in a separate unit with concrete base or move the supply unit inside the shed. The issue was then flagged up with Stuart Mounsey (Steve Molyneux equivalent in finance) who asked the question what was the structures used for and before any money was spent was the data used. Since the structure was not a centinal, national site there was no DEFRA funding for it and of no use to Brian Shields in his calculations. It was no longer linked to Settle Hydro in the permitting process. JW., at this point, asked why it was no longer linked to the Hydro's permitting process. DB. was not sure how it was linked in the first place. JW. Said it was linked to ensure there were sufficient flows to ensure that fish got through when generation wasn't possible. The hydro screw has recently been changed to a variable rate screw, enabling generation at all sorts of times and much more than in the past. He went on to question how the E.A. could assess future problems, which may be detrimental to fish stocks caused by the change in the generation regime, without the data relating to fish movements in that area. DB. In reply he said he didn't have the information but the data collected in the first phase was inconclusive and of no practical use. A study at the site, (Hydro Site) if possible, would be more relevant. JW. Said the threat from the hydro had not diminished but had worsened due to the way the hydro was operated. We needed something to ensure we had recourse to data to know whether it is detrimental or otherwise and also to feed into the data sets held by the EA. with regard to smolt production, fry and all associated. It was felt that the counter was important and should still be retained in particular to support the data sets and the five point plan. In a communication to JW. from Jack Spees, (Director of the Ribble Trust) Jack's opinion was that the loss of Locks was not a desirable outcome. The facility did provide a longer term monitoring data set that can be more accurately linked, in his opinion, to the hydro scheme. Given the recent request to increase the available flow for power generation, taking Locks off-line is a bad idea as the hydro-power could be changed to make things much worse, the hydro would be better turned off completely.

There followed a lengthy conversation re-costings to run the counter. DB. said the initial repair would be

£800 - £900, but the longer term costings, however, should there be a major fault, he'd no idea where the money would come from. It was established the counter had a major refurbishment in the last three years and due to its location was less likely to be damaged than other similar counters. If the counter were used to measure flows (telemetry section) for flood defence data, it would be difficult to apportion costs within sections of the E.A. Data on fish movement although present in the system would not be collected due to the allocation of fisheries funding. JW. Suggested that if the equipment were left in place, it was feasible funding could be found for the data to be downloaded. There was an issue with training to carry out the downloading process.

After conversations on the subject with Daniel Atkinson, E.A. Data Analyst, it was established this could not be facilitated by the E.A. It was estimated it could take up to 6 months for someone to get up to speed with the operation. DH. Commented that it was remiss, if Telemetry were using Locks for flood defence purposes and the fish passage data was within the system and not to be able to download or use the data. Therefore, and if feasible, what would be the cost to download the data?

JW. Said it had been suggested to him that the cessation of data from Locks might be the E.A.'s method of making sure we don't have another data set to challenge them with.

DB. simply replied no and said it was purely a question of the lack money but agreed to look into DH's question on the costs of downloading and analysing the data.

3. Dinckley Bridge Works

Progress on notice for works & conditions applied to contractors for in river works.

JW. Asked what conditions had been placed on the project to prevent pollution effects, bearing in mind the work was scheduled to start Monday 18th June.

DB. In reply said the E.A. had not yet received application associated with the proposed works.

DH. Explained that representatives involved had stated they had been in full contact throughout and everything was in place.

JW. Went on to give his reasons for the question, which was that discussions at our last meeting suggested that most of the work would be carried out from the southern bank, now, having changed the plan, both banks were to play a part.

JW. Expressed frustration resulting from repeated email requests for information, in spite of all tenders being returned. Information requested regarding the chosen contractor(s) was refused. The surveyor was changed and others engaged and there remained the question of the involvement of the E.A. in the proceedings and in particular any work that may involve going into the river.

DB. Gave assurance that the methods used in the project would be considered and there would be amendments to detail where necessary.

On a question relating to alien plant species present at the site from JW. DB gave assurance that the biodiversity team were aware of the conditions at the site. A lot of permitting conditions were said to be standardised. DH. Commented, It was noted that from documentation seen, that there was no mention of Japanese knotweed. DH. & JW. Gave a brief description of the plans to reinstate the bridge. A 'Tee' section crane would be positioned on a temporary constructed island in the middle of the river to enable the sections to be lifted on to supporting pillars. There was concern that removal of the crane from its location in the river could take as long as five hours, this could prove risky if the river were to rise substantially as it has been known to do in the past. The final construction would be 15ft higher than the old bridge.

JR. Commented that we were not aware of how the old structure was to be dismantled. JW. Said in meetings with LCC representatives, that many concerns had been expressed regarding possible adverse effects during construction which may include - downstream effects on running salmonids and the knock on effect upstream to the value of the fisheries, due to downstream mortalities. Finally, the adverse effects on stock regeneration due to lack of spawning fish.

Concerns were expressed generally regarding the apparent lack of knowledge of the ecology by LCC and its contractors. JW. said he would make available the latest documents he had been given to the EA. DB. Said he would contact the Senior Planning Officer to obtain a position statement regarding the projects progress. CH. On the matter of informing persons affected by the activities associated with the project, said Health and Safety legislation placed duties on Authorities to delegate safety issues and ensure their contactors informed those people who may be affected by their operations.

Although preparation work had been carried out in the form of access arrangements and base of operations on the river bank, concerns relating to drain off from the site into the river were expressed. GM. On the subject of information and clarity relating to the concerns expressed, agreed to investigate these which were within his remit.

4. Gravel Removals

On a further question by DH. regarding any permissions granted by the E.A. for the removal of gravels due to start next month at **Padiham Bridge**. DB. In reply said that he currently did not have that information but would in due course enquire. DH. on the subject said the project was featured in an E.A. publication where it was stated that all concerned had been contacted. However, in reality, not a single riparian owner had been contacted regarding the work proposals. The project was described by JW. as involving Burnley Borough Council and the E.A. Matthew Connor of the E.A. was the point of contact for further information. GM. Agreed to provide some clarity on the issue in due course. In the discussion that followed it was reiterated that fishing was not featured in any of the projects considerations, **however it was noted that a proposed duck race was not likely to be affected.**

DH. Reminded those present of the situation which occurred three years ago at Long Preston where the threat of an injunction preventing the work, forced a hasty meeting between all parties on site. The result was an understanding that all parties (in particular permitting & fisheries) involved would share information through the eight weekly meetings. It appears that E.A. departments are not talking to each other. DH. went on to describe that problems were further compounded by changes in schedules and the fact that no-one seemed to have any knowledge regarding riparian rights, the welfare of riverine species or indeed, issues involving loss of amenity etc.

DB. Said he'd commented on the project to colleagues in biodiversity and also in consultation with the planning/permitting team. **Update** - the contractors are due to submit an updated method statement to the E.A.

JW. asked what conditions would the E.A. impose to ensure there was no plume of silt washed downstream affecting both Calder & Ribble.

DB. Said only material above low water level was to be removed. JW. Was led to believe silt & gravels under the so called, dry arch, was to be removed which would necessitate movement into the river. It was inevitable discolouration would result as indeed past experience had shown.

DH. made the observation that removal of gravels at Padiham Bridge risked increasing flows below and adversely affect the village of Whalley which was prone to flooding.

JW. Asked if the gravels taken out could be reinstated to continue downriver as nature intended. Other possible effects relating to nesting birds and fish rescue were mentioned.

DB. On the subject of providing answers to questions suggested prior discussion between JW. And himself could be an advantage in order relevant people could be present or information communicated to the meeting.

5. Red Scar Weir Removal Plans

Jack Spees was looking into the possible negative effects of coarse fish reproduction, bream in particular. DB. Said after the last evening meeting where PAS expressed concerns relating to dissolved oxygen levels in the area, he took measurements and produced the following measurements.

The readings below were taken when the river level was relatively low. The results were described as quite surprising. DB. Said he started taking readings from below where there was extensive chlorella and a reading of 131%. Further upstream at Bezza Brook the reading was 123%. 3m below the weir the reading was only 125%, his assumption was that the weir would be putting oxygen in. However, a meter reading taken 3m immediately above the weir showed a reading of 132%. Looking at the above diagram readings increase further upstream. Night time readings were 92% above the weir and 96% below. 20m below the reading dropped to 74%. Indicating a slight artificial raise. DB. concluded that the riffles were putting as much oxygen into the water as the weir and linked to the way oxygen is dissolved in water. With dissolved oxygen levels above 100% (supersaturated) oxygen wants to diffuse out of the water and into the air as the air holds less oxygen. Weirs and riffles at certain times and locations are actually reducing oxygen levels by allowing greater release of oxygen into the air through turbulence and increased contact between air and water. In still waters say 10ft depth, oxygen diffuses into the water at the surface. Water deeper down doesn't receive direct air contact so is reliant on currents within the water body and therefore deeper water tends to have less oxygen. In the riffles, all of the water is hitting the surface every few seconds which aids diffusions into or out of the water. At night time there aren't great sags in the levels as it's quite shallow and because the movement is maintained. The concerns were that nothing else but the weir was inputting oxygen, however there were a number of riffles in the locality.



NOTE- Calibration of the probe is carried out in air (which sets the probe at 100%. Deviations above or below 100% are recorded as shown on the diagram above.

General surprise was expressed at the findings, not only by those present but also colleagues of DB. within the E.A.

JW. Said there were similar concerns with the prospect of settle weir removal which was installed to oxygenate the river below the sewage outflow. DB. suggested the circumstances there may be different and recommended similar testing be done there. It was also thought further readings should be taken at Redscar. It was noted that Herons regularly predated at the weir. In the discussion that ensued, it was generally agreed that the gauging weir at Mitton should be flagged up under the 5point plan for funding to include a fish pass.

6. Damage to Winckley Fish Pass and Weir.

JW. Prior to the meeting, had sent photographs of the damage to DB. who had scheduled an inspection visit on Wednesday 20th June. JW. was of the opinion that remedial work done early would prevent greater costs should the situation deteriorate. It had been established that the EA. were currently responsible for the cost of repairs to the structure. JW. asked if it were possible to take out the two channel walls. The walls were instrumental in catching trees and accumulating blockages. DB. agreed the suggestion was viable and could also prevent further bank erosion. **Ongoing.**

7. Fears concerning Whalley Weir and Hydro raised at last Council

It was reported by a local of Whalley, Mr. Ivan Hargreaves, that often there were significant changes in flows at the hydro. This had been flagged up and under investigation by the EA. The investigation uncovered discrepancies in the operation of the license conditions. Unfortunately this issue was in the domain of Graham Miller who had to leave the meeting earlier. DB. agreed to seek the information from GM. And report back. JW. said another issue was raised at the last RFCA meeting by David Jackson of Clitheroe anglers who expressed concern in the drop of salmonids found by the Trust in Sabden Brook. It was thought by JW. that there had been no EA. monitoring surveys of Sabden Brook since 2011.

However, It was established that the Trust had carried out limited surveys which were the subject of David Jackson's questions described earlier. DH. said the brook had gone from a triple A standard to insignificant. JR. said evidence building up pointing to problems relating to the operation of Whalley Hydro. DB. having spoken to Rebeca Tinsley (Technical Specialist) said there would be a meeting with her and Darren Wilson to discuss monitoring issues. It was possible an ad-hock survey could be arranged. JW. asked if it might be possible for Rebeca to attend an RFCA meeting to explain the EA's monitoring system. DB. agreed to contact Rebeca with the request.

DH. with regard to Sabden Brook said there were only two logical conclusions, 1) there may have been some local pollution that has wiped out the stock which no-one has picked up on. 2) Stock can't get there

(up or down) because of Whalley weir. He went on to remind all that after the removal of Padiham weir, anglers would observe 100% catch & release and the Calder would not be used as part of the stock classification for five years. The river would also be stocked with fry to kick-start the recovery. No salmon have been killed on Calder by any reputable angler since the removal of the weir. However the E.A. had reneged on their agreement to stock and had included the wetted area up to the former Padiham weir in their stock classification calculations. It was therefore apparent that the addition of the wetted area which is producing nothing has a negative effect on the overall stock evaluation exercise.

JW. Asked for details from the E.A. as to matters not conforming to the generating license. Also, had corrective actions arising been carried out. Access to the structure is not permitted and we have had no feedback whatsoever. JR. said a monitoring system was needed above the structure. JW. Monitoring surveys carried out before the hydro was live, should be compared to new surveys now. The change in results should prompt further investigation. DH. said the policy from above appears to be 'let them run.' JR. was of the opinion that here was an opportunity to use the 5point plan using the doctrine on obstructions and barrier removal to get something done. DH. advised that if the hydro conformed to the agreed plan, there was no requirement for any monitoring by the generator DB. This was almost a catch 22 situation, where the Government had come up with a standard design and if that works there is no need to put extra cost on the business for monitoring.

DH. Warned that Sabden Brook should set alarm bells ringing and therefore either the Trust or the EA. should carry out monitoring on a regular basis. **Ongoing.**

8. Salmon Tags

The tags had been given out to Mid Ribble Angling Society. The remainder were with Grant Hinks for distribution.

9. State of stocks

DH. Reported that the collation of returns from all RFCA members totalled 860 fish, the figures were sent to Brian Shields. Of that total 40 were killed giving a 93.34% catch and release. The figures represented a 64% increase on the 2016 total. Figures obtained over the past few years clearly show that in dry seasons anglers don't fish so no fish are caught. 2015 & 16 were dry years. He said in reality the Ribble hasn't failed its escapement targets for 10 years and what we are seeing now is that the Ribble has vastly increased its runs.

The big question was, 'where has the 1.32 multiplier come from?' It had come to our knowledge that in the 2017 stock assessment calculations on the Ribble, a 1.32 multiplier was used. In previous calculations a 1.1 multiplier was used for the Ribble and in the Net Limitation Order (NLO). Here we are not referring to the fish caught by anglers. The 1.1 multiplier was used from 2009 to 2015 as stated in the NLO, the 1.32 rate could only have been used since 2016. However, it is unclear whether this was the case. If 1.32 is correct now, then it begs the question why the figure wasn't used 2009 to 2015. Given the EA. uses its questionable stock classification model and makes year on year comparisons but changes the figures going into it, not to mention other factors such as low flow and angling effort. Is it therefore any wonder that the north-west has been in the forefront in suggesting this model is not fit for purpose. It was further suggested that the reason the E.A. stick with this model was because they have nothing to fall back on. What DH. suggested next was that we all, under the 5 point plan, need to sit round a table and work out a better way forward, perhaps resurrecting option 2 Voluntary Catch & Release (VCR). He said in his opinion there were very few people left in the EA. who understood and could use this stock classification model, the way the figures appeared to be juggled around, in his opinion, was a nonsense statistically. JW. Commented that of more significance was that of 19 rivers identified as being At Risk, there are now 6. DH. Went on to say the E.A. had made other outrageous assumptions, namely after years of claiming 90% rod license returns, it was admitted the figure was between 50 -55%. Also that all one day license holders and youth licences won't have caught any salmon. Also, the vast majority of the other people who didn't send in fishing returns didn't catch any salmon.

Astonishing assumptions to make. Such assumptions could also be argued the other way. In a further development it was found that information from the EA. statistician was incorrect. Figures originally given for Ribble nets in 2017 were 60 salmon & 9 sea trout. It turned out that the catch return from a Lune net had been included in the Ribble total.

JW. said he would amend his figures in the annual report. DH. on the subject of the river classification calculations, said this was another example of reasons to doubt results from formulas used in stock evaluation. The real figure for Ribble nets was now 26 salmon caught. **Ongoing.**

Predation

JW. Expressed concern that the goosander population in the catchment had doubled. The birds had large clutches in upper areas of the rivers early in the year and tended to move down to mid beats & below by Aug / Sept. Groups of 40 Or 50 were now being seen.

CH. Added that scores of the birds were being reported on Parsonage Reservoir, far more than usual. There was evidence that the birds worked in packs.

JW. Went on to ask if the E.A. was prepared to issue a supporting statement in view of recognition in their five point plan of the detrimental effects piscivorous birds were having on fish stocks. A new license application was due to be sent to Natural England with a request for an increase in the number of birds that could be killed. Currently in the whole of the catchment, we were only allowed to shoot 18 birds.

Ongoing.

10. Pollution

JW. Thanked GM for the report he had received from the EA and said they would communicate through the RFCA reports to members. The system was described by JW. as being greatly improved. Current conditions were giving rise to concerns, since anglers were not on the waters to report incidents. **Glamping pods** (weekend chalets) erected at Foxfields Farm, are currently under observation. Concern is expressed over the possibility that polluting matter could effect a nearby stream which enters the Ribble in the Jumbles area. Initial observations indicated there was a grey cast to the stream which could require attention.

This issue was, as it were, tied into other developments in the catchment which may require mains or septic tank arrangements.

GM. Said this matter was with United Utilities and conversations with Planning Authorities, as well as review of their Asset Management Plans etc. JW. Expressed concerns where caravan parks and developments were off the grid. Continued disruption caused by developments were likely to be of concern as far as pollution of our watercourses was concerned. GM. In reply said that such information was treated as intelligence, inspections are then set up and matters dealt with, usually by giving initial advice. In the event the advice is ignored and the problem persists, appropriate punitive action is initiated. Pollution/incident response was not funded and reliance on GIA was a factor even though this had been cut right back. Clearly incidents were going to be missed and prioritisation would have to be a factor in future incidents. On a question of right of access JW. Was concerned that those investigating incidents may not have a right of access. GS. In reply said that those investigating complaints would possess relevant rights of access.

Ongoing.

11. Problems with proposed byelaws

JW. Described proposed byelaws regarding baits & hooks as unenforceable. Those with a trout license are going to be able to use trebles but if salmon fishing can't, other than with a fly or bait of a certain gape. DB. said that it was down to interpretation of how people were fishing and what they were fishing for and agreed that it would be difficult. DH. said that when fishing with a modern switch rod, officers wouldn't have a clue what the angler was fishing for. JW. said these were grounds for objections that were not being answered. If they had made the 7mm hook gape uniform across all methods then it would have been credible. **Ongoing.**

12. Hodder Gravels.

DB. On the question of United Utilities involvement generally, he said he'd asked certain questions regarding the reintroduction of gravel and the restoration of the stakeholder meetings at Stocks. The weather over a recent period was described as perfect for gravel distribution. There was also mention of a walkover survey which had been carried out between Stocks and the village of Dunsop by a contractor (Jacobs) acting for United Utilities. The river had been split into reaches / sections to identify possible restrictions affecting fish populations. CH. Asked if we might have sight of the document (**NEP AMP6 Stocks Reservoir -River Hodder Restoration Options Assessment**).

DB. said that might be possible when the finished document had been made available to U.U. The document in draft form had been sent out to a few people for comment, notably E.A. Geomorphologists and Jack Spees of the Trust. DH. ask whether it might have been appropriate to include fisheries representatives for comment. DB. was of the opinion that when the document was completed, fisheries would be involved and

there would be an opportunity for stakeholder involvement. CH. said this was exactly what was needed to re-engage interest in the River Hodder. DH. pointed out that fisheries / riparian interests should have been involved from the outset and not afterwards when it was a done deal. He went on to remind those present of what happened in the Long Preston Restoration Plan where Settle Anglers were not involved in the planning. This resulted in involvement of AT Fish Legal and the threat of an injunction to stop the work. There was a hasty meeting convened on the river bank of all parties involved as a result. **In Law, the Riparian Interests carry the same weight as the landowner. Ongoing.**

13. Settle Hydro

Concerns had been expressed regarding gaps adjacent to the screw which were likely to endanger fish migration. The screw was now operating for longer periods after recent permitting changes. DH. said that fish were evident in the leat, so that when the sluice was operated, they would inevitably be sucked through the screw. There were no preventative screens. There was nothing from a recent CEFAS study, it was thought there were not enough samples (smolts) to generate comment. It was also thought the study had missed the run. **Ongoing.**

14. Long Preston/Ribble Restoration Plan

On the question of more works planned, there were suggestions that there was a plan to remove a small weir in the Settle area, originally put in to oxygenate the river below a sewage works. The removal was described as improving the interconnectivity within the SSSI. DH. described the weir as very small and unlikely to affect migration. The removal would affect two pools and careful consideration by the club involved was recommended. **Ongoing.**

15. Any developments regarding discharges into Irish Sea from Halite

JW. was expecting information from Collet Whiting (Fisheries Biodiversity, Geomorphology Team Leader) regarding objectors. DB. said Collet had been absent for a spell and he had no information, however, said he would chase up the matter. **Ongoing.**

16. Funding for migratory work in the future

This item had been placed on the agenda by JW. because Grant in Aid (GIA) was being chopped to nothing and the question was, "Where was the money going to come from?"

DB. said he had no idea, the enforcement side of fisheries work was currently being reviewed nationally. JW. asked if those who were involved in the review were aware that there is nothing in the general pot for salmonid enforcement. DB. said there were funds but it was dependant on how individual areas used the funds. He went on to describe his role of looking at service levels for example 53 days of eel work, so many for salmon enforcement, coarse & brown trout work and anti-poaching where there was a bit of a fudge between coarse and salmon. Apparently the north-west has the biggest enforcement team in the country. He went on to describe levels of staffing in other areas. JW. described other areas where separate entities had decided to fund their own enforcement activities, however, it was his view that in most areas similar schemes would be unworkable. DB. said similar suggestions had been muted around the voluntary Bailiffing Service.

He clarified that enforcement funding was a mixture of GIA & rod license money. Rod license income in the north-west was 80% coarse/trout, 20% salmon/sea trout (total £800,000) and determined from post code sales. On a question of funds from foreign sales DB. said distinctions were made from the area the licences were purchased and an assumption made that fishing would take place in that area. The subject was under review nationally and the matter was thought complicated and inconclusive. **Ongoing.**

17. VBS Update

JW. On behalf of Grant Hinks said Grant had been following up reports received regarding a suspected bogus bailiff. DB. reported the receipt of e-mails this week on the subject.

DH. said there was definitely a bogus character operating in the Chorley area in a uniform. He went on to describe another chap who said he was a bailiff for the Trust. He had asked the farmer at Winckley for permission to access the river on the right bank due to supposed difficulties getting through the farm yard on the left bank and he could better view a greater portion of the river from the right bank. Enquiries with the Trust to sort out the validity of the chaps credentials would be made. DB. Reported a national focus on elver poaching this year. After a serious collapse in the eel populations world-wide prices for elvers have rocketed. (Japan, 1kilo = £23,000.)

DB. Brought the following to the meeting. Two young lads in court caught fishing the Duddon.
From caught to court

Two young men from Coniston have been convicted at Barrow-in-Furness Magistrates Court for fishing illegally following an Environment Agency prosecution.

“On 4 June 2018, Benjamin Walton, (20) and Isaac Thompson (20), pleaded guilty at Barrow-In-Furness Magistrates Court to three offences related to the use of a snare and lights while fishing for salmon without a licence on the River Duddon, near Birks Bridge, Cumbria, on 3 October 2016.

Both men received 12 months conditional discharges and were ordered to pay a contribution of £600 each towards Environment Agency prosecution costs and also a victim surcharge of £20 each.

A deprivation order was made for the salmon, snare, lamp, head torch and additional stick seized during the incident, which means they have been permanently seized from the men.

Szandy Vezer, Environment Agency Fisheries Operations Team Leader, said: “The Environment Agency carries out enforcement work all year round. Our job is to protect fish stocks and improve fisheries, and anglers who fish legally rightly demand we take action to catch those who flout the law.

“We track criminals on an intelligence led basis using information gathered by ourselves, the police and other partners and reports from the public.

“We urge anyone to report illegal fishing as quickly as possible by calling our incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

“People who don’t buy a licence are not only cheating other anglers and the future of the sport but run the risk of a criminal conviction and a fine.”

In sentencing, the Magistrates stated they had taken into account that the incident had been a joint enterprise involving a level of planning and seriously impacts on legitimate fishery interests.

The Court also took into account that both men were of previous good character with no previous convictions, the length of time that the incident had been hanging over them (20 months), which would have been a deterrent in itself, and their guilty pleas entered at the earliest opportunity for which they were entitled to full credit.

The Court said this had been a legitimate investigation incurring significant costs and each man would pay a contribution based on means, rather than issue a fine.

A fishing licence is great value for money – the cost starts at £30 with some short term and concessionary licences also available. You can buy a fishing licence online at: www.gov.uk/get-a-fishing-licence.

Anyone fishing without a licence can expect to be prosecuted and face a fine of up to £2,500. For more serious offences the fine can be up to £50,000. Last year, the Environment Agency’s patrols checked 62,076 rod licences and brought 2,043 successful prosecutions for fisheries crime, like poaching. You can check local fishing byelaws here:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-fishing-byelaws.

18. River Watch

This item concerns the degradation & subsequent replacement of awareness signage aimed at members of the public who may observe incidents of pollution / poaching etc. whilst walking by rivers. The signs give information as to what to do when observing such occurrences.

It was agreed that JW. & GM. Would agree outside the meeting on wording, numbers of signs required and locations. **Ongoing.**

Sorry for the length of this Newsletter but it is felt that members should know what is happening on our river.

Attached Dry Weather Update