

# WADAA Quarterly Update

October 2020

## **Chairman's Message**

I am pleased to be able to announce that the new management structure I described in my previous message has now been put in place. Nick Butterfield took up the post of WADAA Manager on 1 October and has wasted no time in drawing up plans to lead improvements, both physical and operational, for 2021 and beyond. Despite the limitations of operating under restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in relation to meeting in groups, we have put in place the new two-committee structure covering Game Angling and Coarse Angling. The AGM, planned for December this year, will be postponed until the first quarter of 2021(at the earliest) so we will be communicating more regularly via email to keep members informed.

This is the first report to be sent out to members via email, to explain new initiatives and to provide background thinking behind some of the decisions that we will make and the policies we are implementing. The reports will be produced by Nick every three months and I would be grateful, if you know of members who are unable to receive emails, if you could print a copy and pass it on.

Please read on, as much more information will follow. I hope this is the start of a successful period for WADAA and I urge you to support the new 'team', not just with suggestions (sometimes complaints) but with offers to become more involved at Committee and Board level - even joining a list of members willing to offer ad-hoc help on improvement work will be appreciated.

## **WADAA Manager – Nick Butterfield**

It's great to be writing as the newly appointed club manager – I'll waste no more time in bringing you up-to-speed on some important issues. There is such a lot going on in the club that I'll apologise in advance for the length of this update!! To keep some structure, I will split the information into 3 sections, 'General', 'Game' and 'Coarse'.

## General

### Club Contacts

Please use the following telephone numbers to contact the club:

Joanne Atkinson, Club Administrator – 07488 534113

Nick Butterfield, Club Manager – 07793 425412

Jim Duncan, Fishery Officer - 07434 674952

### Membership Renewals

It is coming to the time of year when we start to put in place arrangements for next year's memberships. Clearly, incomes from memberships are a major source of revenue for the club. However, items of major expenditure; leases and fish stock for example, are committed many months and years in advance. As such, it is critical for planning purposes that the club can see its membership position at the earliest opportunity.

Furthermore, the club currently has a very large waiting list for 'Full Memberships'. In the past we have accepted payment from renewing members up until the end of February. To maximize our ability to plan, but also to ensure that members coming off the waiting list and joining the club have as much of the year as possible to fish, we would like to strongly encourage that renewals are completed before the end of January from next year. Details of 2021 membership will be released soon.

### Water Quality

We are experiencing some rapid and significant environmental changes which are having serious impacts on the way we manage our fisheries.

The extended periods of drought, particularly in the spring and early summer, are causing challenges that we (and every other angling club in the country) are having to deal with.

- Water temperatures – we are seeing higher water temperatures reached earlier in the year - this year peaking at over 25 degrees C. This causes significant fish stress, particularly on our game fisheries, primarily as a result of depressed dissolved oxygen (DO) levels. The long lasting impacts of fish stress are still being fully evaluated, but there is growing evidence from fisheries around the country that the effects are long lasting and suppress fish activity (and therefore feeding) for an extended period of time.
- Weed – a number of factors have combined, resulting in a rapid growth of weed in our venues, particularly Canadian Pondweed. Enhanced nitrate and phosphate levels from farming activity, restrictions in the use of herbicides and lower water levels caused by changing weather patterns, have led to a huge escalation (in time and cost) to manage this. Weed left un-managed adds further nutrients to the water, increasing the problem in future years. Additionally, decaying weed creates

ammonia – particularly toxic to game fish and further reduces DO levels as a result of bacterial action.

- Algae – increasing blooms of algae create huge problems, again, particularly for the game waters. When these blooms die (often triggered by summer storms) the subsequent oxygen crash can wipe-out entire lake stocks.

We have been dealing with all of these issues on our waters. The capacity of water to support fish life is decreased by all of these factors. As the 'health' of the water reduces, the fish become more lethargic and as a result, stop feeding. Clearly catch rates fall – this is often evidence that there are further issues present. A common response is to add more fish, fisheries across the country are quickly learning that this rapidly makes these problems even worse.

These issues are not going away and as a club we have to adapt and learn to manage these challenges more effectively. We are taking some significant steps:

- Working with experts from the Institute of Fishery Management, we are putting in place a comprehensive and scientific approach to measuring and monitoring the various critical parameters over the course of a year. We'll share more about this in coming months.
- Modifying our stocking plans on the game waters to introduce fish in smaller batches, focused in periods when water temperatures in particular are not at their peak.
- Developing long term relationships with weed and specialist contractors to deploy heavy, specialised kit, multiple times per year. Additionally the club has purchased an aluminium work boat and modified it to be able to take our own weed-cutting attachment. Though not sufficient to complete a 'start-from-scratch' activity, we will deploy it periodically at different venues throughout the year to control growth.
- Addition of mechanical aeration devices to improve DO levels. We will soon commission our prototype solution at Cleabarrow Tarn. We anticipate rolling this out to our other waters, where practical, over the coming year.

These measures, which will address the core of the issues are costly and absorb a large amount of club effort, but will ensure we can maintain the quality of our venues and fishing sustainably into the future. In the short term, this will be high priority expenditure for the club.



## **Game**

### Stocking Plans

The newly formed Game Committee are currently building the stocking plan for 2021. Trout stocking is by far the single largest expenditure for the club and has the most direct impact on each of our members. Taking into account our gathered experience of the last few years regarding the previously discussed environmental changes, we will be building a stocking plan to create the best possible angling returns. The factors which have to be juggled are:

- Trout species
- Fish sizes
- Stocking frequency
- Stocking dates
- Fish suppliers
- Stocking batch sizes

There are many moving parts, and it is a complex task creating a plan – especially when all of our members have differing fishing preferences!

### Fishery Improvements

We received a large number of returns to the member survey that we distributed earlier in the year. The results of this have been analysed and individual fishery plans constructed. The improvements have to go hand-in-hand with the annual budgeting process and also have to be in-line with what we are permitted to do under the terms of our lease agreements.

Toilet facilities were a recurring theme and building on the knowledge we have gained on our coarse fisheries, this is likely to be one of our priorities.



### **Coarse**

#### Castlehead

Following a significant engineering effort, we have re-opened Castlehead with some significant enhancements. Attached is a separate document detailing this work.

#### Cleabarrow Tarn

Following feedback from the survey, we have rectified the longstanding issue with flooding at the back of the tarn by building an extended raised walkway. This work was completed during the summer and we'll add to this in the autumn. Additionally, we'll be adding stone to create some final levelling and improving the 'bivi pitches'.

We expect to be commissioning our off-grid aeration solution soon. This will provide a blueprint for our aeration efforts on our other waters (game and coarse) next year.



### Ratherheath Tarn

Though a vast improvement programme was delivered last year, we'll be adding a further fine layer of stone to the pathways to improve wheelchair access.

### Stocking

Coarse stocking is a winter activity. Fish are on order for our managed venues and we anticipate significant enhancements for all fish species and sizes – something for everyone!

### Natural venues

Though scope for activity on our natural waters is much reduced, we have a number of activities we are underway with:

- Increased bailiffing
- Better access and parking arrangements
- Collaborative fish conservation programmes

I'll release more information about this in the future.

As you can see, the amount of work that the club is involved in is huge. The things we can deliver are limited by 2 factors; money and help. We have been very successful over the last 2 years in securing external funding and this has underpinned many of the massive improvements we have made.

As ever, we need more help. The new committee structure means that people can get involved at a less formal level than as a director and can focus their efforts in the areas that they have most interest.

Dave Farnworth heads up the Game Committee and Dave Hoggarth, the coarse. They would both be grateful of any assistance, no matter how small, that you can offer. Please get in-touch.

Lots of information is posted on the club Facebook page – if you haven't registered already, please do so. The club will thrive on interaction with members, use these platforms to pass on your ideas and observations.

As we head into the winter months or waters are generally less busy, though this can be the best fishing times of the year. Water oxygen levels are at their highest so the trout and predatory species in particular are at their most active.

Tight lines

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