



WILTSHIRE FISHERY
ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I must confess that I did fish rather less during the 2017 season than I usually do, mainly due to the arrival of a new boat in the spring (for sailing in, not fishing!). However when I did get out on the river it didn't seem so productive. My own club's catch book seems to broadly reflect that as our overall numbers for the season were down. That said there were quite a number of larger fish caught. Bob's comments above about wind certainly rang true in my fishing diary, though I have to say that I rather like a bit of wind. It gives me greater confidence when waving my stick around in the air if the riverside trees are doing the same! I think (hope) it gives the trout more confidence too! After a low water season, things were looking a bit dire through the autumn. However since the arrival of the winter rains, really only around Christmas, the aquifers seem to have filled quite quickly and river flows are looking rather healthier for it. Hopefully we're getting a bit of a flush out of all that accumulated silt.

Following the successful workshop on the new permitting regime for in-river work, we have been in discussion with our EA Wessex region colleagues about ways to streamline the permitting of routine river work and reducing the bureaucratic burden, which is otherwise considerable for those operating on SSSI and SAC rivers - the majority of WFA waters. The proposal we've jointly come up is a sort of 'management agreement' under which a trusted river owner/club with a track record of sensitive management may undertake specified types of restoration work on low flood risk reaches without having to apply for a bespoke permit. For higher flood risk reaches approval would need to be sought right up to a full bespoke permit on high-risk reaches. We propose to 'pilot' the idea on the Wilton Club water over the next year. If successful and the EA are happy that flood risk is adequately covered then the plan will be to roll it out to other trusted clubs/syndicates/riparian owners within WFA. We'll keep you apprised of how things are going.

On the subject of Flood Risk Permitting (what used to be Flood Defence Consent), you probably heard about the EA's proposed new charges for permitting. Broadly, they want to recover the cost of regulation through charges for permits, advice provided etc. rather than pay for it out of tax revenue. That means massive increases on the standard charges for all environmental permitting including for 'Flood Risk Activities': under which river restoration and management work is categorised. The scale of charges proposed means that for smaller scale restoration projects on designated rivers the permitting costs would highly likely be greater than actual delivery costs. Not surprisingly there has been uproar within the river management and restoration community. We have put together a robust response on behalf of the WFA to the consultation

proposals, which I submitted yesterday. The five page letter will be placed on the WFA website shortly for you to read. Our key points are that the proposed system is overly bureaucratic and not fit-for-purpose, and that it is complete nonsense to charge volunteer organisations for undertaking work which is directed at achieving the government's own objectives.

Another subject we have had discussions with the EA about is the idea of declaring the River Wylye as a Wild Fish Protection Zone, from its source to its confluence with the Nadder in Wilton. The effect of this would be formally establish the principal that no fish stocking would be allowed, bar exceptional circumstances such as major pollution and wipe-out of the fish population. Already the vast majority of the Wylye is managed as a wild fishery. To my knowledge there is now only one club that still stocks and that has already made a commitment to cease stocking shortly. There is increasing demand for pristine wild trout fishing in sensitively managed surroundings, but there are at present relatively few truly wild chalk streams. I think the Ebbles is the only one. From my own perspective it would be good to see an end to the 'orrid lunkers with cauliflower pectorals which occasionally drift downstream to us. However it's not what I think that matters but rather what the majority of the Wylye owners want. So please, Wylye owners and fishers, please let us know what your thoughts on this are.

Lastly I do hope as many members as possible join us for the WFA Annual Meeting at Langford Lakes on **Saturday March 3rd**. Following a short (but necessary) AGM we will have an illustrated talk by Don Stazicker on trout rise forms and what we can learn from them. Don is a truly intellectual fisherman, fly tier and hi-tech speaker and will be coming armed with all sorts of video footage to show us. It should be a really fascinating talk for any committed trout fisherman. A buffet lunch will be followed by a river walk on the Wylye at Stockton to look at the major restoration project undertaken by the Piscatorial Society there. Do please let Bob Male know if you plan to come on rmale123@vrginmedia.com. See you there!

Tight lines for now!

Tom

From the Hon Sec:

As the trout season comes to an end, I find myself reflecting on a typical mixed season with weather, water levels, weed growth, swans and otters all influencing my experiences on the rivers. After very dry winter and spring conditions, I was concerned that flows would become dangerously low quite early on, but most fisheries seem to have had some decent weed growth, and this has held the water back enough to give some respite to the fish and the anglers.

However, as winter approaches, we need rain, and a lot of it.

My mayfly season was patchy, with some very good hatches, but usually on days when I wasn't fishing, or in places where I wasn't fishing! I did see some great spinner concentrations, notably at West Amesbury, but the fish were beginning to get a bit sated by then, and did not respond very well. I fished through a positive blizzard of fly on the Wylye one afternoon, and did not see a single fish rise. Whoever called it "duffers' fortnight" didn't fish around here!

Is it just me, or has the weather been extra windy this year? Almost every time I fish I seem to have swirling gusty winds to deal with. I read Malcolm Greenhalgh's article in FF&FT in which he looked at the unusually frequent North-westerly winds that had blighted his fishing, he believed, by reducing the hatches of river flies. Maybe it isn't just me.

It is my intention to stand down as Hon Sec at the AGM in March. I originally took it on for three years, and am increasingly aware that I can't really give the role the attention that it deserves. Anyone who would be willing to take the job, please get in touch. It is not a difficult role; it's just that I have too many other commitments. We now have a Treasurer, Mike Denny who will be keeping the books in order, and the big annual job, the weed management and charging process, is now on a secure footing and can continue for the foreseeable future. The Association will have to negotiate its new role and build on what we have already achieved, but the success of the River Keepers' Workshop last year, and all that has come out of it, has shown what can be done.

WATER DEMAND: IMPACT OF THE ARMY REBASING PROGRAMME

As is widely known, the closure of Army bases in Germany and the on-going redeployment of troops to the UK will result in a very large increase in the population of the military bases around Salisbury Plain between 2018 and 2020. In particular Larkhill, Bulford and Tidworth are all experiencing large-scale housing development to accommodate over 7000 additional service personnel and their dependents together with related military infrastructure builds. Clearly this population increase will impact on water demand within the Upper Salisbury Avon catchment but as yet no details have been released of how this demand will be met.

This lack of detail is of concern to three of the main fishing associations on the Upper Avon: Chisenbury, Services Dry Fly (SDFFA) and Salisbury & District (SADAC). The waters of all three of these associations have been impacted historically by the two local abstraction sources operated by Wessex Water plc at Compton (Enford) and Durrington. Additionally there are MOD abstraction sources at Bulford and Larkhill for which data is not available, but which utilise the same aquifer. The rebasing issue and related population increase was highlighted in an e-mail circulated on 19 January 2017 by Robert Keirlie of Natural England who spoke of an "adverse impact on the River Avon...on aquifers and low flows".

Both the Chisenbury and Services Dry Fly associations have taken action to benchmark the current situation on their waters, which it is hoped will provide the necessary evidence should there be suspicion of ecological damage to this designated river in future years. It is hoped that the new "grid" system installed by Wessex Water will also assist in responding to the increased demand as this is designed to balance water demand across the whole of the company's area of responsibility. But in the short term and in order to reassure those likely to be affected, there is undoubtedly an urgent need to publicise the details of Wiltshire Council's water management strategy for the Army Rebasing Programme.

Brig. Tony Wells

WFA Weed cutting dates for 2018.

RIVER WYLYE – Bathampton to Chilhampton		No
CUTTING	CLEARING DOWN	Days
Friday 6 th – Friday 13 th April	Saturday 14 th & Sunday 15 th April	10
Monday 7 th – Sunday 20 th May	Sunday 21 st & Monday 22 nd May	16
Monday 25 th June – Tuesday 10 th July	Wednesday 11 th & Thursday 12 th July	18
		44
RIVER WYLYE – Below Chilhampton		
CUTTING	CLEARING DOWN	
Friday 13 th - Friday 20 th April	Saturday 21 st & Sunday 22 nd April	10
Monday 14 th – Sunday 27 th May	Monday 28 th & Tuesday 29 th May	16
Monday 2 nd – Tuesday 17 th July	Wednesday 18 th & Thursday 19 th July	18
		44
RIVER AVON - Above Crossing 'C'		
CUTTING	CLEARING DOWN	
Saturday 21 st April - Saturday 5 th May	Sunday 6 th & Monday 7 th May	17
Friday 15 th – Wednesday 27 th June	Thursday 28 th & Friday 29 th June	15
Saturday 21 st - Monday 30 th July	Tuesday 31 st July – Wednesday 1 st August	12
		44
RIVER AVON - Below Crossing 'C'		
CUTTING	CLEARING DOWN	
Wednesday 25 th April – Wednesday 9 th May	Thursday 10 th – Friday 11 th May	17
Monday 18 th – Saturday 30 th June	Sunday 1 st – Monday 2 nd July	15
Monday 23 rd July – Wednesday 1 st August	Thursday 2 nd – Friday 3 rd August	12
		44
RIVER NADDER		
CUTTING	CLEARING DOWN	
Friday 6 th - Tuesday 17 th April	Wednesday 18 th & Thursday 19 th April	14
Monday 11 th – Monday 25 th June	Tuesday 26 th & Wednesday 27 th June	17
Thursday 26 th July – Sunday 5 th August	Monday 6 th & Tuesday 7 th August	13
		44

IMPORTANT NOTES

Under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010 - 'Exempt Water Discharge Activity' – The Environment Agency allows members of the Wiltshire Fishery Association to cut weed on the agreed dates and in accordance with the conditions of the exemption.

This programme of dates is now agreed for 2018 and there is no intention to amend it, unless circumstances arise when this is necessary. In that event, the changes will be posted on the WFA website <http://wiltshirefisheryassociation.org> under "NEWS" and circulated to River Email Groups. Before you cut weed, it is your responsibility to check both the website and your email group.

1. Cutting MUST start at the beginning of the dates allowed.
2. You MUST inform your downstream neighbour before cutting and when you have finished clearing down and of any subsequent problems. Regular communication with your upstream and downstream neighbours is essential to ensure trouble-free weed cutting and clearing down.
3. Cutting of weed outside of the authorised dates, without the Agency's consent, constitutes an offence under Section 90 of the Water Resources Act 1991.
4. Unauthorised cutting should be reported immediately to the Environment Agency using their Pollution Hotline Tel: 0800 80 70 60 – Note the exact location (grid reference), date & time & take photographs. Do not enter neighbouring property unless you have their permission to do so.
5. Weed cutting should be undertaken in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of the river habitat. Overzealous cutting of in-river weed (or marginal vegetation) can significantly reduce water levels, which can have a negative impact on invertebrates, fish and other wildlife.
6. In all cases the final two days, as shown separately in the table above, MUST be regarded as 'clearing down only' days and any weed not cut before these days, left uncut. In some circumstances, especially in low water periods, you may need to extend the period of clearing down beyond two days, to ensure there's plenty of time for cut weed to move through the system.
7. Report all blockages and any other weed related issues immediately to:

Bob Wellard Office: 01747851418 Mobile: 07872583910 Email: robertwellard@btinternet.com