

Saturday 26th November 2022, commencing 10:20am

Held at The Lake at Barston, West Midlands Golf Club, Marsh House Farm Lane, Barston, Solihull B92 0LB

Panel: George Stephenson (Chair, Angling Trust to 21 September 2022)
Sir Charles Walker (Chair, Angling Trust from 21 September 2022)
George Graham (Chair, Fish Legal)
Jamie Cook (Chief Executive Officer, Angling Trust and Fish Legal)

Minutes

Welcome from George Stephenson

'Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen – and welcome to this Subscriber Members Annual General Meeting of the Angling Trust and Fish Legal. I am George Stephenson, now ex-Chairman of the Angling Trust and I have on the panel with me here Charles Walker (Chairman of The Angling Trust), George Graham (Chair Fish Legal) and Jamie Cook (CEO AT and FL). Not on the panel, but very much the boss of proceedings, Karen Watkinson (Governance Manager) to whom many thanks for facilitating this meeting and more importantly keeping us all on the straight and narrow re Governance, and Anna Neal (COO – and responsible for all the “numbers” today), who took over from Roland Caley earlier in the year – her first AGM – welcome!

I am thrilled that we are able to meet in person today and to see so many of you here - luckily the World Cup hasn't interfered too much! Whilst Zoom/Teams have enabled us to conduct our AGM meetings pretty successfully over the past two years, I would never have wished to bow out as Chair with the words “George you are muted”! Though perhaps not a bad way to go!

Anyway, as I said, it's great to see so many of you attending this meeting today, thank you again for joining us – we will be recording this mornings agenda so as to facilitate accurate Minute taking.

We have a full programme and it is testament to the progress made by our organisations over the past years that where in the early days the word AGM was met with a shrug of the shoulders from many and a barely Quorate attendance on a damp evening in Birmingham, here today we have such a good gathering and a great agenda.

I will shortly hand over to our new Chairman – Charles Walker – and following the official business of the Angling Trust Meeting, and any questions from you, he will hand over to George Graham, to take us through the Fish Legal Meeting. Following on from the formal business, George will then hand over to our Chief Executive, Jamie Cook, who will show a few short films/series of talks to highlight the work of the Angling Trust and Fish Legal.

Before handing over to Charles, I would just like to say a very few words regarding the immediate past and also the longer period over which I have had the honour to serve as Chair of our great organisation.

Since our Meeting a year ago, when our country was just getting back on its feet after two years of lockdowns, loss of life and the awful trauma brought about by the Covid 19 pandemic, the world was once again thrown into confusion when Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine. The subsequent impact on global power and energy supplies, and supply chains generally have been felt across the world with

rising prices and inflation affecting all of us and the cost of living creating hardship for many in our community.

With this in mind, I would like to reiterate what I said last year, that thanks to the proactive leadership and concerted effort of all of us at the Angling Trust and Fish Legal, we have achieved for our Members, and the wider fishing community, something that all sports and Governing bodies should be proud of – through listening, through lobbying and through dialogue, collaboration and action with anglers throughout the country, the angling trade (who have stepped up to the plate after many years of being slightly reticent!), Government departments and supportive MPs, we have helped anglers to participate and enjoy their sport throughout these challenging times.

Our vision from the start – way back in 2009 - was always to unite the angling community, to give it a powerful voice as a true reflection of the broad community that we represent – I believe today that not only do we have a voice, but we have learnt and are still learning how to use it!

How have we performed this last year? more details on our finances can be found both in the Angler magazine and in the accounts which we have published on the website, but just to highlight last years figures (again thanks to Anna for collating) -

- We are pleased to report a pre-tax surplus of £34,848 for the financial year ended 31st March 2022.*
- The Statement of Financial Position at March 2022 shows our net assets at £705,433, compared with £670,672 for the year before.*
- Work has continued as contractor for the Environment Agency for the delivery of the current National Angling Strategic Services contract and also in our capacity as the National Governing Body for angling in England under our grant award from Sport England.*
- As at 31st March 2022 we completed the final year of the 5 year Sport England funding and have since secured a new five-year funding award from Sport England to deliver the angling contribution to their 10 year Uniting the Movement Strategy.*
- Having reported the record-breaking 40% increase in individual adult members, excluding life members, last year, it is fantastic to report that this level of membership has been maintained through the year with 16,227 members as at March 2022.*
- However, We acknowledge the challenging economic environment ahead and the positive financial results seen over the last few years will provide the reserves necessary to ensure the Angling Trust can continue to drive campaigning efforts and membership services, whilst also continuing to provide investment into competitions and coaching. With this in mind, we are forecasting deficits for the next two financial years as we continue to deliver our ambitious plans for angling.*

Nine years is a long time and I could list any number from a long list of individuals, right through the organisation and thank them for their sterling efforts on behalf of the Angling community – but I believe it has been a team effort, from the Board, the management, the staff and all the volunteers, with initially Mark Lloyd and more recently Jamie Cook as helmsmen/CEO. As such, both personally and on your behalf, I would like to thank the entire team – all Angling Trust staff and volunteers for getting us to where we are today – thank you! I will leave Fish Legal to George, but in the same vein, for my own part it has been a privilege to work with the Fish Legal team - thank you.

Our joint efforts, of which there are too many to mention here, have led to significantly more people taking up fishing – more rod licences sold – and importantly more anglers joining the Angling Trust.

Our partnerships, of which there are also too many to list here, have grown stronger and over the past few years we have invested significantly into the Canal & River Trust's Let's Fish programme, the

Get Hooked on Fishing's various initiatives to encourage more people to fish, and the Missing Salmon Alliances scientific research into the demise of Atlantic salmon in our rivers – to name but three.

I see a very exciting future for the Angling Trust and Fish Legal. For that to happen, and I'm sorry if I'm repeating myself, but we must embrace the many new members who have joined our organisation. Through innovation, collaboration and hard work we must develop a closer relationship with any potential sponsors, influencers and allies. We must appeal to and educate young people in the ways of fish and fishing. We must continue to fight to protect our waterways, our sea and our fish stocks. And of course, very importantly, we must not be afraid to diversify and reach out further to persuade all anglers, whether they be sea anglers, game anglers, coarse anglers, competition anglers, specialist anglers, and even non anglers that by supporting us they are not only strengthening the voice of Angling, but ensuring that the sport we all love is handed on to future generations in a better state than ever.

Before handing over to our new Chairman we have three Resolutions that need to be addressed and signed off – we have received in advance significant votes in support of all three motions, but here they are:

The first being to accept last year's Minutes as being a true reflection of our meeting on 27th November 2021. [Approved – votes received for = 166 x proxy votes + 25]

The second resolution involves a few minor changes to our Subscriber rules. The proposed changes have been reviewed by our Governance Committee and agreed by the Angling Trust Board in September 2022. If anyone has any queries please say so now, before I seek approval - Thank you for your cooperation. [Approved – votes received for = 365 x proxy votes + 13]

The third is the presentation of the accounts for the period ending 31st March 2022. [Noted]

Thank you

At this point, after nine years as your Chair (it doesn't feel that long – though my wife might disagree!) the time has come for someone else to take on the role. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time with both Angling Trust and Fish Legal. I couldn't possibly list all the interesting, talented people I have met and worked with during my time - but it is safe to say I have developed some good friendships and great fishing buddies, and learnt a lot about all things fishy! The Angling Trust has come a long way in the past nine years and I am proud to have played a small part in that development. Board Members, Executives and Volunteers alike, again I salute and thank you all for what you have achieved and what you are looking to achieve in the future.

It is a great honour to have led one of the most active volunteering communities in the UK, which happens also to represent a sport that I love. With that in mind, I would like to say that further to a rigorous and wide ranging recruitment process, where several talented individuals came forward, one stand out candidate emerged – he is now sitting next to me, has become my friend, and has my full support as our new Chairman. An accomplished and very enthusiastic angler, Charles Walker is a true "conviction politician" whose experience in the House of Commons will undoubtedly benefit the Angling Trust. I'm going to let Charles speak for himself as to his reasons for taking on the role and his vision for the Angling Trust, but Ladies and Gentlemen I believe we are extremely fortunate to have him as our Chairman. Charles – over to you - Thank you'

Sir Charles Walker addressed the meeting:

'Can I first of all thank George for the warm words, which are not entirely true. He said I was an accomplished and enthusiastic angler, I am enthusiastic, but Jamie knows I am not yet accomplished! I hope that will follow.

This is an amazing organisation that punches well above its weight, both as a sport but also as a lobbying organisation in the Palace of Westminster, the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The reason that you have a voice is because you have a fantastic professional team led by Jamie and your fantastic voluntary directors led by George. The Angling Trust works hand in hand with Fish Legal, which has had notable successes over the past years, great successes in the year just gone and will continue to have great successes going forward. I wish we didn't need it, but we do as unfortunately there are people out there who continue to pollute our rivers and behave appallingly.

I was asked what my ambition for the Angling Trust is when I took over the Chair. The simple answer is to keep up the good work and support the professional team. What we need to do as a Board is to support their efforts and endeavour. We as a sport punch above our weight and I want to see, along with Jamie, our membership grow. Growing membership is fiendishly difficult. We did well over the Covid lockdown because we were the sport that had people on the river and lake banks and that was reflected in increased membership. We have to try to keep those members, which will be very difficult. We all know that family budgets are under stress and people will be making difficult decisions. We will need to work to retain our membership. We also need to recruit new people to the riverbank. We have had a successful 2 or 3 years and friends in the angling trade have also done well. But although the sport is a cause for good; good physical health, good mental health, great community work, it is not universally popular. There is a small but growing lobby, which doesn't like the idea of angling. We need to be aware of that. The best way to counter that threat is to have new members and younger members joining us and telling their story.

Those are the things I hope to do and I hope we remember that angling is fun. We do it because we enjoy it, because it makes us feel good, because we have a community of anglers that we share time and stories with. We must never, ever lose sight of that. Of course there are huge issues that we as anglers have to face: the increasing demand on water resources; facing down the water companies; the pollutants going into our rivers from farming that destroy fly life; slurry choking spawning beds. We must never lose sight of the fact that most people go fishing and love our sport because they enjoy it, so must always keep a smile on our face.

That is a brief introduction from your new Chair. I have enormous boots to fill, George Stephenson has led this organisation to an entirely new level and we owe him a huge debt of thanks. I am now going to hand over to our Chief Executive, Jamie Cook.'

Jamie Cook addressed the meeting:

'Volunteering is the absolute lifeblood of both of our organisations and the clubs and fisheries that provide the infrastructure for us as anglers to go fishing. I would like to acknowledge three volunteers now, all of whom are in the room with us.

Firstly, Brian Owen, National Federation of Sea Anglers, Senior Official at the point of transition to the Angling Trust in 2014. Brian took on the role of National England Marine Selection Chair. He has continued to support through difficult periods, both for the sector and his own health. His determination has maintained the teams and the success that we have had in that area. The angling and sea angling community owe a great deal to Brian and his fellow volunteers. We have a lot of work to do in that area, but we are turning a corner. I would like to say a huge thank you to Brian as he steps down.

Secondly, is someone that many of you know, David Kent. I was incredibly proud to draft a submission for David for the Queen's final Honours List. It is testimony that within 24 hours everyone who was asked to provide a letter of support had responded. On Monday David will be collecting that

Honour and I want to thank David for the huge contribution to our sport and the enormous difference you have made.

The final recognition I want to make today is to my outgoing Chair, George Stephenson. I joined the organisation from a completely different sector and received an incredible amount of personal support, advice and had trust placed in me by George to develop the team in the way that I wanted to. It was incredibly important to know I had the backing of my Chair. All of the board members of the Angling Trust and committee members of Fish Legal are volunteers and give up their time freely. George has given a huge amount of time, as other members have, and he has had a challenging time over the last nine and a half years bringing the organisations together. People talk about leaving something better than you found it and George has done that in spades. I made a proposal to the Angling Trust Board, which I am delighted to say was voted for unanimously, so from today onwards we would like to honour George as an Honorary Vice President of the Angling Trust.'

George Stephenson introduced the Q&A section of the Angling Trust AGM:

'We now have time for any questions. I do have four questions which were asked in advance, which I will read out in full. The first two will be taken together.

Question 1 from John Newman – Level 2 Coach - Does the Angling Trust agree that the antiquated byelaws, that vary according to different Environment Agency areas, allowing freshwater fish to be legally taken should be updated with the aim that it becomes illegal to remove any fish."

Question 2 from Charlie Halliday – Coach - What is the Angling Trust's position on the current laws relating to the taking of coarse fish in England and Wales and are they campaigning for any changes to it?

Questions 1 and 2 answered together by Mark Owen, Head of Fisheries, Angling Trust:

'Whilst this and a similar question that follows implies that these byelaws are antiquated and vary between different Environment Agency Regions, in fact the byelaws that apply to the taking of freshwater fish now are a national byelaw which was brought in in 2010 following extensive consultation by the Environment Agency. The reasons behind removing Area variations were the very ones identified in the question and to ensure consistency across the country, the aim was to allow a very small daily allowance of pike and grayling for personal consumption and a small number for live or dead baits.

It was and remains the case that taking fish without fishery owners' permission constitutes theft, the byelaws made this a byelaw offence that the Environment Agency can prosecute. It also remains a Theft Act offence to take fish from any private water (flowing or still), including "free waters", without permission of the owner. Where this is of pike, grayling and small coarse fish within the river bag limits, this is a Theft Act-only matter: where it is of fish outside the bag limits, it's also a byelaw offence.

I have requested and received the consultation responses from the Environment Agency and of course the Angling Trust responded at the time of this consultation which we would be happy to provide to you if you wish.

Around half of respondents felt the byelaws should allow some fish to be taken, including for live/dead baiting and personal consumption.

There have also been a number of clarifications of the wording of the byelaws, the most recent being earlier this year, available on the government website.

We will consider if a further review would be needed but would need very strong factual evidence that this is having an impact nationally before the government would consider this.

There were also comments about complexity and responsibility: over the last few years we have done a lot of awareness raising and education around the laws, the most recent example being a Fisheries Enforcement workshop which held two weeks ago, with 133 attendees, where the byelaws were explained in detail to inform club bailiffs.

Mark also noted that the subject is rarely raised and has not been raised at a Regional Forum for some years. The questions received are the first instance of a formal enquiry on this matter.'

Question 3 from Steve Witney - I understand that our new president formerly voted against the motion by the government earlier this year to stop the pollution of our waterways by Water Companies' sewage discharging thousands of hours and tonnes of un-treated sewage into our rivers. If that is the case, and I ask for it to be clarified, I'd like to ask how the Angling Trust, and the new president himself, can justify taking on such a key role when so much of what the AT is doing is increasingly aimed at stopping this disgusting, continual pollution that even with the new law will continue to pollute our rivers for many years to come, and to assure us that this background will not hamper the current and future anti pollution strategy and objectives of the AT?

Answered by Sir Charles Walker, Chair, Angling Trust: *'In 2020 the Government introduced the Environment Bill, which is now the Environment Act, which is a really good piece of legislation. As far as water was concerned it was designed to improve our capacity to store water, which still doesn't go far enough to address issues around farm run-off and road run-off pollution and sewage discharge. The Duke of Wellington, member of the House of Lords, decided to table an amendment that would accelerate the part of the Bill that related to sewage discharges, which was the right thing to do. The reason the government couldn't accept it was that it was uncoded. The view of the government was that to do it the timeframe would cost between £150 and £600 billion, which is the equivalent of the spend on the Covid response (£450 billion) plus help with energy bills (£150 billion). The exact figure was unknown and uncoded – that was the reason the government opposed the Duke of Wellington amendment. The government, with my support, then sat with the Duke of Wellington and Phillip Dunne MP and came up with an alternative amendment that was approved by the House of Commons and approved by the House of Lords.*

The difficult thing about politics is that a lie is around the country via Twitter, before the truth 'can get its boots on'. So people who voted against the Duke of Wellington amendment in the House of Commons were positioned as favouring having sewage put into rivers. This is something that has been happening for hundreds of years, but we are now in a position where the water companies have to produce a five year coded rolling programme for discharge reductions, which is going to cost around £56 billion.

There are two ways open to politicians to amend and shape legislation. You can use political muscle, which is what the Duke of Wellington and my colleague Phillip Dunne MP did. I've done it before and it can be effective and it was effective in getting the government to sit down with interested parties and improve the Environment Bill. The reason I didn't get involved in that is because I had done my own deal over six months with the government around abstraction, getting the guidance around the Bill extended and the definition of damage to include damage by abstraction, that would allow water companies and the regulators to switch-off damaging bore holes. One thing you don't do in politics is play both

sides. It would have been wrong of me to have secured ministerial support for my amendment and then at the first opportunity voted against other amendments.

I have worked behind the scenes for angling since I've been an MP, for 17 years. I have great relationships across the House of Commons, which I put to use as Chair of the Angling Trust. It was no accident that we were all fishing during lockdown, when no other sport was allowed. That's because, not only do you have a great representative body, but you also have people like me on the inside working alongside ministers making the arguments, trusted to get things done.'

There was a challenge from the floor, from Glyn Marshall, that Charles's voting record would remain the 'elephant in the room' for anglers.

Sir Charles stood by his earlier response and restated his position.

Question 4 from Dave Cox - Can the Angling Trust approaches all member clubs via means of a questionnaire to access the implications of the damage done to fisheries by Otters"

Answered by Mark Owen, Head of Fisheries: *'We are looking into the viability of a full members survey in the next financial year and we will consider multiple areas for inclusion. The EA have already provided around £3m towards predation via the funds we administer to help support clubs and fisheries in combating predation as well as funding under the contract with us two full time members of Angling Trust staff who are acknowledged experts both in the UK and Europe in advising fisheries on mitigating the impacts against predation.'*

George Stephenson invited questions from the floor:

Question 5 from Dale Whittaker, Nottingham Piscatorial Society – How can we get our message out to those who don't know about the Angling Trust and increase our membership? Has the use of TV been considered to promote individual membership?

Answered by Jamie Cook, Chief Executive Officer, Angling Trust: *'Really good question and Nottingham Piscatorial Society are a good example, as a recent survey of members showed that 9% of members are individual members of the Angling Trust. We need to do more through the club and fisheries infrastructure to explain more about the work that we do to support clubs and fisheries and the membership team will be focussing on articulating that proposition in the coming months.'*

Individual membership is more difficult. On start-up the Angling Trust was aiming for 100,000 members, but the world doesn't work like that. From my experience of running membership organisations and subscription businesses, it is quite difficult to portray value unless you are right the court of what you want to do. Fundamentally anglers want access to angling, which is what clubs and fisheries can give them. As an organisation we are not set up in the same way as British Canoeing who can offer access to water for their members, we would have to fundamentally change our organisation and potentially rub alongside the areas that our clubs and fisheries, who are so important to our sport.

On the question of growth, Ambassadors in our sport are incredibly important. There were two levels through Covid. Firstly we were denied the ability to go fishing for the first time ever. The anglers who were told they couldn't go fishing looked around and said 'who is going to do something on our behalf?'. They all looked to the Angling Trust and Fish Legal to do something. We stepped up. With the support of Charles and many others, we were

hugely successful. Angling Trust membership grew, participation grew, spiking after a decline for 9 or 10 years, because we were on the front pages. We have to get our elbows out, because there are huge pressures, from a screen culture or a generation engaging with technology. But looking at the statistics I don't think there is a lack of demand for people wanting to get outside and do things that interest them and that they enjoy. What we fail to do to the level that I'd like to see us do is transition those general anglers and articulate to them why it's important to join the Angling Trust. I have gone on record to say that I was like that. I've fished my whole life, but it took looking into the great work that the Angling Trust and Fish Legal do for me to personally join. I have fellow volunteer Board directors who have said the same thing.

TV has opportunities, Social Media is a big opportunity and we are going to hear later about the Reel Education Programme which will launch properly next year. We are creating a funnel of new anglers, but there is no point for us unless they join the Angling Trust. We will be introducing a new junior membership for next year. We need to work through the club and fishery infrastructure to educate members on what we do and why it is valuable. We've got to do more with Ambassadors and Influencers to talk positively about why an Angling Trust is necessary. Ultimately when you speak to anglers and you talk about what we do – they join. We have Toby who has joined us as a videographer and working in social media. We are starting to get some really nice films together, including the Love Fishing, Love Nature film and some more that will be shown today. We have to engage with people the way they want to be engaged with, but we are a broad church, so we will never be able to do everything for everyone. It is what keeps me up at night – how do we get more people to join. As a not-for-profit, we can invest every penny back into the organisation to do more work. That's my role and we have to take the clubs and fisheries on the journey with us.

Question 6 from Peter Fieldhouse – Answered a question on FaceBook – Who is the National Governing Body (NGB) for Angling? Replied to say the Angling Trust and consequently received a number of responses, some abusive, stating that the Environment Agency is the NGB in England and would not accept that the Angling Trust is the NGB.

Answered by Jamie Cook, Chief Executive Officer, Angling Trust: *There are 46 National Governing Bodies, I sit on the NGB CEO Forum and this is something that comes up in other sports as well. For example, does anyone know who the NGB for golf are? It is England Golf, but they don't set the rules, the R&A set the rules. There are also lots of PGA tours and New Liv trying to challenge. England Golf have a role determined by Sport England as the NGB, to develop the sport and grow it. It is irrelevant whether NGBs are private businesses or not-for-profit organisations, that is how NGBs work.*

This came up in Covid – people kept saying 'you are not the NGB', 'you self-appointed'. When we got people back fishing, Phil Smith, Head of Sport at Sport England did a video and wrote a statement to anglers telling them that the eyes of the sporting community were on them and as the one sport who could go back and participate, he implored anglers not to mess it up! He defined the fact that he is the person at Sport England who decides who is an NGB and who isn't. To be honest, it doesn't matter what certain individual groups think, the fact remains that Sport England decide who the NGBs are and they recognise the Angling Trust as the NGB in England for angling. Wales is slightly different as Sport Wales works in a different way. Sport Wales funding is around elite participation and Welsh representative teams. The other misnomer is that Sport England do not fund elite participation. Therefore we cannot spend a penny of the money received from Sport England on sending England teams abroad. UK Sport is the body which funds elite athletes, but they only fund Olympic/ Paralympic/

Commonwealth sports, meaning other sports have to find funding from other avenues, e.g. sponsorship, membership, donations. There is a lot of mis-information around the area of NGBs, but if you contact Sport England to ask who is the NGB, they will forward a link which lists the 46 NGBs and for angling it is the Angling Trust.

Peter Fieldhouse further asked if there could be a media campaign aimed at the non-members to clarify that the Angling Trust is the NGB?

Answered by Jamie Cook, Chief Executive Officer, Angling Trust: *In most sports you have to be a member of the NGB to participate. For example: if a child joins a football club, by association they are an affiliate member of the FA; to compete in a cycling event you have to be a member of British Cycling. The Angling Trust works across two government departments: DCMS – where NGBs are selected through Sport England; and DEFRA where the Environment Agency sits and where the licencing of fishing takes place as environmental activity. This results in some confusion and the challenge from anglers about why they have to pay twice. They believe that if they pay their Rod Licence the Environment Agency should do what the Angling Trust does. But the Environment Agency is a statutory regulatory body, they are not representing anglers directly. They are there to deliver services on the hypothecated tax of the Rod Licence and every penny should go back into fisheries. What we need is a representative body for anglers, putting pressure on the Environment Agency to spend it efficiently. That is what we do. The pollution and campaigns work that we do is funded from core membership. There are elements where we partner with the Environment Agency, where our objects align. It would be great to get hold of a database from the Environment Agency to tell our story to all of the anglers out there.*

Sir Charles asked if there have been any negotiations with the Environment Agency to have details of the Angling Trust included on the Rod Licence.

Mark Owen, Head of Fisheries responded: *There have been discussions, however the Environment Agency are reluctant to include anything. Paper licences do have the 'Check, Clean, Dry' symbol, but that took intervention from DEFRA.*

Jamie Cook added: *There has been research by the Environment Agency on the possibility of asking for donations for specific projects (e.g pollution, children's participation), so discussions are ongoing with the Environment Agency on how to ring-fence donations and deliver the projects.*

The Dutch model of public waters was briefly discussed. If the Angling Trust had waters on a passport scheme that you could fish as part of your membership, that would result in increased membership.

Question 7 from the floor – In relation to the passing of the Environment Regulations – is it possible this is a 'get out of jail' for the water companies?

Answered by Sir Charles Walker – *No, ultimately the Environment Act improves on the situation. It is always open for incoming governments to bring in their own legislation and their own Environment Act. We still don't have enough reservoir and storage capacity. We need to build more reservoirs, particularly in the East and South East. Abingdon has been talked about for 17 years and is still no further developed. There are reservoirs in the Reservoir Plan that are not going to be built for 60 years. I would hope that an incoming*

government will look at storage capacity which will require significant capital investment from water companies.

George Stephenson thanked the audience and the panel, closed the Angling Trust Subscriber Members meeting and handed over to George Graham for the Fish Legal Annual General Meeting.

Angling Trust Subscriber AGM 2022 - Ends

Saturday 26th November 2022, commencing 11:20am

Held at The Lake at Barston, West Midlands Golf Club, Marsh House Farm Lane, Barston, Solihull B92 0LB

Panel: George Graham (Chair, Fish Legal)
George Stephenson (Chair, Angling Trust/ Fish Legal Committee Member to 21 September 2022)
Sir Charles Walker (Chair, Angling Trust/ Fish Legal Committee Member from 21 September 2022)
Jamie Cook (Chief Executive Officer, Angling Trust and Fish Legal)

Minutes

Welcome from the Fish Legal Chair (George Graham)

'Thank you Charles, and welcome. And thank you all for joining us today – your support makes it possible for us to carry on our work.

We'll come on to the formal business of the annual meeting in a moment, but I wanted to open by talking a bit about the growing challenges we are facing, and how Fish Legal is evolving to tackle them.

Our core objective, and the one we are probably best known for, is to take legal action on behalf of our members against those who pollute their waters. But we also have a goal of promoting water quality in our rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters, and to encourage improvements in the sustainable management of the UK's aquatic environment. That is why we have stepped up our efforts to gain publicity for our work; we see this effort as critical to protecting our waters.

Two things remain at the heart of what we do: the first is our legal expertise, which enables us to use the law to make polluters pay, but also to turn the spotlight on gaps in the regulatory framework, or on failures to enforce the rules; the second is our emphasis on action, rather than words – the publicity is not an end in itself, it only follows when we are able to take effective action.

An example is the River Wye, where anglers, and many others, have been disturbed by the proliferation of algal blooms on one of our great river catchments. Penny Gane will talk in more detail about this later, but this case illustrates the sort of action we are increasingly compelled to take.

In the first place, we are having to step in where government bodies are failing to take action. It won't surprise any of you that we don't expect the budgets of the environmental protection agencies to grow appreciably in the next few years, so we expect these failures to increase.

Secondly, we need to highlight gaps in the law and regulation, gaps that are failing our rivers. In the case of the Wye, there is a clear shortcoming in planning that we have exposed through the Courts: council planning authorities believe they can rely on the environmental regulator to properly assess the impact of pollution, but the environmental regulator is simply not looking properly at pollution risks.

The third point this illustrates is that effective action may not mean that we win. We believe we have to take on more cases where our chances of winning are in fact pretty low. The bar to clear in a judicial review is very high, so in many cases the best outcome we can look for is that we shift

people's minds and encourage them to think more deeply about future similar planning applications, not that we actually win the case outright. And that, we hope, is what we have achieved with the Wye case.

You'll find a lot more case studies in the Angler magazine.

To meet the increasing demands on us we have expanded our legal team – so welcome to Angela, who has joined Penny, Andrew, Cameron, Geoff, Justin and Rob. I hope you will join me and the Fish Legal Committee in thanking the team for the incredible work they do on behalf of our members.

Financially, we believe Fish Legal is in good shape. The financial results for the year show a deficit of £11,000; we spent more on scientific experts and on external legal counsel, and we recovered less of these legal costs from other parties. But our balance sheet is in a strong position, so the Committee believes we have strong foundations for carrying on our work. That is thanks to you, our membership, without whose subscriptions we would not be able to carry on. Thank you for your support.

And I'd like to add my personal thanks to George Stephenson, who as chair of the Angling Trust has been a valued member of the Fish Legal Committee for as long as I can remember. Thank you for all you have done for both organisations and for the advice and support you have given me.

Now to the formal business of the meeting.

The questions being put to you are:

- Approval of the minutes of last year's meeting, which I hope you will have found on our website; **[Approved - votes received for = 127 x proxy votes + 15]**
- The re-election of the existing Committee members; **[Approved - votes received for = 127 x proxy votes + 12]**
- The election to the Committee of Sir Charles Walker, the new chair of our sister organisation, the Angling Trust; **[Approved - votes received for = 127 x proxy votes + 12]**
- The approval of the accounts for the last financial year; **[Approved - votes received for = 124 x proxy votes + 20]**
- The re-appointment of our auditors, Adkin Sinclair. **[Approved - votes received for = 142 x proxy votes + 15]**

Thank you very much for your support for those motions. Thank you most of all for your continuing support for Fish Legal. Without you we wouldn't be able to carry on with our mission to protect fish and fishing.

Any questions?

There were no further questions.

Fish Legal Committee AGM 2022 - Ends

Programme of Informative Sessions for Members

The following sessions were run for attendees:

1. An opportunity to meet our Campaigns team, Stuart Singleton-White (AT Head of Campaigns), Hannah Rudd (AT Policy & Advocacy Manager), Kristian Kent (AT Campaigns & Advocacy Manager) and hear more about their work, including videos detailing:
 - What We Do – Angling Bans and Access
 - What We Do – Pollution
2. Competition Angling, with Steve Fitzpatrick (Head of Competitions) and Pete Emery (AT Director)
3. Sea Angling, with Hannah Rudd (AT Policy & Advocacy Manager) and Stuart Singleton-White (AT Head of Campaigns)
4. Game Angling/ Migratory Specie, with Mark Owen (AT Head of Fisheries) and Stephen Beverley (AT Director)
5. Water Quality Monitoring – practical demonstration, with Kristian Kent (AT Campaigns & Advocacy Manager)
6. Fish Legal Case Study, with Penny Gane (Head of Legal Practice, Fish Legal)
7. What We Do – Getting People Fishing (video)
8. Reel Education Programme, with Richard Hadley (AT Coaching Manager)

Angling Trust/Fish Legal AGMs 2022

In Attendance:

George Stephenson
Sir Charles Walker
George Graham
Jamie Cook
Anna Neal
Alex Clegg
Karen Watkinson
Ashley Bailey
Ray Bailey
Brian Owen
David Kent
David Lancaster
M David Harper
Eric Edwards
Gary Herman
Gary Wright
Giancarlo Malosti
Glyn Marshall
Dale Whittaker
John Cheyne
Howard Thomas
Hannah Rudd
Keith Starkey
Stephen Beverley
Kelly Latimer
Peter Emery
Kris Kent
Mark Owen
Michael Shaw
Noel Robbins
Paul Marsh
Penny Gane
Peter Fieldhouse
Peter Neale
Sebastian Coe
Steve Fitzpatrick
Stuart Singleton-White
Toby Curzon
Vincent Mason
Dave Evason
Richard Hadley

Clubs in Attendance:

Nottingham Piscatorial Society
Wickstead Carp Lake
Stratford Upon Avon AA