

ANTRIM AND DISTRICT ANGLING ASSOCIATION. REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN MAURICE PARKINSON TO 2017 AGM.

Welcome to our AGM.

Another year has passed and like previous years we continue to have major challenges. Perhaps this is the nature of the world, with greater pressure on anything natural. In short it means the intellectual requirement is greater than ever and means that there is a greater requirement on all members to play their part.

Many in and indeed outside the club have made a significant effort and it is fair to say because of this we have at least managed to hold our own.

Planning Issues.

These are never far away along the length of the river and this is a constant battle. Jim Gregg has made an enormous effort to make the best case for the 'river' on many occasions and through his good efforts progress has been made. Jim, the Association is very grateful to you. Many thanks.

A major issue that has been developing is that of the Antrim and Newtownabbey Plan 2030.

A number of us have attended a series of workshops to make the case for the 'river' and it seems from the initial document we have made some progress. However this is only a start and there is a long way to go. There is in print and freely available an Options Paper and I appeal to all members to obtain their free copy and respond to the Council on behalf of the 'river'. The Association will be making a response but members do make the effort.

The Great Repeal Bill

Going through Parliament at the moment is the Great Repeal Bill which I understand is legislation which will permit the repeal of many European Directives many of which we have been able to use to help protect our rivers and the environment. The Water Directive is a prime example and this is deeply worrying. This potentially does not make matters any simpler/easier just at a time when we were a little bit more informed about the current directives. Worrying times indeed.

Help from others.

I have already touched on this subject but I must emphasise that the success of the Club in most aspects depends on the help and assistance of others outside the Association. The list is enormous and I can only mention a few in this report.

The work of the Six Mile Trust must be top of the list and we are enormously indebted to it, and of course its Chairman is our own Jim Gregg. Jim we can not thank you and the Trust enough.

The Ulster Angling Federation works very hard on many fronts for the angling clubs in the province and in this respect the Association also benefits. It also helps that the Chairman, Jim Haughey and the Federation's Development Officer Robbie Marshall are members of the Association but I would emphasise there is no suggestion of any form of favouritism.

Government Departments and our local Council are important 'cogs in the wheel' and whilst we have major issues with these from time to time, we are much indebted to them when they contribute to the cause. This was especially so when DCAL assisted us with a major river enhancement scheme above Paradise Walk during the autumn. John Kane in DCAL deserves special mention.

As an Association we do not recognise the importance of landowners along the river system. Many of these contribute very significantly either directly or indirectly to the river and the Association. One person I would like to mention is Ross Kenny who has gone to considerable lengths to enable us to make the river improvements above Paradise Walk.

However, a word of warning. It is critical that we must never take this contribution from land owners for granted. I must emphasise to members that landowners deserve our utmost respect and must be treated fairly at all times. It is particularly important that the Association is never used to cast unfair criticism publicly or otherwise and I remind members the constitution does not permit this type of situation. On a personal level I say to members that when they step outside the authority of the Association they are on their own. I fully appreciate that we encourage members to report pollution etc. but please be very careful what you say. Exactly the same situation applies to private house owners. This is not an easy position to manage for any of us but all of us must put the interest of the Association first and foremost.

We are very fortunate over the years that the levels of rubbish left behind on river banks is very low so thank you to everyone especially the bailiffs who have been taking a keen interest in this issue.

The work of our bailiffs

As members we should not forget about the work of our bailiffs. These guys are critical to the success of the club and at times operate under difficult circumstances. As always I ask members to give these guys as much help as possible. Thanks bailiffs for your help to the Association.

Work parties

It is very disappointing that so few members come forward to participate in the work parties. Members should not wait for notification but rather be proactive and make contact with Bobby Bethel or send a note to the secretary. River fly monitoring is a very important initiative on the river and we are looking for more to undertake this task throughout the river system.

The state of the river

I do not need to remind members of the incident in 2008, but please beware that this type of scenario is just around the corner. We all need to be vigilante.

With this background it is very pleasing to see many good AMI results and a range of other indicators that show that the river at the moment is in quite a good state. The autumn dollaghan run was excellent and Richard Kennedy of AFBI has shown in his work that the fish stocks across a range of sizes etc. are good. Needless to say there is significant room for improvement.

Purchase of fishing rights.

This is an ongoing and extremely sensitive issue but it is good to know that good progress has been made. Legal issues always take time.

Potterswall

The dam is now subject to reservoir legislation meaning that there is a need to manage this facility accordingly to the law. We have therefore additional responsibilities to bear.

Thanks to Gerry Wilson and Seamus Connell and their team that the dam is well managed and is a rather nice place to be never mind to fish. During the coming months we hope to make some further improvements.

Communication with members

Thanks to those who have assisted with this task This is a very important topic and needs diligence of a high order.

Please beware that when making entries on social media sites that they can not be abusive or defamatory in any way. As indicated before there is the threat of being sued or if in contravention of the Association constitution and rules, the additional possibility of being disciplined.

The role of the committee.

As I said last year an organisation or business is only as good as its management team or ruling committee and this organisation is no different.

It is always important to point out that the role of the committee and therefore individual members is to act collectively on behalf of all the members and this requires a sense of duty to the Association and to the river.

We have been very fortunate that the Association has been in this state for a long time and this past year's committee has been exemplary in that respect. Many thanks to the Committee for its hard work and especially to those who have been on Committee and have decided not to return.

As always it is important to remember that Committee members are doers as opposed to talkers and there is always a need for good leaders. The Committee is strongly lead and I would like to say a special thanks to our secretary Allen Fleming, treasurer Andrew McGall and Vice Chairman John Mitchell. Thanks a lot guys for your assistance and support; this has been invaluable.

Conclusion.

This report only deals with a few of the activities of the Association but I hope it provides enough information to show how the Association is managed and has performed during the past year.

To maintain a good quality angling club requires good contributions from members across the Association and I would ask members to come forward to help out in whatever capacity. In this way we can have one of the best angling clubs around.

During the coming year, may you enjoy good health and successful angling on our river.