

Minutes

Saturday 30th November 2019, commencing **11am**

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

Welcome from the Chair (George Graham)

“Welcome, and I would like to echo the other George’s thanks to you all for coming and for your support of our organisations.

The financial year to March 2019 was a busy one for Fish Legal. Our lawyers have successfully secured compensation for many of our members whose waters have been polluted.

There are lots of great case studies in this year’s edition of The Angler, which includes a 10-year anniversary supplement. I want to pick out three themes, where we have seen increasing activity:

- 1) Abstraction. I hope it won’t sound insensitive at a time when a number of communities are just getting back on their feet after flooding, but water resources are under increasing strain across many parts of the country. In 2018 Southern Water were forced to temper their water abstraction ambitions on the lower River Test and commit to major long-term infrastructure investments instead. But just one year later they applied for a drought permit to allow increased abstraction this summer, justified by an alleged ‘exceptional shortage of rain’. Fish Legal argued for much better protections for the Test’s fragile migratory species, and the hearing Inspector agreed in his report that these need to be accelerated.*
- 2) Hydropower. Fish Legal has responded to a peak in requests for assistance from members concerned about potentially damaging hydro-scheme applications being submitted ahead of the end of the Feed-in-Tariff scheme in early 2019. A number of applications have been withdrawn. We have also secured changes to protect fisheries on schemes that are already operational.*
- 3) Anaerobic digesters: last year we secured compensation for Gloucester Angling Club, after tonnes of digestate were released into the river Leadon, killing thousands of chub, dace, bream and roach, as well as endangered bullhead, lampreys and eels. We are still representing members after the disastrous 2016 pollution of the Teifi, which killed tens of thousands of salmon and sewin. Natural Resources Wales decided not to prosecute. Realistically, I believe we must expect to have to pick up more of the strain in cases like this. Neither the Environment Agency nor NRW have anywhere near the budgets they need to pursue all the cases they should be pursuing.*

I want to thank Penny and the legal team for all their hard work to manage this growing caseload and secure redress for our members.

Financially, income rose last year to £523,000 from £456,000 in the prior year. The increase resulted principally from higher than expected costs recovered in successful court cases. Balancing that, we spent more than anticipated on barristers and experts to support our cases, with total costs also rising to £498,000, from £449,000 in the prior year. That means we recorded a surplus of £25,000 for the year, which has strengthened our reserve funds and enabled us to invest in some much-needed improvements to the legal software supporting our team.

We are only able to take on contested cases on your behalf because of the strength of our investment fund. The fund has grown significantly over the past few years in a favourable market to £1.2 million

and I am very grateful to the Committee of volunteers who also serve on the Board of the ACA Trustee Company Ltd., which oversees the management of our finances. Over the last year we have taken steps to reduce significantly the investment management costs of this fund.

We are very conscious of the 70-year history of our organisation (previously known as the Anglers' Co-operative Association and the Anglers' Conservation Association), and that our reserves represent many generous donations and legacies over the decades. We respect the wishes of these donors by managing our funds prudently and ensuring that they are only used for the purposes they were intended. Without the fund, we would not be able to take on the difficult cases, where if we lose, we could face many thousands of pounds in adverse costs.

Particular thanks on this occasion should go to Mark Lloyd, who stepped down this year as chief executive of Fish Legal as well as of the Angling Trust. And we look forward to welcoming Jamie Cook when he takes up this role in January.

Thanks, too, to Paul Stafford, who is stepping down after serving on the Fish Legal committee but has agreed to remain on our Legal Advisory Committee. The Legal Advisory Committee, chaired by Andrew Nathan, gives us the benefit of their expertise and experience to support and advise the legal team through some of our most thorny legal cases. We thank them.

I am pleased that we have been able to recruit two outstanding new members to the Fish Legal Committee, Mike Greenwood and Dean Luker. Along with the rest of the committee, we will shortly be asking for your approval for their appointments.

We now need to hold a number of votes to re-elect the Committee and Treasurer, adopt the accounts and to re-appoint the Auditors Adkin Sinclair."

Approval of the minutes of the 2018 AGM

The Chair asked for comments prior to approving the minutes of last year's AGM. None were received and the minutes were duly approved.

Re-election of the Committee

The Chair sought approval to re-elect the Committee by block vote, in addition to the proxy votes already received in favour:

George Graham
Phil Chamberlain
Tim Goode
Mike Greenwood
Michael Heylin OBE
Jamie Lamb
Dean Luker
Charles Nichols
George Stephenson

This course of action was seconded and carried by a show of hands. The Committee was duly re-elected.

Re-election of the Treasurer

The Chair sought approval to re-elect the Treasurer (Roland Caley), in addition to the proxy votes already received in favour.

This course of action was seconded and carried by a show of hands. The Committee was duly re-elected.

Approval of the accounts for the period ending 31 March 2019

The Chair sought approval of the accounts, in addition to the proxy votes already received in favour.

This course of action was seconded and carried by a show of hands. The accounts for the period ending 31 March 2019 were approved.

Appointment of the auditors Adkin Sinclair

The Chair sought approval to appoint the auditors, Adkin Sinclair, for a further year.

This course of action was seconded and carried by a show of hands. Adkin Sinclair were duly appointed for a further year.

The Chair made the following closing statement:

“Thank you very much for your support of these 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.”

No questions were received from the floor. Members were invited to contact staff or Committee Members during the breaks.

The meeting closed at 11.25am

Angling Trust/Fish Legal AGMs

In Attendance:

Neil Berry
Leva Breitereyte
Adam Brown
Chris Burt
Pat Byrne
Roland Caley
Owen Chapman
Steve Clamp
Sarah Collins
Clive Copeland
Paul Davis
Bryan Dray
Tim Earthrowl
Eric Edwards
Mal Ellison
Peter Emery
Andrew Fairclough
Terence Fell
Peter Fieldhouse
Samantha Frost-Jones
Penny Gane
George Graham
Mike Greenwood
Robert Gregson
Paul Harding
Geoff Hardy
Michael Heylin OBE
Nigel Howard
Rob Hughes
Craig Hunt
Dennis Hunt
Donald Jones
Janusz Kansik
David Kent
Daniel Kirk
David Lancaster
Stuart Leask
Dean Luker
Nick Main
Eoin McDonagh
Christopher Mills
David Mitchell
Richard Morley
John Morrall
Charles Nichols
Brian Owen
Robin Pearson
Richard Pilkington
Jon Portman
Philip Reade
Mick Rowley

Dilip Sarkar
Karen Sarkar
Martin Salter
Tom Sherwood
Roger Simpson
Stuart Singleton-White
Allyson Smith
Paul Stafford
George Stephenson
Mark Timerick
Dominic Webb
Ian Wilks
Martin Wise
Amanda Wynne-Jones

Staff (non-voting)

Karen Watkinson