

Saturday 25th November 2023, commencing 10:30

Held via Zoom Webinar

Panel: Eric Prescott (Chair, Angling Trust from 26 September 2023)
George Graham (Chair, Fish Legal)
Jamie Cook (Chief Executive Officer, Angling Trust and Fish Legal)
Paul Gant (Head of Finance, Angling Trust and Fish Legal)

Minutes

Jamie Cook, CEO of the Angling Trust and Fish Legal opened the meeting:

Good morning and welcome to the Angling Trust subscriber members meeting 2023. I am Jamie Cook, CEO of Fish Legal and the Angling Trust and would like to thank you for giving up your Saturday morning to join us today.

Just a couple of housekeeping items and order of business for this morning. First, we will run through the Angling Trust business including voting.

For those of you who have not already cast votes you will be able to do so this morning and momentarily I'm going to invite Simon from our technology partner to explain the process.

Following the formal Angling Trust business, voting and presentation of the accounts there will be a chance for you to raise questions.

At the bottom of your screens, you will see a Q&A box – if you could please type any questions in there then we will address these at the end of the session and I have colleagues in attendance who should be able to cover most subject areas.

The Angling Trust meeting will then close, and we will move onto the Fish Legal AGM where again you will have an opportunity to vote and accounts will again be presented.

I'm delighted to say that this session will close with a discussion between Head of Practice Penny Gane and Martin Smith, Honorary Secretary of the Pickering Fishery Association.

They are going to discuss how they have together secured one of the most significant UK rulings affecting water protection policy in years and just how powerful we can be when our organisations and motivated, passionate anglers come together.

It's a phenomenal story and I look forward to listening in.

The Angling Trust board and Fish Legal committee are made up of volunteers who give their time for free to support our organisations. I want to express my deep thanks and appreciation for what they do.

As a membership organisation we give you, our members the opportunity to vote for who you wish to take up a number of these posts and so I'd like to hand over to Simon to explain how you can cast your votes this morning.

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Simon Thompson of MiVoice explained the voting platform.

Thank you Simon – I hope that is clear to everyone, however if you are having issues then Simon's email address is available and he will be able to help you.

Before I move on and give a brief overview of the Angling Trust's year, I'm going to ask Alex to play a very short video which encompasses what we do and hopefully some of the reasons why you as members support us.

.....**Video**.....

Anglers have a unique connection with the environment and have done more for conservation of our waters than almost any other independent stakeholder.

Our pastime has a rich heritage and delivers huge benefits to individuals, communities and the environment but it depends upon access to healthy aquatic environments in both freshwater and saltwater and strong ecosystems from which fishing is a positive dividend.

Yet fishing faces threats, as do those environments we depend upon and those fish that we all dream about. Our community requires a voice on key issues, a powerful voice which can drive change and influence at the highest level and that is where the Angling Trust has proven its value time and again.

Be it getting fishing back through the COVID pandemic, being the first sport permitted to re-commence competitive activities. Be it gaining recognition for recreational sea angling in the Fisheries Bill or campaigning alongside our partners at Fish Legal, taking government and regulators to court where this action is necessary.

Supporting local clubs to fight and win against local angling bans or working alongside our valued partners across the angling trade to drive investment back into grass roots angling participation, environmental protection or elite international competitions.

Supporting clubs to access grants for otter fences or fighting for greater protection from cormorants, the Angling Trust are leading the fight.

We are an organisation with a broad remit, the only sports national governing body who are also positioned as one of the leading environmental NGOs within the sector and as such we embrace a diverse cross section of members who support our work for very different reasons.

I hope you have all had a chance to digest your copy of the Angler magazine covering all of the work we carry out on behalf of fish, fishing and the environment and within it the launch of our 5-year strategy; Fishing For Good.

Strategies are not worth the paper they are written on if they are not followed, and the Angling Trust board will continue to monitor our progress against the goals we have laid out - through annual business plans as we attempt to move positively from A to B against the exciting and ambitious objectives we have set for the future of our pastime.

We will continue to harness the drive, passion and commitment of our community and those of you on this call to increase angling participation and opportunities.

Safeguard access, deliver international success in all disciplines and build a stronger organisation, for anglers, by anglers which places fish, fishing and our environment at the heart of everything we do.

I want to thank you and your clubs, associations, societies and fisheries for your support.

All the volunteer bailiffs, the coaches, the hundreds of you who have signed up to the Water Quality monitoring network.

Those of you out championing the Anglers Against Litter campaign and those of you who deliver hundreds of competitions across the year.

Our community is built on volunteers, and I think you all prove how much stronger we are united.

I hope you are extremely proud of the impact your support is having – we simply couldn't have the impact we do without you. Thank you.

I will be available to answer questions at the end, but I'd now like to hand over to our new Chair.

We ran a thorough and detailed process to recruit a new Chair and were fortunate to have a number of superb applicants.

I'm delighted that Eric Prescott has agreed to take up the post of voluntary chair of the Angling Trust and with your support will also join the Fish Legal committee alongside me.

Eric is a lifelong angler and I'm sure he will tell you of his exploits in a minute.

As the former president of Manchester Anglers Association and current president, secretary, treasurer, head bailiff, fisheries officer, tea boy and everything in between of his local club in Sussex he has a strong understanding of the challenges involved in running a successful fisheries portfolio.

Eric has run some huge businesses in multiple sectors and is an experienced leader and formally sat on the British Waterways board overseeing the transfer to the CRT.

He has experience of working at a high level alongside Government Ministers and I look forward to working with him even if I have not yet had a chance to go fishing with him.

Eric was co-opted to the role of Chair under our Memorandum and Articles in September 2023.

I will ask Eric to introduce himself now and take us through the remainder of the Angling Trust subscriber members meeting. Thank you.

Eric Prescott, Chair of the Angling Trust addressed the meeting:

Thank you, Jamie. First, I would like to start by welcoming everyone online to this year's AGM.

Secondly, I also want to add my thanks to all the volunteers, members, staff, officers and board members who diligently work and, in many cases, give their free time to make the Angling Trust the great organisation it is.

As Jamie said in his introduction, I am a lifelong angler, I have been fishing for over 60 years. Starting from a boat in Anglesey, progressing from bomb crater ponds behind Manchester airport and from there to the big meres and flashes in Cheshire.

Interestingly, when I was 19 or 20, it was on one of those lakes that I met Kevin Clifford who was emptying every venue in the Northwest and developing many of today's carp fishing techniques. So, you can imagine my surprise to see Bev Clifford, his daughter being nominated here today.

To me, this all goes to show how special, intimate and precious angling is.

My first involvement in club management was as President of Manchester Anglers Association, the game fishing club centred in Ribblesdale, North Yorkshire.

It was here I learnt how to fly fish for salmon and trout, with one of my most memorable days fishing, catching and releasing 5 fly caught salmon in a very busy morning.

Sadly, pollution, abstraction, predation and many other factors make a similar day today a very rare occurrence.

As my career developed, I left the Northwest and lived in the West Midlands, Bedfordshire, Oxfordshire, Hertfordshire and Edinburgh before settling in West Sussex over 20 years ago.

Along the way, I fished for specimen chub and barbel on the River Severn and in the Oxfordshire and Bedfordshire rivers.

I fished for big bream and pike at Tring Reservoirs and caught plenty of silverfish in the canals around Berkhamsted.

Today, I run a local club near my home, and I fully understand the challenges clubs large and small face with the recruitment and retention of members, ever increasing cost, predation and the risk of pollution, poaching and disease.

The fact is, so many clubs are run by very few committee members who do an incredible job, often unrecognised and for little or no reward.

If you are one of those and on this call. Thank you, clubs are the lifeblood of our sport and vital in creating those pathways that help juniors and newcomers to the sport become life-long anglers.

As I recently retired, one of the first things I did was get my club onto the Club-mate platform.

This has freed up many hours of my time and I now have more time to enjoy fishing with friends, competing in club matches, occasionally framing and taking a pound or two off them.

I still fly fish at commercial trout waters near my home and occasionally fish around Shoreham and Chichester Harbour on the South coast.

It is also fair to say this coast has suffered from overfishing by factory ships and pollution from the irresponsible water companies, just like many other areas around the country.

Now, given my retirement and the extra time I have, I'm excited to be joining both the Angling Trust and Fish legal and look forward to playing my part in their future success.

Last year the Angling Trust introduced nearly 40,000 new individuals to fishing for the first time and launched the extremely exciting Reel Education programme with support from Shakespeare UK, taking fishing into primary schools for the first time in a generation.

The programme has been endorsed by the Department for Education and of those 20,000 plus children who have gone through the scheme a staggering 98% now wish to try fishing, with many schools setting up new angling clubs as a result...this is a fantastic project that I expect to see grow in the future.

In competitions we have seen success across all three disciplines on the international stage and I'd like to make special mention of the youth teams in game, sea and coarse.

Angling does not currently receive UK Sport funding for elite participation so the partnerships we have forged with the angling trade to develop talent pathways and sponsor our international teams are critical in securing these successes.

Keeping with the theme I was delighted to see a big increase in numbers of participants at our junior national championships which had to be extended over two days due to the increased uptake.

We also saw growth in numbers across the ladies national, as well as the masters, veterans and anglers with disabilities championship.

This again demonstrating how richly diverse and accessible angling can be to all.

As a regular match angler myself, I'm interested in where we can do more to support competition at a local level which we know is so critical to regular participation and providing access to many who do not participate across other sports.

As a club secretary I have benefitted from advice and support through the Angling Trust in the past and I am pleased to see the team continuing to ensure that rod licence income collected by the EA is channelled back into grass roots community clubs, associations and fisheries.

It is our role to hold the EA and other regulators to account and where our objectives align, to partner to deliver better outcomes for fish, fishing and the environment.

George Graham will talk more about Fish Legal later but as an early member of the ACA I'm continually staggered by the impact the partnership between the Angling Trust and Fish legal has. Whether its industrial pollution from an airport, abstraction by a water company or agricultural pollution from a chicken farm the combined campaigning strength of the Angling Trust and the legal teeth of Fish Legal deliver meaningful change where others can't.

I know how passionate anglers are and having fished for over 60 years I want to see the future of our pastime safeguarded.

I look forward to meeting many of you over the coming years and to supporting the Angling Trust team to achieve the goals we have laid out.

Now to the formal business and I will ask Simon to share the slides with the results of the proxy votes and those cast during the meeting:

1. *Minutes of the Angling Trust Subscriber Members Annual General Meeting from 26th November 2022. **Approved.***
2. *Nomination of Directors (General Role):*
 1. *Beverley Clifford – 204 votes*
 2. *Neville Fickling – 178 votes*
 3. *Prof Keith Neal – 98 votes*
 4. *Sean Corbett – 74 votes*
 5. *John Craddock – 26 votes*
 6. *Christopher Johnston – 4 votes*

Beverley Clifford and Neville Fickling *duly elected as Nominated Directors (General Roles).*

3. *Nomination of Director (Welfare and Safety Lead):*
 1. *Brendan Tonks – 493 votes*

Brendan Tonks *duly elected as the Welfare and Safety Lead Director.*

A warm welcome to the new directors.

We now have time for any questions. I do have three questions which were asked in advance, which I will read out in full.

Question 1 – from Mark Withyman - Why in 67 pages of the recent "The Angler" publication is there only less than one page devoted to Game fishing? In the Highlights from game and Sea page. Also as a connecting question why was that information on that page not correct as it missed the Fips Mouche European Championships in Portugal this year and the Fips Mouche 5 Nations championship held here in England where England won both team and individual gold medals? The information regarding the Fips Mouche 42nd world championships is also incorrect?

Response provided by Steve Fitzpatrick, Head of Competitions (read by Eric Prescott): *Firstly, please accept my apologies for errors in the competitions-related content within The Angler magazine, it was not my intention.*

There are no excuses for the omission of the two events you refer to, they were simply missed by the team when collating the summary information from the news stories published on our social media channels and website.

It appears that in the case of the 5Nations event the story wasn't published on our website and so was missed. As you were the winner of the event I'd like to apologise directly to yourself as well as the team.

The Game news section of our website is something which needs more focussed attention and stronger lines of communication and I have contacted Paul Page for his support on this. I plan to establish regular dialogue with Paul, TEFF Press Officer Andrew Green, and Game Development Manager Danny Williams so we can ensure the coverage/support is more in keeping with what we are now achieving in the coarse angling sector.

This enhanced media presence is already seeing benefits to our coarse portfolio in terms of positive support and growth in participants and there's no reason why we can't achieve the same in Game and Sea disciplines. If you have ideas on how we can perform better in your discipline then please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Question 2 – from David Calvert - Following the theme used by AT in the latest magazine - What is AT doing to arrest the collapse in numbers of people taking part in salmon fishing with the consequential threat to the future existence of game fishing clubs?

By way of background - the annual catch of salmon on my local club water has fallen from around 120 per year in the 2000's to 5 (5) in 2023. Our membership number is slipping to a point where the future viability of the club is uncertain.

Response provided by Mark Owen, Head of Fisheries (read by Eric Prescott): *In order to address this we are campaigning to increase salmon numbers in our rivers on multiple levels. In January this year we launched our Salmon Charter in the House of Commons with the Fisheries minister <https://anglingtrust.net/2023/01/31/angling-trust-launches-manifesto-in-parliament-to-protect-atlantic-salmon/>*

We have been actively campaigning on these issues ever since, we are founding members of the Missing Salmon Alliance <https://missingsalmonalliance.org/>, earlier this year we appointed Sam Jones as our Salmon Angler Engagement officer and we have formed a Salmon & Sea Trout Advisory Group chaired by an AT Board member with membership consisting of the Chairs of Regional groups like the South West Rivers Association & the North West AT Consultative Council to ensure we are engaged with salmon anglers on the ground.

We continue to campaign for action on pollution, predation, removal of barriers, estuary protection, aquaculture and for bylaws to acknowledge the crucial role anglers can play in protecting salmon and increasing stocks. Mandatory restrictions on anglers via bylaws are a crude way of addressing a problem for which anglers are not the villains. We advocate for a voluntary approach where anglers and regulators come together, not only to effectively manage the fishing but to work on the real pressures of salmon.

Question 3 – from Peter Grundy - After the recent scandal of every water authority admitting illegal dumping of sewage into our rivers and costal waters, how is the Angling Trust going to confront and make the water authorities stop this illegal dumping and bring those responsible to account.

Response provided by Stuart Singleton-White, Head of Campaign (read by Eric Prescott): *The legal investigation by the EA and OFWAT is ongoing. While we welcome this, it does mean that the EA and Ofwat are reluctant to provide information and evidence they may use as part of any prosecution. Meanwhile, we continue to push water companies, the EA and OFWAT to clean up their act. Our WQMN will soon report on the first year of monitoring data it has recorded. It is not a good picture. We continue to use this to drive action at the national level. And many angling clubs are using it to demand action at the local level.*

In addition, both as the Trust, and through coalitions like Blueprint for Water and #EndSewagePollution we continue to highlight the issues and demand action from government. This includes pushing for more action though the government Storm Overflow Reduction Plan, and Plan for Water, more action on how they are going to deliver their legally binding targets to reduce phosphate and nitrates in our rivers (part of the Environment Act), and pushing for more action through the water companies business planning and price review process.

There is a lot more I could say, so I recommend everyone reads our latest campaign review publication, published last week. If you would like a hard copy, get in touch and we can post it to you, or look on our website under the campaigns section.

Question received in the meeting:

From Paul Harding - Fish Legal Income - I note that there is a significant reduction from both Club and Individual membership. What can be done to address this for the future?

Response from Paul Gant, Head of Finance: *The apparent reduction in membership income is due to the receipt of a significant amount of recovered costs in 2022/23, which affected the percentage of membership income to the overall income. There has been no significant reduction in membership income.*

Eric Prescott 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.

From Ian Watson – Do we know why the government is challenging the High Court decision [*Costa Beck Judicial Review*]. Is it just cost implications or something else?

Response from Jamie Cook, CEO – I don't believe the government have confirmed that they are appealing.

Angling Trust Subscriber AGM 2023 - Ends

FISH LEGAL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday 25 November 2023, commencing 11:05

Held via Zoom Webinar

Panel: George Graham (Chair, Fish Legal)
Eric Prescott (Chair, Angling Trust from 26 September 2023)
Jamie Cook (Chief Executive Officer, Angling Trust and Fish Legal)
Paul Gant (Head of Finance, Angling Trust and Fish Legal)

Minutes

Welcome from the Fish Legal Chair (George Graham)

Thank you Eric and Jamie, and thank you all for joining us today. Can I start with the good news? I hope many of you will have seen Fish Legal's big win in the High Court this week in a case we brought on behalf of our member club Pickering Fishery Association. The judge ruled for us in the judicial review we brought against DEFRA and the Environment Agency for failing to carry out their duty to review and update measures put in place to improve the Costa Beck – a once thriving wild trout and grayling fishery in North Yorkshire.

The potential ramifications are huge, possibly for another 4,900 water bodies across England, with read across into Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

You will hear more from Martin Smith – Secretary of the club involved in the case – later. This is a perfect example of the work our legal team put in to protect our waters and highlight gaps in law and regulation. They have the expertise to find the right legal grounds for us to bring cases that make a difference, not just a noise.

A big shout out on the Costa Beck case to Andrew Kelton, who has been working on this one for years, and huge thanks to the rest of our legal team: Penny Gane, named on this year's ENDS Report list of the most influential environmental lawyers; Justin Neal, who featured on that ENDS Power List last year; Geoff Hardy, who is leading on our private prosecution of Southern Water; Cameron Hogg, who secured one of our biggest ever settlements last year after nine years of work; Robert Younger, our Scottish lead, who is opening up new battle fronts around the damage caused to inshore fisheries by commercial trawling and dredging; and Angela Henry, the newest addition to our team who has already won her first pollution case for a member club against a water company.

Fish Legal's task is only going to get bigger. It is clear that the government agencies we are supposed to depend on as the first line of defence for our waters are less and less equipped, and in some cases less and less willing, to take on the task. So your continuing support for Fish Legal really makes a difference.

In financial terms, if you have read our accounts for the year you will have seen that we recorded an unusually large surplus of £350,000, compared with a deficit of £110,000 in 2021-22. This largely relates to the settlement I mentioned earlier that we achieved on behalf of a member fishery. That settlement took nine years work, so we received reimbursement of a substantial portion of the legal costs we had run up over that time. Cost recoveries like this are a regular feature in our accounts, but they can be hard to predict both in size and in timing; this one, in fact, we had budgeted to receive in 2023-24 but it came in a little early. Over time, the Committee still aims to achieve somewhere

between breakeven and a modest surplus on a rolling basis, but there will be ups and downs in individual years. The fighting fund, managed on behalf of Fish Legal by the ACA Trustee Company, remains in solid shape.

Now to the formal business of the meeting, I will ask Simon to share the results slides with the results of the proxy votes and those cast during the meeting:

1. *Minutes of the Fish Legal AGM 25 November 2023 - **Approved***
2. *Election of Committee Member:*
 - i. *Eric Prescott – **Approved***
3. *Re-election of existing Committee Members - **Approved:***
 - i. *George Graham (Chair)*
 - ii. *Philip Chamberlain*
 - iii. *Jamie Cook*
 - iv. *Mike Greenwood*
 - v. *Tim Goode*
 - vi. *Jamie Lamb*
 - vii. *R Dean Luker*
 - viii. *Andrew Nathan*
 - ix. *Charles Nichols*
 - x. *J Mark Phillips*

4. *The approval of the accounts for the financial year ending 31 March 2023 -**Approved***

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.

As there are no further questions, I will conclude the Fish Legal AGM 2023 and hand over to Jamie Cook to introduce the Case Study.

Fish Legal AGM 2023 - End

The AGMs were followed by:

A Case Study: "Going to court with Fish Legal: an angling club's perspective"

Penny Gane, Head of Legal Practice was joined by Martin Smith, of Pickering Fishery Association, to discuss the recent judgement in the Judicial Review taken by Fish Legal on behalf of the Pickering Fishery Association.

Angling Trust/Fish Legal AGMs 2023 Attendees

In Attendance:

Alex Clegg
Jamie Cook
Karen Watkinson
Eric Prescott
Paul Gant
Simon Thompson
Penny Gane
Martin Smith
Samantha Frost Jones
Stuart Sharp
George Graham
David McCreath
Graham Wright
Adrian Smith
Steve Beverley
Anthony Bamber
Sean Corbett
Paul Harding
Peter Devery
Mike Spiller
Sarah Collins
Ian Watson
Michael Smith
Peter Emery
Kelly L
Al White
Peter Cliff
Huw Powell
K W
Dale Whittaker

Member Organisations in Attendance:

Association of Barbel Fishers (ABF) & Barnsley and District Amalgamated Angling Society
Phoenix Angling Club (Herefordshire)
Wybunbury Anglers Association
Honiton Sea Angling Club
Asfordby and Melton Society of Anglers
Avon and Tributaries Angling Association
Nottingham Piscatorial Society
Pickering Fishery Association
Slaugham Angling Club