



Angling at Wingerworth Lido - an Angling Trust Briefing

Background

Wingerworth Lido is a 3.5 acre public access lake managed by North East Derbyshire District Council with the fishing rights leased to Clay Cross Angling Association for over 25 years. During this time the club has worked hard to improve biodiversity and water quality, create a healthy and vibrant environment for fish and wildlife, deal with public nuisances including litter, drug taking and anti-social behaviour and provide a much valued recreational fishery where local people can enjoy an important connection with nature.

The 2021 Environment Act introduced enhanced duties for local authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity. It also established a government commitment that everyone should live within a 15-minute walk of a green or blue space. The provision of angling opportunities is recognised as an important part of this commitment.

Years ago the Lido was choked with weed, had problems with algae blooms and unauthorised fishing and littering and was becoming unattractive as a community resource. Over time the Clay Cross Angling Association has assisted in the management of the lake drawing on advice from the Environment Agency and fishery specialists. The stock assemblage has been carefully managed to create one of the best tench and carp waters in the area with a good head of other species including roach, perch and pike. The Lido delivers safe, affordable angling for all ages and has introduced many young people to both fishing and a broader appreciation of nature.

Why ban fishing at the Lido?

It appears that the moves against angling have been driven by a few ideologically driven individuals on the basis of virtually no evidence. The criticisms seem to be around the following points:

- The leaving of litter
- Conflicts with wildlife
- The use of dye in the water causing problems for the toad population
- Overstocking of carp “ –omnivorous and a non-native species”

Angling Club response

- Angling club volunteers and bailiffs clear up litter from the public, including dog fouling, and without their presence matters will only deteriorate. The club has strict rules against littering.

- The lido has around 40% of the bank space with no fishing which provides plenty of cover for fish and wildlife and includes a shallow section by part of the dam wall where there could be a risk of birds inadvertently picking up an angler's bait.
- The use of a vegetable based, light inhibiting blue dye was undertaken with EA approval and within national guidance to address the problem of excessive weed growth and damaging algae blooms. (See note below)
- Frogs and toads are not impacted by approved blue pond dyes (See below)
- The lido now has a healthy plant assemblage with prolific lily beds, pond weed and marginal habitat.
- There are only around 60 carp in a 3.5 acre water which is a perfectly sensible stocking density. Carp are a naturalised U.K. species having been in the country since the 14th Century. The healthy numbers of other fish species indicates that their presence is in balance with the fishery as a whole.

Note on algae blooms - danger to wildlife, children, pets and pregnant women.

<https://www.ceh.ac.uk/our-science/projects/algal-blooms-and-human-health>

Blooms of algae in freshwaters can produce potent toxins, potentially making water bodies unsafe for recreational activities and restricting their access to the public and their suitability as a source of water for drinking and irrigation.

Blooms are often produced by cyanobacteria, also known as blue-green algae. They typically colour the water bright green and can form a surface scum along shorelines. Cyanobacteria produce toxins which cause a range of health problems, from minor skin irritations to severe stomach upsets, and can even lead to death. The World Health Organisation has established guideline values of cyanotoxins and cyanobacterial cell densities for recreational use and for drinking waters.

UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology

Blue Dye and Toads

Pond dyes do not negatively affect toads or other amphibians at recommended concentrations; research shows they are non-toxic, food-grade substances that don't alter the behaviour or development of frog and toad tadpoles. Commercial pond dyes are safe for all pond life and are used to block sunlight to control algae growth without harming fish, wildlife, or plants.

<https://ojs.herpetologica.org/index.php/bah/article/view/93#:~:text=Abstract,to%20twice%20the%20recommended%20usage>.

A Biodiversity Hub ?

In response to media enquiries a press spokesman for NEDDC said the aim was to create 'a safe space for wildlife to thrive' without any explanation as to why this objective was incompatible with retaining angling on the Lido.

In answer to the Angling Trust enquiry in January the Assistant Director – Property, Estates & Assets, Damien Johnson said:

“These matters were carefully considered by the Council’s Asset Management Board and the long term aspiration is that the site can be promoted as a district wide destination as a bio-diversity hub. The lido is a unique local heritage asset, a place of special interest for nature and wildlife groups and we want to make it a great place to visit.”

Again, absolutely no justification was given for removing angling from the site.

Angling on Nature Reserves

The Angling Trust is an active member of the Wildlife and Countryside Link and the Blueprint for Coalition of Environmental NGOs. At a national level the angling community works closely with our colleagues in the environmental movement advocating for fish and wildlife. Most sensible people recognise the value of having two million anglers as part of a strong voice for a better environment. However, we do sometimes come across situations where a handful of ideologically driven people try to subvert the majority support for Britain’s most popular outdoor pastime. It appears that this might be the situation at Wingerworth as we can find little evidence of either public or political support for an angling ban and certainly no rational justification for one as demonstrated above.

The Angling Trust mobilised MPs and the local community in Kent on behalf of Bromley and District Angling Society to oppose similar arguments made by a militant faction within Kent Wildlife Trust who were claiming that angling was incompatible with their nature reserve at Sevenoaks back in 2021. The ban was eventually overturned thanks to the support of other wildlife groups.

<https://anglingtrust.net/2021/01/27/wildlife-groups-back-anglers-in-bid-to-save-fishing-at-sevenoaks-wildlife-reserve/>

By way of an example we have produced a list of Wildlife Trusts that actively promote fishing on their sites showing that angling and ‘biodiversity hubs’ are far from incompatible.

WILDLIFE TRUSTS & FISHING - Some of the fishing available on WLT reserves:

Staffordshire WLT sells permits directly for its water at Doxey Marshes

<https://www.staffs-wildlife.org.uk/support-us/online-shop>

Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northants WLT at Felmersham Gravel Pits

<https://www.wildlifebcn.org/nature-reserves/felmersham-gravel-pits>

Wiltshire WLT at Steeple Langford nature reserve

<https://www.wiltshirewildlife.org/fishing>

Hampshire and IoW WLT - Winnal Moors on the River Itchen and at Swanwick lakes

<https://www.hiwwt.org.uk/nature-reserves/swanwick-lakes-nature-reserve>

Norfolk WLT – Martham Broad

<https://www.visitthebroads.co.uk/things-to-do/wildlife/birdwatching/product-detail?listing=>

Partnership working in Derbyshire

Standing in marked contrast to the current situation at Wingerworth is the excellent partnership working in Derby where all the city council's lakes are successfully managed by the local Earl Harrington Angling Club who have improved the aquatic environment in all the lakes for all wildlife and not just fish.

With careful management there have been improvements in the water quality and the habitat of all the lakes. Hundreds of insect friendly aquatic plants are planted each year. The club is an active member of various city groups including The Friends of Allestree Park and has received praise from across the city and beyond for working with other partners including the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and Sustrans. In addition to environmental issues they also work with NHS, charitable trusts involved with a range of health issues, uniformed organisations, schools and the Youth Justice Service.

Like Clay Cross the Earl Harrington Club has a good working relationship with the Environment Agency Fisheries Team recently securing £2k of EA funding through the Fisheries Improvement Programme for marginal habitat improvements at Mill Dam, directly addressing water quality issues in the pond / lake, which will hugely benefit the wildlife, and increase biodiversity massively. The Clay Cross Angling Association has also received Angling Improvement Grant funding from the EA for the installation of safe fishing platforms to assist junior coaching and disabled access. Money that will be wasted should fishing be forced to cease at the Lido.

With such excellent partnership work with angling organisations occurring nearby it is surprising that NEDDC appears to be doing its best to alienate the angling community rather than working with them for the benefit of local people and the environment. It is also surprising that the Environment Agency were not consulted on the decision to ban angling at Wingerworth.

Council Angling Bans Reversed

While there are some examples of good direct management of local nature reserves and lakes by local authorities the picture is definitely a mixed one with best practice usually being achieved through constructive partnership working. Sadly, the ending of angling has, in some cases, led to a marked deterioration in the condition of these waters as they fall into disrepair following the removal of a valuable group of committed volunteers with an interest in looking after the site.

Listed below are cases where councils banned angling but later lifted the ban after recognising anglers' role in caring for and managing the venue:

1) Blackpool Council — Stanley Park Lake (Lancashire)

Ban: A six-month suspension began 1 Sept 2024 following wildlife entanglement concerns.

Reversal: On 26 June 2025 the council lifted the ban, reopening fishing in a clearly signed, designated area to protect wildlife. The council also committed to work with the angling community (incl. Friends of Stanley Park and the Angling Trust) towards a Stanley Park Fishing Club to help manage the lake.

Link: <https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/news/new-fishing-rules-agreed-for-stanley-park-lake.aspx>

2) Southend-on-Sea Borough Council — Friars Park, Shoebury (Essex)

Ban: Long-standing prohibition on fishing (c.20 years).

Reversal: On 1 Nov 2011 the Cabinet resolved to lift the ban on the “back lake” and to advertise for an angling club to manage the water on the Council’s behalf.

Link:

<https://democracy.southend.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/201111011600/Agenda/Document%205.pdf>

3) Peterlee Town Council — Shotton Hall Pond (County Durham)

Ban: “No fishing” policy in place for decades.

Reversal: On 12 Nov 2018 the council approved opening the pond to fishing via a controlled syndicate, explicitly citing better control/self-policing by anglers and small revenues to fund habitat improvements.

Link: https://peterlee.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/AgendaCE_2018-11-12.pdf

Summary

- No justification for an angling ban
- Many Wildlife Trusts encourage angling on their reserves
- No conflict between having an angling presence in a ‘Biodiversity Hub’.
- No issues with current fisheries management
- Use of vegetable dye to suppress excessive weed growth and harmful algae blooms is of benefit to both the environment and public health
- No evidence that vegetable dyes impact on frogs or toads
- Angling presence deters littering and anti social behaviour
- Angling connects people to nature and is good for well being and diverting young people from drugs and crime
- With 40% of the bank space restricted there’s plenty of sanctuary areas for fish and wildlife
- NEDDC should be following the example of other councils by working in partnership with the local angling community
- Taxpayers money has been invested in creating an excellent community fishery which will be wasted
- No evidence of proper consultation prior to ending angling at Wingerworth.

Way Forward

The Angling Trust urges the leadership of NEDDC to urgently address this issue and instigate a full review of the process that led up to the removal of fishing at Wingerworth Lido, the consequences of so doing and why the angling club, local members and other stakeholders were not properly engaged or consulted.

Experience from elsewhere shows that it would be possible to incorporate angling into the Council's vision for a biodiversity hub and there should be no prior assumptions that properly managed angling is incompatible with broader wildlife objectives.

Once there has been proper stakeholder engagement a full and transparent public consultation should follow on future plans for the Lido.

The Angling Trust is prepared to assist in achieving an acceptable solution. We would much rather be working with NEDDC to this end rather than escalating this campaign.

ENDS

Angling Trust
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