

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY – GOTHAM CITY ANGLERS

Introduction

Gotham City Anglers ('The club') is a long established, closed membership fishing club with a maximum of 100 full members, exclusive of honorary, life and veteran members. The club is an unincorporated association, meaning that it has no independent legal existence from its membership. The club has a constitution which prescribes governance arrangements, including the establishment of a committee, and the appointment of trustees. The constitution states that the trustees shall be appointed by the club committee and that they are authorised by the committee to purchase, lease, sell (etc.) club property.

The club welcomes applications from all age groups but in recent years the trend has been (as is the case of many angling clubs) that the majority of the membership is aged 55 or over. It is important that this policy recognises this, as older members can be more vulnerable, and the consequences of an incident are foreseeably more severe.

The club has a portfolio of waters in Westshire; some waters are owned outright by the club and others are leased or otherwise rented from riparian owners. Waters include rivers, canals and stillwaters.

Some club waters are private with no public access whereas others have rights of way or other access rights adjacent to them. Even when there is no public right of access, estate staff, farm workers and others can be present, and this policy recognises the fact that it can never be assumed that no third parties will be present on or near the club waters.

The club is a member of the **Angling Trust** and obtains its public liability and employer's liability insurance via the Trust.

This policy is complementary to the rules, procedures and guidance in the club handbook.

Objectives of Health and Safety Policy

The key objectives are –

- To ensure, so far as is reasonable and practical, the safety of members when fishing the club's waters.
- To identify, manage and (where reasonably possible to do so) to minimise any potential sources of risk.
- To state clearly the obligations of the club to its members.
- To identify members' responsibilities for their own safety when fishing the club's waters, and the safety of their guests.
- To maintain a register of the club's assets, their maintenance, repair and replacement, both planned and reactive.
- To maintain an effective system of defect and hazard reporting, so that members can report issues to club officers.
- To maintain robust safety arrangements for any approved work being carried out by members on behalf of the club, these to include responsibility for supervision and adherence to task specific risk assessments.
- To create and regularly review a detailed risk assessment of the club's activities.

- To ensure that the club complies with the conditions of its insurance policies.
- To ensure that members are made aware of this policy.
- To carry out all such other actions as are necessary or incidental to the achievement of these objectives.

Risk Assessment

The purpose of the risk assessment which follows is to identify foreseeable risks which may be encountered by the club and/or individual members. It cannot be an exhaustive list, but it will be reviewed to reflect any changes in risk.

1 Drowning/Injury - pond/lake fisheries

Hazard -The club's lakes can only be fished from the bank, but members should note that water temperatures can remain low for most of the year, that banks can be slippery and uneven and that depths can increase very quickly. Silt and mud can be difficult to walk on or wade through; falling and/or getting stuck are risks. Weil's Disease is also a risk, especially in warm and/or dry periods.

Control –

- Special care needs to be taken when accessing swims, and when landing and returning fish.
- Anglers should not wade except when absolutely necessary.
- Anglers are recommended to use disinfectant gel to minimise Weil's disease risk.

2 Drowning/injury – river

Hazard

The club's river fisheries are spate rivers, and are natural, unmaintained waters where new hazards can appear without warning. Anglers must be aware of this fact and act accordingly. River depth can vary from inches to ten feet or more, and the flow vary from almost stationary to dangerously fast. Levels can rise quickly and without warning and swims can be obstructed by fallen trees and flood debris.

- Banks are often unstable and can collapse without warning.
- Trees which have obstructed the flow can create greatly increased flow and sudden changes in depth.
- Other hazards include livestock (including bulls, and cows with calves), discarded barbed wire, wasp nests and, in the summer months, an increased risk of Weil's disease.

Control

- If wading, studded waders are recommended, and a wading staff can offer added safety.
- Anglers should be alert to potential hazards and take appropriate safeguards.
- Where there has been recent heavy rainfall in the catchment area, colouration of the water and floating debris can mean a rapid increase in flow. Anglers should get out of the river in these circumstances and monitor the level of risk before returning.
- Anglers who are inexperienced, junior and/or infirm should fish with a companion.
- When fishing the lower section of rivers, be aware of the tidal fluctuation.

- It is highly recommended that anglers check river levels on the Environment Agency website before fishing. Check all the river levels upstream of where you intend to fish, as doing so can give advance notice of flood risks. Never assume that because it hasn't rained in the local area, that the river level will not suddenly rise. Storms miles upstream might go unnoticed but can affect the whole river.

3 Vehicle Damage/Collision

Hazard

Access to the club's waters can involve using narrow, uneven single-track roads and access tracks, often with poor visibility. Tourist traffic can be heavy, especially during Spring and Summer, and large agricultural vehicles can be encountered at any time. Deer are common (especially at dawn and dusk), and walkers, horse riders and cyclists are often encountered, sometimes in numbers. Thefts from vehicles parked near the club's waters are possible.

Control

- Drive slowly and carefully. Especially when driving early or late, be on the alert for deer and, if one appears, be prepared for more.
- If driving a vehicle with poor ground clearance, do take extra care.
- Secure the vehicle and remove valuables.

Club Responsibility - Maintenance and Repair of Club Assets; Working Parties

- The club assets principally comprise stiles, gates, padlocks, fishing platforms, signs etc. The club is responsible for the maintenance, repair and replacement of such assets and will use reasonable endeavours to ensure that it rectifies problems as soon as practicable after being notified of them or otherwise becoming aware of their occurrence.
- Members are expected to be observant, and to help the club by notifying it of any hazards they encounter, especially where a club asset needs maintenance, repair or replacement.
- The club will maintain a register of each category of asset and such register will include details of inspection, maintenance (date, nature of repair/replacement, whether routine or preventative, or arising from a defect report).
- ***No working party will be organised, nor will any work of any type be planned or carried out without prior notice to and approval from the Secretary.*** Where necessary, the club will seek consent for the work from the landowner. Any request for work to be carried out must include details of its location, nature and cost, the members involved, identification of any special risks (including details of how they will be managed). ***The name of the member responsible for supervising the work shall be provided to and approved by the secretary and all work must be carried out under the supervision of the approved supervisor.***

- The club may impose such further conditions as are necessary to ensure the work is carried out safely. For example, any work involving chain saws, power tools or other potentially dangerous equipment must only be carried out by operatives (whether club members or not) with appropriate expertise/training and use of PPE.
- The club does not maintain the banks of its river fisheries and treats them as entirely natural waters. Members are free to fish anywhere, and at any time in season. Some accesses may involve passage along unmade tracks and across stiles, fences and gates. These are not maintained by the club, and it has no responsibility for them.

Club waters - Member Responsibility

Except where identified as a responsibility of the club, such as repair of club assets, members are responsible for their own safety and the safety of their guests. Attention is drawn to the risk assessment above, but it should be noted that the risks identified are not exhaustive and that members must evaluate, manage, minimise and/or avoid any risk they may encounter while fishing the club's waters.

To help members remain safe, please note the following advice –

- If you are fishing alone, please tell your partner or other contact where you are fishing, and the time you expect to return.
- Before fishing it is recommended you check the local weather forecast on your phone app (e.g. Met Office); cease fishing and take extra care in thunderstorms.

- Always take your mobile phone with you, even in areas of poor reception, as emergency calls are automatically routed to the network with the best coverage.
- It is highly recommended that you download the **what3words** app on your phone. This app gives an ultra-precise location code, by reference to three random words. It is now used by the emergency services and is a proven life saver.
- Club members should note key contact numbers, including club secretary [tel no./email] and chair [tel no./email] .Please also note the **Environment Agency** 24 hour pollution hotline 0800 807060 and the **Police** non-emergency number 101.

Conclusion

The club wants its members to enjoy fishing the club's waters as safely as reasonably possible. This advice in this note is given to ensure that club members are made aware of possible hazards they might encounter when fishing club waters. It also sets out the responsibility of the club to its members, of the member for his/her own safety and the safety of their guests.

The club will regularly review the policy, but members should not hesitate to notify the club of any new risks or other concerns.