

Tuesday 26 November 2024, commencing 18:00

Held via Zoom Webinar

Panel: Eric Prescott (Chair, Angling Trust)
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)
Simon Thompson (MiVoice)

Minutes

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

Welcome to this year's subscriber AGM. What I want to do first of all is advise you that this meeting is being recorded. I am Eric Prescott, Chair of the Angling Trust and the running order this evening is firstly the Angling Trust business, followed by a Q&A and then we will go on to the Fish Legal business with a Q&A after that. We also have a video, which some of you may have seen, it's Brigepal Singh's Story, a fantastic video and we then have Penny Gane from Fish Legal who will take us through the #EveryRiverCounts Campaign. We will have a final Q&A at the end. If you are new to Zoom, you will see the Q&A function at the bottom of the screen, where you can also ask questions as we go along.

Simon Thompson is supporting us with the voting this evening and he will now explain the voting:

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Simon Thompson of MiVoice explained the voting platform and passed back to Eric Prescott.

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Eric Prescott then outlined the items that members are being to asked to vote on during the Angling Trust Subscriber meeting:

- Minutes of the Angling Trust Subscriber Members AGM, 25 November 2023
- Election of a Nominated Director to the role of Welfare and Safety Lead Director.

Eric provided background to the election of the Welfare and Safety Lead Director: In 2023 three new nominated directors were appointed to the Angling Trust Board, one of whom was appointed to the crucial role of Welfare and Safety Lead, which is a requirement of the Sport England Code of Sports Governance. Unfortunately the Director appointed as Welfare and Safety Lead had to step down due to personal circumstances in October 2024 and we have had a very short window to turn around the reappointment. As the vacancy was a nominated position members were invited to express their interest in the role by covering letter, CV and a short biography. In total six applications were received. The Nomination Committee, which comprises Independent Non-executive Directors of the Angling Trust and Fish Legal, then reviewed the applications for suitability to ensure that the candidates put forward to the member vote had the requisite skills and experience to support the Board with strategic matters pertaining to Safeguarding and could provide oversight and practical support to the Executive and the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Following careful consideration the Nomination Committee, in line with its terms of reference, concluded that of the applications received only one candidate clearly demonstrated sufficient strategic and practical experience to

meet the needs of the board as identified by review of the Board Skills Matrix, that is Mr David Wiltshire who is proposed for appointment today.

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Eric Prescott:

I want to welcome you again to this year's Subscriber Member AGM and just share with you some reflections of the year that the Angling Trust has had. I also want to say a few words of thanks and take a little time to reflect on the work the Trust has undertaken in the year. So starting with the thanks; I want to thank all of you as individuals or as representatives of club members. Without your continued support we would not be able to achieve all that we do. I also want to thank Jamie [Cook] and all of the Angling Trust staff and volunteers for all the work that they do, often in the face of considerable criticism and it genuinely is no fun having all your decisions and actions publicly scrutinized. I also want to thank my fellow board members; they devote considerable time, thought and energy often way beyond what is reasonable in an un-remunerated role. Also worthy of thanks are the staff and Non-executive directors of Fish Legal - we work closely together on many issues and I am very grateful for their continued support and guidance. Finally thank you to our trade sponsors and supporters - your contributions help make some of our challenges we face together possible.

I joined the Trust a little over a year ago and I have enjoyed my first year getting to know better what we do and going around the country meeting staff, volunteers and many anglers. Angling is a very broad church and it will be difficult to cover all that the Trust has achieved in the few minutes that I have available, however I do want to share with you some highlights of our activities and performance.

We have developed our Strategy to Protect, Promote and Develop angling, fighting for fish, fishing and the environment. I want to start with some observations around our first mission, which is to Protect. We have this year seen a change in government and I have no doubt that as the Labour Party settles into their new role they will engage with National Governing Bodies like ourselves to better understand the relevant sectors. Prior to the election we worked closely with the Labour Party and we were able to get our Manifesto for Angling endorsed by the Secretary of State. This is a huge achievement and it ensured our voice and your voice is front and centre in the Department's planning. We have also been invited to engage with the new Water Commission and this again will ensure our voice is heard as we represent angling and the environment at the top table. Our industry is collectively worth over £4 billion per year for the economy and employs thousands of people nationwide and provides thousands of volunteering opportunities. It is fair to say that any government that ignores this fact will do so at their peril.

The Anglers Against Litter campaign, supported by Shimano, continues to flourish and the team have been awarded a Keep Britain Tidy Award, recognising the massive contribution anglers make in keeping our surroundings pristine. Our Water Quality Monitoring network has continued to grow and the water companies are now using the citizen science to guide and inform their investment decisions. This is a fantastic outcome and it is a perfect example of how a small initiative can grow and achieve great change. We cannot afford for one minute to take our foot off the gas and it is through the network of club volunteers that this outcome has been made possible.

In the last few years we have increased our engagement with sea anglers and have done a huge amount of engagement within the sector. There are over 40 separate Marine Fisheries Management plans in preparation and we are representing recreational angling on all of those plans. We are also working with all the government agencies in the Marine sector and our marine policy work is being recognised as we strive to support recreational angling. Our success in securing a permitted recreational Bluefin Tuna Fishery is a massive step forward. We know the outcome was not perfect but we are committed to build on this and improve and engage with other matters to the benefit of

recreational sea anglers. Charter skippers and the coastal communities, your voice is growing louder and it is being heard.

In freshwater our fight against invasive non-native species and the challenge of predation continues. As the Chair and Secretary of a small club, I know how much time and effort can be given up to these matters and at a club level I have used the services of the Angling Trust Fisheries Management Advisers and whilst my club's cormorant problem was not solved, the advice we received has certainly reduced the impact these birds were having on our fisheries. If you have a problem and have not engaged with this team I would highly recommend them. Our Angling Improvement Fund team, working with clubs and the Environment Agency (EA) have given out grants totalling over £155,000 to support fisheries against predation. I was able to see some of the benefits myself when I visited a club that was supported in installing an otter fence. Over £66,000 was awarded to clubs and Fisheries to improve biosecurity and protect fish stocks and we've worked to support a number of clubs who've been dealing with seal predation of their fish stocks. This is not a massive problem nationwide, but it can be catastrophic for those clubs who are struggling with this issue and we've been working with the EA the RSPCA and others to address the current circumstances and to collectively develop national protocols that can be enacted to enable clubs to proactively protect fish stops.

Finally under the Protect banner I want to give a big shout out to the Voluntary Bailiff Service (VBS) team and their army of volunteers. We are not the enforcing agency, but we do play a huge role in supporting clubs and fisheries up and down the country to deter illegal angling and report suspicious activity to the police or the EA. I spent a day with the southeast VBS team and sat in whilst they trained four police officers in the appropriate law around poaching and taking fish, ownership and riparian rights. It was enlightening and shows the power and reach of our partnerships. This is great and sadly necessary work and it's an area where we will continue to support and grow.

Now I want to move on to the objective of Promote: the fantastic Reel Education programme, launched in partnership with Shakespeare, has been a huge success taking angling into schools and aligning fishing with the curriculum. It has created a desire to fish in children who would otherwise perhaps never have considered it having lit that spark. Our nationally recognised Get Fishing Awards have seen over 43,000 people try fishing for the first time across 1600 community run events with nearly 10,000 returning multiple times to progress through the award system to become established and capable anglers and hopefully for life. This nationally recognised single development program starts to put angling on an equal footing with sports like swimming and trampolining in establishing a pathway to participation and it is no coincidence that the EA junior licence sales have jumped forward over 24% in the last year.

We have also continued to grow the Get Fishing for Well-being Initiative and now have 43 organisations recognized as approved delivery partners. I want to thank our fantastic Ambassadors who continue to support and promote the benefits of fishing and boldly support our wider environmental initiatives.

Finally touching on our work to develop angling, this continues to grow every year our fantastic Competition Team organises hundreds of competitions across all disciplines and this year we have been able to add the Penn Sea League to our portfolio. I had the great pleasure earlier in the year to visit Lindholme Lakes and help weigh-in at the Club Angling Champs. I also went and helped the Competitions Team at the Ladies and Disability Champs at Marston Fields and in August I supported the Competitions Team at the Division One National in Wigan that was fished on the Leeds and Liverpool canal and where the Daiwa Gordon League lifted the trophy. I also competed at the Fish O Mania qualifier in the summer at Monk Lakes in Kent, where I was well and truly bashed on the day but I got to experience first hand the fun and excitement this event has for club and open match anglers alike.

We continue to support our national teams, now numbering over 40 and we do this despite no funding from UK sports or Sport England, so we are very grateful to all of our team sponsors who helped make this achievement possible.

The Get Fishing Fund, in partnership with the EA has distributed over £200,000 worth of Rod Licence income in the form of grants to over 113 clubs, fisheries, organisations and coaches to support their work to inspire the next generation of anglers. Learning to fish is a journey, all of our individual journeys are unique and we must recognise though, the world is changing. Access to hands-on instruction on how to fish is not always easy to gain in today's digital world, so this is why we continue to support bursaries for angling coaches. Last year we trained and licensed over 350 coaches and I want to offer my thanks and welcome them into this wonderful sport.

Later this year we are going to launch our latest initiative, the Fisheries Support Team. This team will include dedicated officers in each region working on the ground to support clubs and fisheries to develop their offering. They will be able to offer advice and guidance in everything from habitat improvement, member engagement, safeguarding and much more.

Over 2,600 clubs, fisheries and syndicates are members of the Angling Trust and Fish Legal and I want to thank all of you for your trust and support and please rest assured we are your voice in our collective drive to Protect, Promote and Develop this great sport.

Now I want to remind you that voting on the two Angling Trust resolutions is about to close and so it is your final opportunity to vote. During the next presentation Simon will pull the voting together and we will get the results, which be presented after the next section.

I will now pass you on to Paul [Gant], our Head of Finance.

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Paul Gant, Head of Finance, Angling Trust and Fish Legal:

Thank you very much Eric, I appreciate your introduction and thank you everybody for joining us. I will now take you through the finances.

The slides presented summarise the pages in the Angler magazine with results of the year that ended in March 2024.

Last year at the AGM I had been with the Trust a matter of days, I am now a year in and have a better understanding of Not For Profit organisations and the need to use sources of income wisely to deliver the objectives of the Angling Trust and fight for fish, fishing and the environment.

We have continued to do that in the last year. The income that the Angling Trust receives continues to be diverse and balanced and actually a little bit less reliant in the last year on the grant income from the Environment Agency and a bit more from grant funding from other bodies so we can see that we have grown our grant income in a couple of areas by 8%, which is now about 20% of overall income. We have also seen income in the year on Citizen Science Projects, particularly Catchwise. That was a significant project for us um that went from 2023/24 and has carried on into this financial year, ending in the summer just gone. We are still doing some of the reporting right now so you will see Catchwise mentioned again in next years' slides.

We have seen some small declines in income from membership, mainly from individuals not from clubs or fisheries, they are both up. Income was a little bit down in competitions and coaching. There was a change to coach licensing during the year; the Level 1 Coach qualification ended.

Grant funding is up about 8% on last year and that includes grants from Sport England, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and a number of other small grant funding bodies.

As I mentioned we are Not for Profit, we intend to spend the money that we receive and this year we made a net profit of just £4,000 which on nearly £4 million worth of income, is pretty close! That compares to a £20,000 surplus the year before. Costs are up year on year, mostly because we have more people doing more good stuff and they cost more clearly. The wage inflation was not significant, but the people costs are up by 8% because of the volume.

Direct project costs mainly refers to the Catchwise Project. That was a step up, which reflects the full-time project manager and the number of contractors going out to seaside communities and working with people who were angling from the beach and recording their catches.

Although competitions took in a little bit less income in the year, they actually spent 10% less than the year before and competitions at that level still contributed about the same to the overall position for the business.

Reserves are okay at the end of the year, when you make a very small profit you would expect your reserves to be broadly the same as they were the year before and that is the case.

That is a quick run through of the finances for the Angling Trust. There is more detail available in the Angler publication or if you want any more information or to ask a question, please use the Q&A.

I will hand back to Eric now.

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Eric Prescott, Chair of the Angling Trust

I would now like to invite Simon [Thompson] to share the voting results slide please, which will include from votes cast this evening and those from the proxy votes that were submitted before the meeting.

- 1. Minutes of the Angling Trust Subscriber Members Annual General Meeting which took place on the 25th of November 2023. **Approved** (For = 251, Against = 0, Abstain = 25)*
- 2. Nomination of the Welfare and Safety Lead Director*
 - a. David Wiltshire. **Approved** (For = 260, Against = 7)*

Thank you Simon and thank you for those of you that voted on the resolutions. I would now like to move on to the Q&A.

Question 1 – from Pat Dower - Will there be consultation with the membership as part of the Water Commission role that the Angling Trust has?

Response provided by Jamie Cook – *thank you for the question the short answer is yes. For those of you who are not familiar with this, the angling community has been calling for a root and branch review of the failing water sector for longer than I have been involved, so we are pleased at the government's move to set up this Independent Commission under Jon Cunliffe, but it is going to be a difficult balancing act between all of the pressures that they are going to face. I think the key thing is that anglers are at the top table, which I am proud of, and we are committed to working with the Commissioner to focus upon the health of our rivers, lakes and seas to make sure that remains front and centre, because there is going to be economic challenges to this as well. We have not worked through the logistics of how we are going to consult with the full membership on this. I think one of the key ways that we are going to work is through the club network to get that feedback and to make sure that we are advocating properly on behalf of the community.*

The short answer is yes the longer answer is there'll be further details come through of how we are going to do that but yes, absolutely, we are going to represent the sector, represent angling and to ensure that we have that voice now that we have that seat at the table.

Eric Prescott confirmed that there were no further questions, closed the Angling Trust Subscriber Members meeting and handed over to George Graham for the Fish Legal Annual General Meeting.

Angling Trust Subscriber AGM 2024 - Ends

Tuesday 26 November 2024, commencing 18:30

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Panel: George Graham (Chair, Fish Legal)
Eric Prescott (Chair, Angling Trust)
Jamie Cook (Chief Executive Officer, Angling Trust and Fish Legal)
Paul Gant (Head of Finance, Angling Trust and Fish Legal)
Penny Gane (Head of Legal Practice, Fish Legal)
Simon Thompson (MiVoice)

Minutes

Welcome from the Fish Legal Chair (George Graham)

Welcome to the Annual General Meeting of Fish Legal. A reminder that voting is now open on the motions that we have before the meeting. Some of you may have voted already; if you have not, please vote now so that we can count and present the results later in the meeting using the same procedure as outlined earlier. Also a reminder that if you have any questions about Fish Legal then please use the Q&A button which you should find at the bottom of your Zoom screen.

This time last year at the AGM we had just won our Judicial Review in the High Court on behalf of the Pickering Fisheries Association which established that the Environment Agency had misunderstood and misapplied the law requiring them to produce Nationwide River Restoration Plans. The Judge agreed with our arguments and since then so has the Office for Environmental Protection, the government's own Watchdog overseeing Environmental Regulators in England. It found deeply concerning issues with the way in which the laws designed to protect our rivers lakes and coastal waters have been put into practice.

But we can't stop there. The last government appealed against the Judgment, the new government had an opportunity to do the right thing for our rivers but chose not to withdraw that appeal so we will be back in court in January. That is in the Appeal Court and you will be hearing more from Penny [Gane] in a few minutes about how we are working to widen the impact of the Costa Beck Judgment from one small river in Yorkshire to thousands of other water bodies through our #EveryRiverCounts campaign.

This important case is just one of many that we are fighting on behalf of members across the UK. We have a long list of ongoing cases against water companies and it is not just damage from sewage pollution but from emerging threats as well such as polluted surface water. Damage caused by over abstraction of rivers is another common theme to our legal work whether that's linked to farming, water company abstraction to meet growing customer demand, or for renewables. In Northern Ireland in particular we are working on a number of cases with members where abstraction for hydroelectric schemes is seriously affecting the ability of migratory species such as Atlantic salmon to move up and down the river systems.

We continue to use our expertise in Environmental Information Law to fight for transparency around the impact of private utilities on our waterways and on fish. We are currently gearing up to go to court against EDF for withholding critical information behind the company's decision to drop fish

protection measures from its cooling water intake at Hinkley C nuclear power plant in the Bristol Channel.

You will also hear from Paul Gant in a minute who will take you through our accounts and you will see that the reported result for the year is a substantial loss. These reported results can vary widely from year to year depending on things like the timing of cost recoveries on cases we win. I can confirm that the Committee is confident that our finances remain on a sound footing and the Fighting Fund also remains strong. That Fighting Fund is very important for enabling us to embark on litigation knowing that we can afford the cost. Nevertheless, your Committee continues to explore ways in which we might enhance and maximise our fundraising potential to support our growing case load. We hope to bring you some more concrete ideas on how we might achieve this over the coming year.

A warm thanks to our legal team. Penny [Gane] has become an influential public voice for us on issues around the law and the water environment. Geoff Hardy, Angela Henry, Cameron Hogg, Andrew Kelton and Rob Younger in Scotland remain as busy as ever. We welcome this year two new lawyers, Haseeb Ilyas and Zoe Wedderburn-Day who have hit the ground running in the course of the year. We also bade farewell to Justin Neil who had served Fish Legal very well in a number of roles over the years. Warm thanks to him for all he has done for us. I'd like to offer my own particular gratitude to all of them and also to the members of the Fish Legal Committee who give so much of their time and knowledge to help us run the organisation. Special thanks at this point to J Mark Phillips who resigned from the committee earlier this year and to R Dean Luker who steps down today and we welcome two new Committee members whose election you will be voting on shortly. Steve Chesters has a wealth of experience in Water Quality Management and in fishing club administration which will be invaluable to us and Saira Tahir whose background in corporate law brings us a fresh perspective on many of the issues we face.

So final reminder to those of you who have not voted, please do so now as the votes are about to close and while Simon tees up the results, I'll hand you over to Paul [Gant] to take you through the accounts.

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Paul Gant, Head of Finance, Angling Trust and Fish Legal:

Thank you George. I just have one slide for Fish Legal's numbers and as George has already mentioned the financials for Fish Legal do swing materially year-to year based on when we incur costs for Third Party Experts and Counsel Fees to do with the cases that the Fish Legal team are fighting and when we win cases and recover those costs, plus the costs of our own team it looks vastly different comparing year on year. Last year a surplus of £350,000 after recovering £384,000 of cost for costs incurred in prior years. This year an operating deficit of £103,000 which essentially is the difference between the £43,000 that we recovered in costs and the £146,000 that we incurred with expert and Counsel fees. Beyond that the Fish Legal - team ran at break even. We do not want to make a profit in Fish Legal, we want to fight for fish and fishing on behalf of our clubs and fishery members and that is what we are doing. Actually we strengthened the team during the 2024 financial year by adding Angela [Henry] to the team so the costs have gone up as a result of that because not only is it the cost of a person but all the licences, legal systems and everything else which we need to in increase with volume. Those costs will continue to go up in 2025 because we have additional people in the team.

Other things to mention are that we are looking after Fish Legal funds slightly differently. We are earning interest on the money that we have on deposit, which we did not do previously. It is still on deposit at the bank, but it is in an interest-bearing account. You can see the difference of £4,000 last year and nothing the year before. That all helps, it goes to the defray some of the other costs in the business and as George has also mentioned the reserves for Fish Legal are healthy. The Committee

agree that there are sufficient reserves to continue to fight the good fight particularly with the Fighting Fund in the background as well. So in summary, everything is fine for Fish Legal and this year so far everything is looking on track as well.

That is the end of my slide, but again, if anybody has any questions please pop them into the Q&A.

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George Graham, Chair of Fish Legal

Thank you Paul [Gant]. Simon [Thompson] do we have the results of the voting?

1. *Minutes of the Fish Legal Annual General Meeting which took place on the 25th of November 2023. **Approved** (For = 153, Against = 0, Abstain = 18)*
2. *Re-election of the existing Committee Members – **Approved** (For = 163, Against = 1, Abstain =6):*
 - i. *George Graham (Chair)*
 - ii. *Phillip Chamberlain*
 - iii. *Jamie Cook*
 - iv. *Mike Greenwood*
 - v. *Tim Goode*
 - vi. *Jamie Lamb*
 - vii. *Andrew Nathan*
 - viii. *Charles Nichols*
 - ix. *Eric Prescott*
3. *Election of Committee Members – **Approved** (For= 159, Against =1, Abstain =10) :*
 - i. *Steve Chesters*
 - ii. *Saira Tahir*
4. *Approval of the accounts for the financial year ending 31 March 2024 – **Approved** (For = 154, Against = 1, Abstain =13)*

Thank you all for your support for those motions. Now we have a couple of questions:

Question 1 – Leslie Teale - Are there plans afoot to resume the quarterly WQMN review meeting?

Response provided by Jamie Cook – Thanks for the question. The answer is yes. I have been in a meeting in Topsham in Exeter today and got back with 15 minutes to spare. There are a couple of quite interesting developments on this side that we will be communicating through the Network. It is probably worth saying, I am sure that all who are involved in the network are aware that we sadly lost Kris Kent, a valued colleague, earlier this year and that has been a challenge for everyone involved from the Angling Trust and the Water Quality Monitoring Network. Glenn Marshall who some of you will know as a volunteer in the Severn catchment agreed to offer some support from a technical perspective, because losing someone of the stature, in both his knowledge and the size of Kris for those of you who knew him, is always going to leave a huge void. We have worked through that now, we have a plan moving forward and yes, before Christmas you will get the updates.

There are two quite interesting pieces of information in that I think I am okay to share. The first relates to the Severn catchment. I recently met with the CEO of Severn Trent Water and they have agreed to use the data from the Water Quality Monitoring Network within their catchment to influence their investment decisions moving forward. At the moment we are trying to work through how to go about collating that data and aligning it with the club network. We have offered to support them with setting up either kind of ‘town halls’ or direct one-to-one meetings between Severn Trent and the local clubs to ensure that their infrastructure investment is focused on important waters for recreational angling but also related around the points when our monitoring network shows there are specific problems. That is quite a big step because lots of the other

recreational activities have gone to the water companies and lots of them are taking money from the water companies, they have said well anecdotally we believe 'this and that' is the right area to focus upon. Because we have got an Evidence Base, solely because of this programme, we are able to sit with the CEO of Severn Trent and say actually you really need to focus in these areas because there is data to support that. So I think that is a first big step forward.

The second piece of information is that we have just received provisional approval for a pilot to take the Water Quality Monitoring Network into estuaries. There is a pilot scheme on the Ribble, I believe. It requires Board and Committee approval, but if approved then we will be able to prove the value of this scheme in protecting those estuary waters as well as freshwater. We also have an aspiration to move that into still waters as well.

Question 2 – from Steven Bowyer - What is the percentage of individual members as opposed to club memberships? Will individual members who are not affiliated to clubs be given the chance to comment as Jamie indicated that it would only be via club memberships?

Response provided by Paul Gant - Based on the most recent set of numbers we have for membership numbers: we have just over 16,500 individual members across all categories, adults, juniors etc and there's 19,500 total members including clubs and fisheries. As a percentage split 85% are individuals of some type and 15% are clubs and fisheries.

Response from Jamie Cook - Per my previous answer we have not worked through the mechanics of it yet. The Water Commission is relatively new and there is a huge amount of data to work through and an awful lot to cover for a very small team. I'll be completely honest we have not worked out the mechanics of how we will collect feedback. Steven's question is absolutely right, I referenced the fact that we will rely on the club network. We have got over 2,500 club and fishery members so where possible I think that we will use that network to try and consolidate responses around the waters that are impacted because we are all impacted by this. But that is not to say in that answer that we are not going to consult more widely with individuals. I will just be completely honest, we have not worked out the kind of mechanism to gain direct feedback on that at this point. So it is not to say as an individual card carrying supporting paying member that we are not going to take feedback. That's absolutely not what I was trying to say, we are working through how that will work.

Question 3 from Paul Woodgate - Stopping the use of customer money to fund executive bonuses has already been successful. How can Fish Legal help similarly in stopping (or lessening) the amount of customer money used to fund repairs in infrastructure, which should come from operating profits and curtailment of executive salaries?

Response provided by George Graham - I have a lot of sympathy with the thrust of that though I am very wary about stopping repairs on infrastructure, anything that might lessen that so just a note of caution on that but I will ask Penny [Gane] to give a more thorough answer:

Response from Penny Gane- We are looking quite closely at the business plans that have been submitted by the water companies that are currently being considered by Ofwat. They are due to make decisions and their final determination on what the water companies are going to be able to spend in the next five years in December. But I agree with you in terms of where we should be putting our focus and trying to put pressure on to make sure that operating profits are used to drive improvements as well. That was one of the elements that came out of us looking very closely at what was going on on the Costa Beck. We were finding that there were some very simple operational fixes which should be coming out of day-to-day management and operational spending which could really protect the river and those were not being prioritized within the Water Company's operations. So absolutely we want to see the water companies spending on fixing problems which should be coming out of their normal spend rather than prioritizing big asset infrastructure spending when that might not be the necessary solution to easy fixes on rivers.

Response from Jamie Cook - The one thing I would add to what Penny said is this is part of the Water Commission role and it is why we are fairly uniquely positioned to respond because Fish Legal have been calling for this type of action for an awfully long time. Having that legal 'bite' to be able to back up the points that we are making politically from a Campaign's point of view from the Angling Trust gives us an element that a lot of the other stakeholders have not got. To be able to feed in those practical areas that we have been calling for for a long time so I think that is going to be layered into the Water Commission response in ensuring that that we are putting pressure on not to go down the same route that consumers have become wise to now.

Response from George Graham - This is a really important issue that we have been focusing on for some time - that the first thing Water Companies need to do is the basic maintenance. I should have looked up the number, but I'm pretty sure it was 28% of the major storm overflows in the last combined statistics they released were attributed to basic asset maintenance failures: things like cleaning the filters; clearing away scrub from overflow ponds. They need to do the maintenance before we can trust them to do the asset investment; they love investing in new infrastructure because that adds to their regulatory asset base on which they are allowed a return. They do not like doing the basic maintenance and that is what we need to make sure gets done first of all. I mentioned that we had added two new lawyers this year and one of them in particular is going to be focusing a lot on areas like the water company business plans.

George Graham:

If there are no more questions then I will declare the Fish Legal Annual General Meeting over. I have thanked the team and the Committee but I do want to add my thanks to Eric's to you all as club and individual members for your support. Without you we would not be able to carry on our fight to protect our rivers, lakes and coastal waters from the abuse that they continue to suffer.

Now I am going to hand over to Jamie [Cook].

Fish Legal AGM 2024 - End

The AGMs were followed by:

Brigepal's Story

Jamie Cook introduced 'Brigepal's Story' – a video showcasing Brigepal Singh's inspirational passion for fishing. Born in Bethnal Green and growing up in East London, angling wasn't a common pastime in his Sikh community, but something clicked when he held a rod in his hand. Brigepal has gone on to be a recognisable face on the banks of London's rivers and canals, and is most well known for some of the monster chub he has banked over the years.

The film is part of a series of films exploring how people from all walks of life are part of the fishing family and that angling truly can be for everyone.

Available to view: <https://anglingtrust.net/get-involved/we-fish-as-one/>

#EveryRiverCounts

Jamie Cook introduced Penny Gane, Head of Legal Practice for Fish Legal to talk about the #EveryRiverCounts Campaign and the impact of legal action taken by Fish Legal over a number of years on behalf of Pickering Fishery Association, which once had a thriving trout and grayling fishery on Costa Beck in North Yorkshire, but which is today virtually fishless. The case has uncovered problems in how the planning and improvement of rivers was being taken forward across the country.

86% of rivers in England are currently not in good ecological health. This information is available from the Environment Agency website. England is divided up into 4,929 different water bodies and there is a deadline of 2027 for them all to meet the 'good' status.

A lot of work has gone into trying to find out the reasons for failure for each water body that is failing. Examples of why a water body might be failing for fish include: sewage discharges caused by the water industry; agricultural pollution from land management.

The legal challenge against the government and the Environment Agency came about after review of the plans for all of the water bodies across England. They argued that they did not need to come up with specific actions to deal with all of the reasons found for failures. Our view was that their generic, vague plans were not good enough and that actually what they needed to be doing was coming up with specific actions with time limits for all of the reasons why water bodies are failing across the country. That is the reason that we are going to the Court of Appeal in January because this government, unfortunately is following in the same footsteps as the last government in trying to defend the fact that they do not need to come up with plans for every single river.

We know that without actions on the bank we will not see any real improvement in the health of our rivers. That requires action from the regulators. We are working with member clubs and fishery owners who are backing #EveryRiverCounts campaign on their particular river where we have identified what specific actions need to be taken on their waterway to improve things on the ground. We know that there are specific regulatory actions which can improve in very practical ways the health of fisheries across England. The campaign is not just about those rivers that have special protection, not just about special areas of conservation, not just about chalk streams which rightfully get attention and focus. This is about every single river and every single small beck and every single tributary and the steps that the regulators need to take to bring them back to health.

What can you do to help with the #EveryRiverCounts campaign?

We have set up a dedicated website to try and spread the word about the campaign. We are raising money to fund the appeal, which is expensive. We have been successful so far in raising over £10,000 to help fight the case in the Court of Appeal, but if you are able to support us with a donation or you can recommend to your club that they support the campaign, please visit the #EveryRiverCounts campaign website: <https://everyrivercountsappeal.fishlegal.net/>

If you would like to become the face of your local river and support the campaign that way, tell us about what you think is special about the river where you fish and likewise we can tell you and help you find out the reasons why your particular river is failing and what can be done by the regulators to improve things.

You can sign up for updates to keep a breast of how things are going and the progress we are making against this new government towards pushing them to make real improvements for healthy rivers for fish.

Angling Trust/Fish Legal AGMs 2024 Attendees

Individual Members In Attendance:

Alex Clegg	Timothy Pryke
Jamie Cook	Paul Woodgate
Eric Prescott	Sarah Collins
Paul Gant	John West
Penny Gane	Leslie Teale
Samantha Frost Jones	Mike Greenwood
Stuart Sharp	James Graham
George Graham	David Wiltshire
Paul Church	Paul Harding
Ryan Chorlton	Michael Spiller
Brian Owen	Pat Dower
Carole Sanderson	Graham Odiam
Ron Taylor	James Stinson
Anthony Fulton	Richard Bamforth
Tony Bamber	Andrew Stonehouse
Francis Curtis	Ian Stokes
Alex Parker	Mark Parry
David Baker	Tony Harvey
David Fisher	Michael Hirsh
Clifford Bayford	Darren Chilcott
Phil Houghton	Neville Fickling
Joel Virgo	Rob Harris
Bev Clifford	Steven Bowyer
Neil Stacey	Said Evason
Simon Horsley	David Kent
Eric Edwards	Steve Beverley
Mike Smith	Mark Summerfield
Ian Watson	Phil Chamberlain
Martin Barry	Andrew Nathan
Claire Fuller	David Kent
Karen Woolley	Stephen Chesters
Colin Stroud	

Member Organisations in Attendance:

Haltwhistle Junior Anglers
Mottram St. Andrew Fly Fishing Club
Avid Angling
DOESAC
Plough Angling Club
Wybunbury Anglers Association
Wetherby and District Angling Club
Chelmsford Angling Association
Port Sunlight AC
Haywards Heath and District Angling Society
Zander Angling Club
Peterborough & District Angling Association
Long Eaton Victoria Angling Society
Asfordby and Melton Society of Anglers
Repton Angling Club