

Annual statement to members of the Isle of Wight Freshwater Angling Company Ltd for the 2023/24 membership year

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the Annual General Meeting of the Isle of Wight Freshwater Angling Company. A big thank you to Arreton Community Hall for allowing the use of this venue and access to the bar.

It has been fair to say that the Board have faced another challenging year in trying to fulfill the wants and wishes of the membership, abide by the regulations we must adhere to as a Company and the challenging financial obstacles we have dealt with.

We realise that we will never satisfy every member, but we do base our decisions on what the majority of members ask for and is it financially achievable.

Progress achieved over the previous couple of years has continued this year with:

- Improved swims at Holliers, stock ponds cleared and put into production.
- Septic tank at Merstone repaired.
- Laurel trees taken down to fence level at Gunville after a neighbours complaint.
- Pruning back the island and surrounding trees on Heron.
- New boats sourced to ensure safe working is possible when on the water.
- Health and safety policies revised and updated to ensure we comply with our legal and insurance requirements.
- New signage installed to warn of potential dangers.

The work over the last few years to enhance the fisheries is starting to pay off. It takes time for hard landscaping to settle down and look more pleasing and natural. Kingfisher demonstrates the success in managing fish welfare with weight gains and numbers of fish caught.

The appalling weather over the past few months with torrential rain has caused some major damage and closure of venues. The flooding in Gunville in particular has caused some concerns for the surrounding housing estate, and new piping will need to be installed to prevent major damage. Talks are ongoing with the Isle of Wight Council to find solutions, and once resolved further improvement work can commence.

There is still much to do at Merstone, with repairs to the platforms on Minnow, the resurfacing of the car park and the path around Kingfisher. There will also be a new concrete path from the toilet block to the first peg on Kingfisher making things more accessible for our disabled members.

Further work is still required on swims at Holliers and the access road to the venue could cause issues. The actual access road does not belong to the company, but we are contracted to maintain it. The verges and overhanging trees belong to Holliers

Farm who are required to maintain that. We have recently had a complaint from Holliers Farm that members had driven their cars on the verges causing damage. This was mainly due to the amount of mud on the lane causing cars to ground out. We have since tried to make preliminary repairs, but further work will be required once the weather improves.

Maintenance is always a constant drain on resources and the unpredictable weather has given us some additional expenses over and above what could be anticipated. Maintenance and equipment has been our biggest expenditure over the last 12 months, but if we want to have safe accessible venues and keep nature at bay, neglecting regular upkeep would result in far higher long term costs.

Unfortunately, whilst the core of the volunteer work parties will continue, the number of members committed to the work has diminished. If you are able to help in any way please consider attending work parties in the future. You may have noticed the recent efforts to clear fallen trees, work on kingfisher island and to clear paths around Heron. However the Board have reluctantly accepted that contractors will need to be employed to supplement the general day to day maintenance of our venues, and to ensure completion of on going necessary projects in order for members to enjoy good sport in safe surroundings.

We have spent £19,376 on the purchase of fish stocks over the last year. 50 C3 Carp from Mark Simmonds and 50 C3 Carp from Will Groves have been introduced to Holliers New Lake, and the new stock ponds. The stock ponds have been cleared to enable us to grow on our own stock for the future. 300lb of Bream in the 2 to 4lb range were introduced to Old Lake. 10 10-12lb Carp purchased from Will Groves were stocked in Gunville along with 5 larger Carp of 20lb. 6 Carp to 20lb with the largest at 27lb 12oz stocked in Heron. The netting of the lakes has given us a much better idea of the stock we currently hold. The Board feel that we probably now have the optimum level of stock at each venue, and ensure that further fish purchases will be kept to a minimum during the next year. The stock ponds at Holliers are maturing nicely and should provide our own replacement fish to introduce at our venues. Feeding of this stock will continue and supplementary high protein pellets introduced to stimulate growth.

We would like to think communication with our members has improved with the introduction of a membership mailing list and updating our website. It is planned to issue updates on a regular basis to keep members informed about what is happening and progress made.

We do unfortunately still from time to time hear members expressing dissatisfaction about Board decisions. Please remember unless the issue is raised as an e mail to the Company Secretary, it will not receive the consideration that is required. The Company Secretary passes all complaints to Directors to consider at the monthly Board meetings, so rather than just express your dissatisfaction verbally please let us know by e mail to the company e mail address. It will be discussed, and you will get a written response.

Recently an allegation was made suggesting that Board members and company officers were profiting financially from their position within the Company. This is completely and categorically untrue. No board member or officer receives any remuneration or benefit in kind from the Company. We all pay our membership fees like all other members.

The Board have reviewed the Articles of Association to ensure they reflect good management practices relevant to the Isle of Wight Freshwater Angling Company. The Articles of Association are published on the website. We have recently introduced a conflict-of-interest register, where all Company officials are compelled to declare any potential or perceived conflict of interests. The register makes it clear that if any interests held outside the company might be perceived as being at odds with the Company interest it is declared, and the individual excluded from voting on the subject. This register is reviewed before every Board meeting.

The day-to-day administrative duties are conducted by the Company Secretary, who deals with membership applications, guest tickets, payment of invoices and correspondence to and from the Board of Directors. The Xero system for financial transactions is accessible by all the Directors and our Accountants, and all Directors and bailiffs will have access to the membership database. This ability for all to access ensures all can see details of financial transactions and ensure good governance.

Our bye laws have also been updated to bring everything into a single document, easier to understand and more appropriate for the modern day. All members are strongly encouraged to read them when they renew their membership.

Following a very informative presentation from David Wilkins the South East Regional Enforcement Officer with the Angling Trust we have amended our rules to allow a bailiff or Company Official to request sight of a valid Environment Agency rod license and fishing on Company venues will not be allowed unless a valid license appropriate to the number of rods fished is held. There were a number of members who were caught without a current EA license this year by Environmental Agency Officers and will likely face a court appearance and fines. The rod license fee is used to fund many activities to prevent damage to fish stocks and the environment so we are very keen that our members possess one. Some Board members are currently undertaking training with the Environment Agency with a view to becoming accredited by them.

We are currently reviewing our procedures for enlisting volunteers to act as bailiffs or water keepers. Many of you have replied to a recent e mail on this subject expressing interest. We will be formulating the procedures we would like our bailiffs to take in the near future, which will always follow guidance issued by the Angling Trust. Very many thanks to those that have already shown an interest. Even if you are not a bailiff and see actions that appear to be suspicious or unlawful, please e mail the Company e mail address or ring the EA hotline on 0800 807060. Do not take any risks or put yourself in danger.

The Company membership currently stands at 849, but this does include partners/wives/husbands and children in Family memberships. The actual number of active members amount to 689.

The membership can be broken down as follows:

68 Family memberships

264 Full memberships

198 Concessionary over 66

26 Concessionary Disabled

61 Juniors under 16

6 Juniors 16-18

56 non fishing associate members

6 Honorary memberships

4 Life memberships

The guest ticket system is still working well with 57 free tickets issued. Each member is entitled to 2 free guest tickets in each membership year and can purchase additional tickets at £10 each once their allocation of free tickets has been used. Guest tickets are only available from dawn to dusk, and the member must accompany the guest and ensure they comply with all the Company rules.

Income and expenditure for the year ending 31/03/2024

Our Membership income = £64,765

Guest tickets = £230

Deposit account interest = £2,125

Total Income = £67,120

This was an increase of £20,264 on the previous financial year.

Our expenditure was £82,656

This was an increase of £22,655 on previous financial year.

We have therefore spent £15,536 more than our income

We do endeavor to live within our income, but items like electricity to run our aerators and unforeseen maintenance costs do eat heavily into our income. To save costs we are changing electricity suppliers to access to be far cheaper tariffs over a 3-year fixed cost period, rather than the yearly contract we have had with SSE.

You will also notice that we transferred sums of money from our Santander Savings account to a Nat West 95 day notice account which has given us a better rate of return.

As at 31/03 our accounts stood at :

Nat West Current account = £2542.09

Nat West 95 Day account = £96,010.68

Santander account = £25,792.42

We have projected our income for the next financial year using the breakdown of members we currently have and using the updated membership charges. This would give us a projected income of £75, 378. This is over £7,000 less than we spent last year, so you can understand the larger than normal increase in membership costs we are introducing. If we want to maintain the facilities we have, to the level we currently enjoy, we must make provision for this in increased fees.

We have at past AGM's set the level of membership fees for the following membership year, but with the rapidly fluctuating financial markets and costs of maintenance we feel we have no option but to review costs closer to the new membership year. We had originally thought about removing concessionary membership fees, but we would have been the only club in the country to do so according to the Angling Trust, and felt it was not the right thing to do.

Thank you for your patience, and if you do have issues you wish to discuss please raise them in any other business. Those issues will be taken away, discussed by the Board and you will be given a considered reply as soon as possible

The Board