

CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, 13 June 2023

Title: Witney Lake Fishing Season

Contact Officer: Biodiversity and Green Spaces Officer - Carl Whitehead

Background

Witney Angling Society has had rights to fish Ducklington Lake since 1991 and has worked with the Town Council to protect and develop the fish stocks and fishing swims since that time.

Current Situation

The Society would like to make a change to the current fishing season on Witney lake. They propose changing from the traditional closed season which is 9 months angling per season from June 16th to March 14th the following year. This would change the fishing season to allow 11 months angling per season on the lake with a shutdown of 1 month.

The shutdown month would be started once the fish have started to group up to spawn as viewed by the Society – they would inform Members, the Council and signs would be erected at the Lake to make other park users aware, and a post added to social media.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Having taken advice from the Environment Agency, the Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer has been advised this is a valid and acceptable request. There will be no impact to the fish stock as long as the “closed season” is put into force when required.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

The club needs to re-sign a new tenancy agreement with the necessary inclusions to protect the swims and fish stocks from overfishing.

Financial implications

Described here or as stated in the report above.

- This could have a positive financial gain in that the Council could increase the annual ground rent paid by the Society if it was felt suitable. The current rent stands at £1,500.00 for 9 months.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. This will be carefully monitored and reviewed and,
2. There could be a financial benefit to the Council and,
3. The Society will self-police this so no extra officer time would be required.