

CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, 4 June 2024

Title: Witney Lake – Request to Register as a Fishery

Contact Officer: Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer

Background

Witney Angling Society has held an agreement with the Town Council since 1991 to fish the lake, and over that time has assisted to maintain and develop the fishing “swims”. They have also donated 2 life rings for public use as needed around the lake.

Current Situation

The group has decided they would like to register as a fishery to enable support from the Environment Agency and to better protect fish stocks in the Lake.

Below is the process they are following:

For the first stage of formalising the lake as a ‘fishery’ the club will need to complete a fishery registration with FHI/CEFAS – go to:

[Form RW1 : Application to register as a fishery or cropping water - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/form-rw1-application-to-register-as-a-fishery-or-cropping-water).

Then, they’ll need to apply to the EA for a ‘site permit’.

[Application for a Live Fish Movements Site Permit \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-a-live-fish-movements-site-permit)

Letter from the Chairman of the Angling Club:

To whom it may concern,

I am writing as Chairman of Witney Angling Society to express the Society's interest in registering Ducklington Lake as a fishery with the Environment Agency.

As an angling club we are trying to provide first-class fishing for our members, and by completing the registration process we would be legally allowed to stock the lake with fish, improving both the fishing and the wider biodiversity of the lake and country park.

Being bordered by the river Windrush on one side and the Brook on the other is partly what makes the lake so special, but as evidenced by the recent continuing high water levels it also makes it susceptible to flooding.

In winter this may not be so much of a problem for the fishing, but in the big summer floods of 2007 the lake lost 95% of its fish stocks into the river. In the intervening years the lake has very slowly recovered to where it is now, but for a long time it was not worth fishing at all and the club was in serious danger of folding. As of today the club is in a good position, but we are entirely dependent on having good fishing to attract members.

Without having the necessary permissions in place to add fish stocks to the lake, should a serious flooding event happen again then the future of the club will be in serious doubt. Being that we are now nearly into May and the river is still so high that it is flooding into the lake, we feel this issue is getting more and more pressing, and given the weather predictions for the future we feel this will only increase with time.

Even without the flooding issue being able to add fish to the lake will only improve the services we can offer to our members, and hopefully attract more local people to use the park, and to maybe discover the joy of angling.

I have spoken with the council's Biodiversity officer, Carl Whitehead, and he is very supportive of this proposal. As a society we would very much like to work with the council to make this happen, so that we can continue to provide a good amenity for local people, and to help towards making the lake and country park as wildlife-rich as possible.

With thanks and best wishes,

Witney Angling Society Chairman

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.

This action will improve the overall biodiversity of the lake.

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.

There is no risk to the Council in applying for this status.

Financial implications

Described here or as stated in the report above.

➤ There are no financial implications to the Council.

Recommendations

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

1. The request from Witney Angling Society to register Witney Lake as a fishery.