



Avon & Tributaries Angling Association

Banks and Maintenance Report - 2020

Bank maintenance this season has provided many challenges, not least because of the unexpected lockdown situation early on. Also, the retirement of Dick Rees and the standing down of Dennis Toogood provided a catalyst for change to our basic maintenance structure and overall policy.

With Dick's retirement from active duty we have employed the services of Johnny Tirila as our new contractor. Much of his work has been to do with the regular strimming of the trout water, M1 all the way up to and including W7. The stocked water was strimmed once before each stocking and the catch and release water as and when necessary according to growth, although this should be no less than 3 times through the season. In addition to this Johnny has helped me to clear much of the reed growth on W1 and W2 and has also joined Hugh Sibley to maintain and improve the ladders, ropes, and stiles on the trout water.

Using Johnny as our contractor has already this year significantly reduced our total contractor costs and the forecast for next season is that our contractor costs will be further reduced by approximately £7000 on the 2019 figure.

The Wed Team, headed up by Phil Chant and George Marwood, while being reduced to skeletal forces during the lockdown has nevertheless continued to maintain access to our banks to a high standard. Initially work was done to clear the now fishable area in front of the Mill House on the Mye (W1). As the season got underway a grand effort by Phil and Steve Fuller was made to clear the catch and release water C1, W4, W6, and W7. With the help of Ed Gillard the team were then able to do a remarkable amount of work on the coarse water along the Frome and Avon in readiness for the opening of that season. Later on much time was spent clearing and preparing the Ponds site for its redevelopment as headed up by Nick Gates.

In total the Team met in one form or another on 31 occasions which equates to 106 hours, 54 hours of which were spent at the Ponds.

During our closure during the lockdown poaching on our waters became a major issue which resulted in the necessity to beef up of our bailiffing efforts. At its height we were able to patrol the water most days of the week with the help of Phil Chant, Johnny Tirila and myself. Phil was instrumental in keeping good contact with the local police who provided us with additional support.

Trespassing by the general public has also continued to be a significant issue, particularly on the Midford. In addition to improving the defences on the Garages gate we have also, in association with the adjacent landowner, had some new fencing installed which should help keep the general public from encroaching the path along M2 and M3 all along the

right hand bank and into our field. We have also taken the decision to change the codes on the locks in this area as our old code had been given out to the public. The codes will again be changed throughout the trout water at the beginning of next season. This may take some time so do continue to use the old code as necessary.

A further result of Dick's retirement has been that we took the decision to sell the tractor and replace it with a Land Rover vehicle which will hopefully be in service soon pending its registration and the completion of the Ponds renovations as a place to keep it.

A result of this change of vehicle, along with our basic maintenance structure, has been a major policy shift with regard to tree removal whereby apart from any potential health and safety issues it is not always an immediate priority to remove them at the expense of the many other regular maintenance issues that we need to keep on top of. Also, many times it would be beneficial to just leave some fallen trees as they can provide good cover for the fish. Further, We might also need to review/consider on a case by case basis whether or not it is always our responsibility to remove the trees at all. This might actually fall to the landowner, whereby they could potentially either get their own contractor to remove it (at a cost) or perhaps share the cost with the club.

Many thanks to all of our volunteers - Phil Chant, George Marwood, Peter Frost, Mike Brewin, Steve Fuller, and Ed Gillard for their huge combined efforts this season.

Gavin Wells - 31 October 2020