

LINLITHGOW ANGLING CLUB DEVELOPMENT PLAN

OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

The objectives of the plan are designed to address the major threats/risks to the Club's future sustainability.

1. To maintain and improve the river and its environs as a sustainable fishery.
2. To increase Club membership, particularly among young people.
3. To maintain and extend the social activities of the Club and its extensive programme of annual outings.
4. To raise the profile of the Club in the local community in support of objectives 1 to 3.
5. To contribute to and support activities organised by the appropriate angling bodies and partners relevant to game fishing e.g. the Scottish Anglers National Association, River Forth Fisheries Trust, River Avon Federation, Forth Area Federation of Anglers.

MAKING THE PLAN EFFECTIVE

The key to a successful plan is that our **members** and **partners feel it is their plan-owned and supported by them**; that there are activities for everyone to contribute to and that its implementation is regularly monitored.

It is proposed:

1. That the Club Executive Committee set the plan for the beginning of each new season with dates for all planned activities throughout the coming year. For example, if it is proposed to undertake burns clearance, the dates should be specified as clearly as the current outings programme, well in advance. The same should apply for club meetings and events. The plan/calendar should be posted on the website
2. As far as is possible a lead person should be identified for each activity or event.
3. The Club Executive Committee's principal office-bearers: President, Vice President and Secretary will prepare a report for the AGM on plan outcomes.

MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING THE RIVER AND ITS ENVIRONS

Over the years there have been reports on the condition of the river: the Carron and Avon Rehabilitation Initiative, Craig Macadam Entomological Report, Wild Trout Advisory visit, Avon Habitat Restoration Project. In summary, these reports paint a picture of a reasonably healthy river with a reasonably healthy invertebrate population. The WTT report points to the importance of burns maintenance and improvement. There are some stretches of the river which would be suitable for salmonid breeding.

The degree to which the Club wishes to improve the river environs is in part dependant on our vision for the river as a fishery. It is unclear from the RFFT project 'River Life' whether any substantial development of the river as a migratory river is anticipated. Indeed, much of the investment from the project is targeted at developments on the Almond. The Club Executive has reached the view that unless substantial investment is anticipated from RFFT, we should focus on maintaining the river as a (primarily) brown trout fishery. The issue of migratory fishing development can be re-visited but without very substantial investment, it is a non-starter.

Therefore, recommendations below relate to trout fishing, with no action to develop the river's migratory capacity. In short, we don't oppose measures to increase salmon and sea trout in the river but focus on native brown trout.

The Linlithgow stretch has three main contributory burns. The future of the river lies in maintaining healthy burns and keeping bankside access to the main river.

1. It is proposed that each of the burns is inspected by members of the river managers group (see below 2) annually in the first half of the season and that a working party then visits the burn with a view to clearance and maintenance as identified by the river managers. Dates need to be agreed asap.
2. The River Managers Group used to meet reasonably regularly. It is proposed to reinstitute these meetings: twice a year and the start and end of the season. I will undertake to convene these meetings.
3. The River Managers Group should be charged with assembling a small programme of works to improve access to the river on beat 4. There are stretches where the installation of wooden steps and guide rails would dramatically improve access. We should aim to get this programme costed this year and seek to fund it by a combination of our own resources and funds from our sources e.g. RFFT
4. Bank and vegetation clearance is everyone's responsibility, but some stretches need more substantial clearance than 'bramble clipping'. The Executive should allocate one of the office-bearers to lead this and co-ordinate clearance parties on the main river.
5. We should maintain the fly monitoring work and institute a programme of phosphate testing (correspondence is in hand with RFFT on funding the kits).
6. We should maintain and expand numbers of members about to undertake spraying.

All the foregoing will depend on volunteer capacity i.e. active support from our members and our willingness to do the work-we may not manage it, but we can at least try and see how we progress.

The place of the river and future of the club in the context of the RFFT River Life Programme is unclear. We do not know what if any shared vision RFFT has for the river. A 'high level' delegation of the principle office bearers should meet with RFFT to discuss this on the back of the development plan consultation.

INCREASING MEMBERSHIP AND RAISING THE PROFILE OF THE CLUB

Our membership is in steady, though not yet alarming, decline. An issue is the small proportion of young members.

This is unsurprising at one level-people are not in these times 'joiners'. Many voluntary organisations suffer the same problem. The recommendations below seek to address this issue by playing to the club's strengths-the conviviality of our members and the desire to share our knowledge and expertise.

It is proposed we undertake the following:

1. Membership to anyone under the age of 18 be free.
2. We advertise for new members in 'The Gazette' offering free tuition (in association with SANA tutors?)-perhaps an event themed around a 'river open day' or something at Millhall.
3. We aim to get five schools participating in the Trout in the Classroom project in 2019-funding from Historic Environment Scotland.
4. We continue our work with the local scouts-already a source of new interest.
5. We 'formalise' the post of youth development officer (currently Joe Arntdt) and ask Joe to present a plan for increasing membership among young people.

The social side of the club and its environmental role will appeal to many people-we need to make more of this. We also need to come across as anything but stuffy and dare I say it, slightly modern.

Angling is as much a recreational activity as it is a sport. The image we portray to the wider public of the Club needs to convey this broader appreciation of environmental guardianship and camaraderie.

It is proposed:

1. Executive Committee - improve the website-give it a more modern free with more input from members
2. We advertise our activities on the Linlithgow Facebook page.
3. We put out more press releases on our activities.
4. We write to other local organisations (those with a link to us) offering to give talks on the club's work.
5. We produce an annual report for wide distribution to other voluntary organisations and sister organisations in Linlithgow and beyond.

MAINTAINING PARTNERSHIPS

Many of the challenges which face anglers can only be tackled by united action across all the angling bodies locally and nationally.

Our most important partnership is with the River Avon Federation, of which we are a founding member club. We will continue to support Federation activity as we have historically.

The Club has an excellent reputation largely acquired through the consistent work of club Executive Committee members maintaining links with other clubs, national angling bodies and local community groups.

We should continue to place a high priority on this work.

David Manion
Club President March 2018

