

Presidential Remarks AGM 15/1/2020

The first item of significance in 2019 was an email received from the AWPR Joint Venture Group confirming construction of the Don Crossing Bridge was now complete and they would be tidying up the surrounding area below the bridge. Well the so called tidy up wasn't very thorough.

Following discussions at the last AGM an interest bearing account was opened to generate some income. As you will all know interest rates are currently poor and a further minus point is that any interest generated will attract a payment of corporation tax at a rate of 19% but it is better than nothing. You would be surprised how difficult it was to get some establishments to accept monies for investment from an Association.

Fly Tying classes for members have started up down at the Bothy once per week. See the website for details if you are interested in attending. The class caters for all abilities to ty a fly. Thanks to Stewart Horne for organising the classes.

Following discussions with Marine Scotland there was no give on the requirement to supply stats for effort in fishing for salmon. Anglers are required to advise if they have been fishing for salmon whether or not they actually caught a fish. A system was set up by our Secretary using the online catch reporting system. The initial system didn't really work very well and involved a lot of work to sort everything out. A modified system has now been set up which is far better. There is enough work to do without having to deal with this extra.burden.

Our online telephone reporting line has been closed down. Only a couple of members were using it and the cost of keeping it open

simply couldn't be justified. There are rumours that not everyone is reporting fish caught. Only by reporting your catches properly can we see a way forward of getting our rivers out of Category 3.

Loch of Loirston has been commented upon by members for a few years now. The weed growth in the loch is nowadays almost totally out of control since the use of herbicide was banned. Even if cut using our weedcutter the weed just reappears within a very short period. Over at the Farmside there are however more clear areas which can be fished but it can be a long walk round. The promised parking has never materialised. At a recent meeting with the new property agent for Muirs we have again been promised parking sometime in 2020. Time will tell

Bearing the concerns of members about Loirston in mind when we were given the opportunity to take over a new Stillwater out beside Newmachar we decided to have a look. Millpond is a very small Stillwater which at one time was a commercial fishery open to the General public.

There were some concerns over the small size of the place but there were many plus points with a well maintained area and no real weed growth problem so we decided to take on the fishery on a trial basis using some of the compensation monies received from AWPR for the pollution they caused at Loirston.

It is an ideal venue for junior members or less infirm members who find walking along riverbanks difficult. We initially stocked with fish up to 1.5lb and it quickly showed promise. A subsequent stocking saw some slightly larger fish introduced. As you will hear in the catches report it has been very successful. There is a group of dedicated regulars. A member who originally complained about the small fish stocked had a very good day out there last week with

several good fish up to 3lb in weight. The fish seem to grow on well.. There is also a head of resident wild brown trout from the inlet burn.

In the early part of the year we began to form a long term Sustainability plan. Several objectives of importance were decided on and a lead person put in charge of each. Already some work has been carried out to identify areas where some savings can be made. Our 3 main costs are payment of river Board Assessments, maintenance and general expenses. Nothing we can do about the Assessments but in the maintenance area we have already cut out use of independent contractors for our annual grass cutting keeping it all grass cutting contained within our maintenance contract resulting in a saving of several thousands of pounds. Use of email etc instead of printing will also show a considerable saving in general expenses. It is early days but we are making headway.

Over the past 3 years we have had concerns with a substantial drop in membership numbers. Recruiting new members has been a struggle. In 2019 things were not so bad with a smaller drop out of members and slightly better recruitment. As an Association we need to pay our way. At an AGM a few years back members indicated they would prefer fees to rise in line with inflation but due to the problem with retaining and recruitment the Committee decided in the past that the fees should be capped and the entry fee reduced to try and attract more new members. With hindsight this tactic hasn't really worked at all well.so this year we will be suggesting a rise in line with inflation of £10 across the board We are also increasing the entry fee for new members by £20

We have introduced guest permits for members who can take up to 2 guests out for a single days fishing on any of our waters during the season. You need to apply online to obtain the necessary permit.

Hopefully this might encourage some of the guests to become members.

The footbridge over the Goval Burn at Upper Parkhill North was found to be in very poor condition and a health and safety issue. Using again AWPR monies we decided to rebuild the bridge. We were fortunate in being donated timber to carry out most of the work to reduce the cost. Over the period of a week Stuart our Contractor assisted by a small group of members who volunteered to help completely rebuilt the bridge decking with handrails on both sides. We now have a much stronger and safer bridge which should last for many years

At the Parkhill Fishery pier no 1 was also rotting away and was replaced completely, again using donated timber. Recently pier 5 has also been replaced.

At long last we have reached an agreement with Mr Jamieson of Ardlethen Quarry, Ellon regarding access down to the south bank of the Ythan for the purposes of carrying out grass cutting and any bank maintenance This access is not for anglers who will still get their access from the car park on the north bank and walk across the pedestrian bridge.

There was a SANNAC competition final held on the Don at Parkhill on 28th July. This saw 12 of the top anglers in Scotland fly fishing for brown trout over 2x3 hour sessions. Many members will say there are no Trout to be seen but the participants landed 96 fish during the period in conditions which were far from ideal.

ADAA member Richard McHattie was in the top 6 so has qualified to fish for team Scotland in the 2020 international rivers competitions. Well done Richard. Applause?

At Upper Parkhill there is a continuing problem with oil seeping out from the Kirkhill storm drain.

Scottish Water place absorbent booms across the outfall but these continually get so saturated they sink and have no effect. This problem has been ongoing since the 1970's and all the authorities say there is nothing that can be done about the problem. When the booms sink oil starts to enter the river so we continually have to report it to SEPA who in turn contact Scottish Water. John Stephen has phoned SEPA so many times they have now put him in direct Contact with Scottish Water so he can now phone them direct when a problem arises.

ADAA has an ongoing dispute with AWPR over compensation due to the compulsory purchase of our land and fishing rights in the area of the roadbridge etc... Discussions with the assessor responsible for agreeing compensation have produced what I consider a derisory offer to settle the matter. We may end up going to Arbitration to try and get a proper settlement. Unfortunately our acting land agents recently suffered a disastrous fire in their office and all their paper records pertaining to the matter were destroyed. Fortunately everything was scanned and backed up on disc so they will be able to put their files together again but it will take time to do it all that once they find new premises.

Down at the Donside Hydro scheme on the Cruives there are ongoing concerns with the speed of the water coming out of the turbine. During the 2019 season 2 of our members reported seeing salmon swimming into the outlet and being forcibly ejected by the turbine screw. If any member happens to be down in area and sees anything similar happening please let our Secretary know. Any photos of fish in the spillway leading from the turbine outlet would be welcomed

The grass cutting in 2019 was going well until the wet weather came along. Regrowth after cutting was so rapid that complaints were being made that no cutting had actually ever been done. In more popular areas grass had to be recut a 2nd or even a 3rd time.

Members are quick to complain but sometimes the weather has a lot to answer for. There is a schedule of cutting laid down for the contractor to follow. Obviously not all areas can be cut at once but all areas will eventually be dealt with so if your favourite area has not been cut, be patient as it's turn will come.

Our direct debit paying system is working well with an odd exception. When agreeing to pay by direct debit you are simply spreading the cost of the fees normally due in February over a 10 month period. One or 2 members decided to cancel the payments part way through the season when the agreement is for the fees to be paid in full. If someone decides to stop paying by the instalment method, under the agreement the balance of the annual fee become due and failure to pay will jeopardise their future as a member.

Thanks to George Clark for all the work he has done to set everything up and ongoing administration of the system. He has to deal with all sorts of queries during the course of the season.

Something else of concern is the increasing ageing profile of our membership. The more senior citizens we have will mean less income and that needs to be watched very carefully.

We are at a crossroads with membership numbers and recruitment. We need to generate sufficient income to pay for everything and if there is a shortfall something may have to go.

With that in mind 2 groups have been set up to look at our River and Stillwater fishings. Costs and leases all need to be looked at very

carefully. Something may have to be shed if we cannot afford it. It's just like the crisis in high street stores.

Fishing in the 2019 season was slightly better than in some recent years, possibly due to the wet weather, but it wasn't anything to get excited about when compared with catches 9 or 10 years ago.

There is currently an international crisis with the drop in numbers of Atlantic Salmon. It is now acknowledged the problem is out at sea but no one has yet come up with the exact reason and we are a long way from knowing the cause. Some say it is all down to global warming but who knows?

We can only hope things get better.

The Don and Ythan remain as category 3 rivers on the Marine Scotland list, as the number of adult salmon returning to spawn are considered inadequate to maintain stock levels. I hear complaints about ADAA imposing catch and release on the rivers but it is the law that compulsory C&R for any salmon caught applies on a Category 3. It affects all anglers fish on the whole river not just on ADAA beats.

On the Brown Trout side members themselves practice C&R with 99% of all trout being voluntarily returned.

ADAA is well represented on all 3 of our local Salmon Fishery Boards. On the Dee we have Craig Fleming. On the Don Paul Adderton and Myself and on the Ythan Alec Paterson and Myself. I am also Clerk to the Don Board and Chairman of the Ythan Board. Alec is no longer a Committee member due to poor health but his knowledge of the Ythan river is second to none and he fully supports ADAA. From time to time different groups do try and impose unwelcome changes and a conservation code exists for all rivers. These codes are not always in line with ADAA rules and I have always made it clear that ADAA

will abide by its own rules and not necessarily follow any code which at the end of the day is voluntary. On the Ythan for example there was an attempt on more than one occasion in recent years to have a ban on worming introduced but it was rebutted and other Board members fully supported ADAA in maintaining the status quo. Personally I cannot imagine many areas on the Ythan being suitable for any other method of fishing.

It is only just over 2 weeks until the opening of the Dee season on 1st February and the other rivers follow on the 11th. Rivers have been at good levels all winter but have dropped back quite a lot with the dry spell in the last fortnight. However we are ever optimistic and I am sure most keen anglers are looking forward to the season ahead.

I wish to thank all members of the Committee for their input during the year. It hasn't always been easy at times.

Finally All the best to everyone when fishing in season 2020.