

## Minutes of 2024 AGM of Cobbinshaw Angling Association Ltd

### Held at Deer Park Club on Sunday 28th January 2024

#### Order of business

1. As detailed in the Agenda.
2. The Chairman informed the meeting that, assuming everyone had signed in, there were 68 Members present. He thanked Frank Jackson for managing the sign-in.

#### AGENDA ITEM 1: Apologies

3. M Campbell; R Perrett; C McIsaac; M Ritchie; R Hunter; E McGhee; E Morrison; W Duncan; J Glynn; H Moody; D Gribble; C Turnbull; R Wilson; A Aitchison; A Harris; P Hutchison; C Joynes.

#### AGENDA ITEM 2: In Memoriam

4. A minute's silence was held in memory of the following Members who the Chairman advised had sadly passed away since the last AGM:
  - ID Clark; G Inglis; R Taylor

#### AGENDA ITEM 3: Minutes of 2023 AGM

5. There were no suggested amendments to the draft minutes as presented: they were approved on proposal by **V. Ruckley** and seconded by **R. Rudkin**.

#### AGENDA ITEM 4: Secretary's Annual Report; Paper 4.1

6. The Secretary referred to his annual report already circulated and highlighted the following:

##### The results of the underwater survey carried out in August 2023

7. The survey identified a number of surprises which have heavily influenced our 2024 stocking plans:
  - (a) The loch is a lot shallower than we thought with an average depth of around 12 to 14 feet in the middle areas.
  - (b) There is no deep trench running from the cages to the dam; but there is a deeper hole of around 16 feet off the dam, probably where the draw-off valve is located.
  - (c) There is a pile of faecal matter below the cages where the depth ranged from 8 feet to 12 feet, depending on wind swing.
  - (d) The temperature at the bottom of the loch was more or less the same as that at the surface, confirming that there is no stratification of water layers within the loch. The almost constant temperature throughout the loch during the summer most likely explains why the fish go quickly off the feed and are very slow to come back on, as there is no cooler water to escape to when the water temperature rises.

##### The impact of climate change

8. He emphasised that climate change is the biggest challenge facing the Association and we need to be clear about what it means and how it affects our fishing. The problem has been creeping up on us over the past 10 years or so but it seems to have accelerated in recent years.
9. He explained that the main risk is prolonged high water temperatures which puts the fish in to a torpid state where they effectively stop feeding and catches plummet, which is what happened in 2023. It is also the cause of other freak weather patterns that are occurring more frequently, such as floods, droughts and heavy winds. This issue is not unique to Cobbinshaw - it has affected all fisheries, especially shallow waters like ours.

10. He outlined things that can be done to mitigate the affect of climate change which the board is currently investigating, but pointed out that they come at a cost and require some changes in how we have traditionally managed the fishing. These include:
- (a) Installing aeration equipment.
  - (b) Altering season dates and stocking policies to maximise cooler water periods.
  - (c) Introducing regular monitoring of oxygen and Ph levels in the water; and checking fish - especially deliveries - for evidence of any parasites.
  - (d) Re-locating the cages and assessing longer term viability
11. He also advised that a Water Quality Group had been established to lead the investigation and advise the board on potential remedial measures. [Addendum: the group comprises Frank Jackson, Ross Hunter, Neil MacIntyre and Tim King - supported by two external experts Ken McKenzie and Douglas Hendry].

#### Future of the cages

12. He advised that the intention of the board was to retain the cage operation for as long as possible given that it was the cheapest means of stocking larger fish. However, there were a number of issues that raise doubts as to their long term viability:
- (a) Firstly, the pile of faecal matter below the cages means that they need to be moved as it poses a serious risk to fish held in them, and the board is currently exploring that with the WQG. Establishing new anchor points is not straightforward, and the earliest they could be installed would be in the summer. For 2024 the cages will therefore remain as they are but the nets will be raised / shortened to ensure there is clear water between them and the bottom; and the number of fish held will be reduced to 4000 to reflect the reduced cage area. If we are unable to move the cages to a new location we cannot retain them.
  - (b) Secondly, the impact of climate change, and particularly prolonged high water temperatures, increases the risk of parasite and other infections within the crowded environment of the cages, which is exacerbated by dropping water levels over the summer. We have altered our stocking plan [clearing the cages early] to reduce these risks but only time will tell as to whether that will be sufficient.
  - (c) And thirdly, he referred to the substantial cost of replacing the cages, which was likely to be needed soon and would be in excess of £50k, which we currently could not afford.
13. He also made clear that there are no immediate plans to do away with the cages, but the reality of the situation needed to be recognised and understood. He added that if the only outstanding issue was cost of replacement, then a smaller scale operation might be feasible and could be built upon going forward.

#### Fishing results 2024

14. He summarised 2024 as being a very difficult year with the overall catch rate at 62% and the kill rate at 33% - perhaps the lowest ever. The loch fished exceptionally well up to late June but once the hot spell kicked in and the water temperature rose and stayed high for all of the summer in to autumn, the fishing literally fell off a cliff and never really recovered.
15. The difficult year was not helped by the identification of a gill parasite which required the early release of some 2000 plus bigger cage fish in late August. But even with this sudden, big stocking, the fishing never really improved. Some late stockings from the lorry, including an extra stocking of 400 blues, boosted things a little, but the resident fish never really came back on the feed.
16. We were not alone in having a bad season; all other fisheries were similarly affected albeit in different ways according to their circumstances, with shallow water fisheries such as ours being worst affected. We can do things to improve the fishing, but one thing we can't do is alter the weather: that's why it's called 'fishing' and not 'catching'.

#### How good the facilities are at Cobbinshaw

17. He finished on a positive - we still have one of the best fishery set-ups in Scotland:
- (a) Excellent keepers who run the fishery on a daily basis
  - (b) High quality boats, motors and accessories - all superbly maintained
  - (c) Excellent members facilities
  - (d) Easy pontoon access to boats that extends our fishing lives by several years
  - (e) An excellent stocking programme that is fully transparent to members
  - (f) Fully flexible fishing times to suit members availability
  - (g) And all year fishing for those that want it - for both trout and pike

18. The Secretary concluded by formally recording his personal thanks and that of the board and members to the Fishery Manager and his Assistant - Ian McCusker and Andrew Fry - for their exceptional performance throughout the year, despite some difficult circumstances. Their continued commitment and dedication to the Association, combined with the personal assistance they provided to many members on a daily basis, is a credit to their character and professionalism and is very much appreciated by all.

*Questions from the floor*

19. **W. Woods** commented that minutes of board meetings were not being posted timeously on the website - a point he has raised previously. The Secretary accepted his comments and promised to do better in future. He added that the minutes of previous meetings were always posted on the notice board in the cabin at the end of each board meeting following approval at that meeting.
20. **I Prentice** queried the feasibility of moving the cages given the way they are constructed. He also had concerns that the nets would not bear the weight of being shortened. The Secretary explained that these matters had been considered by the FM and other experts, and should not be a problem. A wider discussion on plans to move the cages ensued, and the Secretary explained what was proposed: utilising two of the existing anchor points and setting two new moveable anchor points so that the cages sat at least 30 metres away from their existing location; that approach could be applied all around the existing site, giving potentially four new sites, plus the existing site; the cages would sit in each new site for a maximum of 5 years, following which they would be moved; according to expert advice received, leaving them in one location for 5 years max would not be a problem as the faecal matter build up would be low and it would be naturally broken down without adverse affects once the cages were moved; the real issue concerned obtaining and installing suitable new but moveable anchor points.
21. **S. Fairgrieve** asked about the impact of low water conditions this year: would it mean that the nets could still drag across the pile; and would the shallower depth not make the fish more susceptible to high water temperatures ? The Secretary explained that the nets would be shortened to 6 or 7 feet below the waterline and at that depth they should be clear of the bottom even if the loch falls 2 feet. Also, the underwater survey showed that there is little difference in water temperature between the bottom and the surface, so depth of the nets is not really an issue in that regard. Furthermore, nearly all of the cage fish will be stocked before high summer and the balance - some 800 - will be spread across the cages to give them more space and improve oxygenation through less competition.
22. **I. Whyte** asked why are we not scrapping the cages if current and future conditions pose a risk to the health of the cage fish and the wider loch? The Secretary replied that the board acknowledged the risks, hence the changes in stocking currently proposed. However cage fish are currently the cheapest means of stocking, especially bigger fish, and to stock only from the lorry would increase stocking costs, which has implications for charges. The board is effectively trying to get a balance between risk and reward, and at the moment the risks appear manageable. Nevertheless, for reasons already stated, there are several imminent large question marks over the long future of the cages at its current scale.
23. **W. Woods** commented that we have been speaking about introducing aeration equipment for several years but nothing has been done about it. He referred to advice he had received that indicated it was a fairly simple process using solar panels, and relatively cheap at around £3k. The Secretary replied that installing aeration equipment was neither simple or cheap. There were various options available, all with different technical capabilities and requirements. As stated in the AGM pack, we are currently investigating the best options, but the costs of established systems are well in excess of that quoted by Mr Woods.
24. **N. Davidson** asked whether we had considered removing the faecal pile, either by dredging or vacuum. The Secretary responded that both had been considered but experts advised against it because it would be impossible to avoid mixing it in the open water which could do significant harm to the wider loch.
25. **I. Whyte** asked whether the current pile was a serious threat even if left alone; and would any new piles under the new locations not also pose a problem. The Secretary advised that advice received was that the existing pile would likely breakdown naturally, albeit slowly, if not disturbed; and we could purchase specialist accelerant pellets to speed up the break down but these are relatively expensive. As regards any new cage locations, advice received was that the faecal build up would be low and break down naturally and quickly given a max build up period of 5 years and a 20 year return period.
26. **J. O'Hara** asked if we could dam the pipes in the small loch to help with managing draw-off in the main loch. The Secretary replied that Scottish Canals would not allow us to do that [our lease does not permit any structural changes to the reservoir].
27. **W. Woods** commented on the number of members that had left in recent years, adding that it was unsustainable and asking what the board was doing about it. The Secretary advised the drop in numbers was caused by a combination

of factors; an ageing membership generally; a decline in the number of people taking up fishing; socio and economic lifestyle changes; financial and cost of living considerations; and greater competition from other activities. These were all out with our control. The board has instigated wider advertising of Cobbinshaw annually and this had been successful in attracting new members, but he advised that the best recruitment source remained existing members by bringing friends and relatives in to the Association.

28. The Secretary's report was passed on proposal by **I. Whyte** and seconded by **R. Rudkin**.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 5: Treasurers Annual Report and Accounts; Papers 5.1 and 5.2:**

29. The Treasurer presented his report and accounts to the meeting. He did not go over his report in detail and instead summarised as follows:
30. He began by stating that it had been another difficult year financially, and it looks like we face another one next year due to continuing cost of living pressures.
31. In 2023 we incurred a loss of £10k [albeit a planned one] despite increases in both fishing charges and subscriptions; and a similar loss is forecast for 2024, again despite proposed increases in subscriptions and reductions in stocking. The bottom line is that our costs are rising faster than our income streams - meaning that we are now living beyond our means.
32. Due to exceptional circumstances, we used reserves in 2023 to cushion the impact of rising costs etc and plan to do the same in 2024 with a planned loss of circa £11k, but that's not sustainable going forward. In short, we need to get our books back in to profit, and that means making some hard choices around costs and fees, either at this AGM or at latest, the next one.
33. He set out the basic options - we can reduce costs, or we can increase income, or we can do a bit of both - and summarised the feasibility of each.
34. On reducing costs he stated that this the only area where we have some degree of control, but even here our options are limited and have consequences that some will not like:
- (a) Salaries are the largest single cost but have no real scope for savings.
  - (b) Stocking is the next largest cost and is the only area where meaningful savings can be made. Stocking is a complex area with a range of conflicting factors involved. There is a separate stocking Paper where this area will be considered later in detail. For the moment, it is important to understand that a reduction in stocking costs is a key part of keeping subscription costs down.
  - (c) The remaining expenses are a mix of items where there is little scope for savings - rent, insurance fuel, maintenance and utilities. We have saved on maintenance over the past year but that cannot continue as we need to maintain both equipment and facilities, especially the pontoon and cage structures.
35. On increasing income, he advised that there were also several options:
36. A simple option is for members to fish the loch more often, thereby increasing fishing income. Fishing is expensive nowadays [at commercial fisheries - up to £42 plus pp for a shared boat day session and up to £36pp for a half day single angler] but the more members fish at Cobbinshaw the cheaper it becomes. The board is aware that some members already fish very regularly - one or twice a week, even in difficult times - and we should all be extremely grateful for their commitment and support. If we all followed their example and fished that bit more often, then we would soon get our books back in balance and continue to develop the high quality fishing and facilities we already enjoy.
37. Perhaps the easiest option is to raise subscriptions and fishing charges, and in the real world of rising costs increases on these are inevitable. But there are other options we can exploit in order to keep increases down:
- (a) We can fish more often , as already explained, which would increase fishing income and take some of the pressure off subscriptions

- (b) We can maximise our income sources by extending the use we make of our facilities. That includes allowing bank fishing on the main loch throughout the year and allowing bait fishing there over the winter. Having those additional options will give us more income, and possibly some new members. They will not immediately solve our financial issues, but it's a start, and over time the income value will likely increase.
  - (c) In short, we need all the income we can get in current circumstances to keep costs fair and manageable for everyone, and to help protect the longer term future of the Association.
38. In summary, he advised that the board was not comfortable with a planned loss for next year. It would have much preferred asking for increases that covered all of the projected loss plus a bit extra to give us a small profit. It also recognised that there had again been exceptional financial circumstances prevailing over 2023 that justified another final subsidy from reserves to keep increases down, especially as we had healthy reserves to finance it. He also made clear that this was the last year we could do this, and unless things improve greatly over 2024, some hard decisions will be needed at the 2024 AGM.
39. Lastly, he made clear that although the past two years had been difficult financially, the Association's overall finances remained healthy and its immediate future was not at risk. If membership and income fell, then we would simply cut our cloth accordingly, but the Association and the high quality of fishing and facilities at Cobbinshaw, would continue for the foreseeable future.

#### Questions from the floor

40. **I. Drummond** asked if we could not open up fishing on the small loch to generate more income. The Treasurer advised that we could not issue permits to the public because of the tax implications. Members currently had access to the small loch all year round, including the use of bait when taking children.
41. **W. Woods** asked if we could allow bait fishing in the small loch all year round, again as a means of increasing income, but also as a means of satisfying demand for bait fishing in the winter by some members. The Treasurer confirmed that such a change would be feasible but it was not however one of the formal proposals included at this meeting. However if members agreed to the proposal the board could implement it under delegated powers and seek formal ratification next year. He suggested - and the meeting agreed - that we consider this as part of the bait fishing proposal later in the Agenda.
42. There was a brief discussion on whether we should stock the small loch to encourage use. The Treasurer replied that fish currently move from the main loch to the small via two large connecting pipes. To specifically stock it would reduce our stocking of the main loch - or involve additional costs. Also, the small loch had been stocked in the past [including a boat] but it had not been a success, either in terms of use by members or catches. On the basis of this discussion there was no call to specifically stock the small loch.
43. **I. Whyte** expressed concern that we were again budgeting for a loss. He felt we were simply kicking the problem down the road: ultimately, we would need to address it, possibly with a significant increase in fees and charges, so why not now? The Treasurer stated that his concerns were well made, and shared. However he referred to his comments made earlier when presenting the accounts, ie the board was uncomfortable with the proposal but felt that there were exceptional circumstances to support it, and this would be the last year we could do this. He added that a key reason for the 2023 loss was a significant drop in fishing income - some 900 rods down at a value of around £11,500. If fishing income picked up this year the forecast loss might be avoided but there were obvious uncertainties: much was down to continued support from members. He accepted that this was not ideal but was considered a reasonable compromise in the circumstances.
44. The Chair brought questions to a close and asked for a proposer and seconder to approve the Treasurer's report: Proposed R. Harvey; Seconded J. Garnett.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 6: Chairman's Report**

45. The Chairman referred Members to his written report which he did not feel the need to add to. There were no questions to the Chair.
46. The Chairman formally recorded his thanks to this year's retiring Board Members - for their help and support throughout their time on the Board; and to all the other Board Members for their help and support throughout the year.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 7: Stocking proposal 2024; Paper 7.1**

47. The Chair passed this matter to the Secretary to lead.

48. Secretary referred to the board's stocking proposal and related matters as set out in Paper 7.1.
49. He summarised the proposed stocking plan as follows:
- (a) 11,000 fish ie a reduction of 1000 from 2023
  - (b) Split between two suppliers - Invicta 7200 and Dunsop 3800
  - (c) 4000 fish to the cages from Invicta, stocked early March at varying weights up to 1.5 pounds
  - (d) 7000 lorry fish averaging 2 pounds
  - (e) 3200 cage fish stocked before high summer with incremental weights up to 3 to 4 pounds
  - (f) 800 cage fish he's over to autumn and stocked at weights of 5 to 6 pounds
50. Key points he emphasised included:
51. The reduction in stocking forms part of wider proposals to reduce costs and thereby limit increases in subscriptions, and needs to be considered in that context.
52. Stocking used to be a simple operation: you chuck fish, catch them and kill them; and if there was any left over for next year, that was a bonus. That is not the case now. Stocking is a complex operation affected by a number of conflicting factors:
- (g) Changing angler attitudes who: fish less; kill less; want bigger and more fish.
  - (h) There are simple less anglers around because fewer youngsters take up the sport
  - (i) Climate change issues..
  - (j) High annual mortality - for us, survival rate of fish not killed is estimated at between 15% and 20% max
  - (k) Topography of the loch - at circa 900 feet above seal level, it is oligotrophic and a lot shallower than we thought.
  - (l) Satisfying different preferences within the membership on fish size, type etc, which is an impossibility without some degree of compromise.
  - (m) Availability of fish suppliers, which are reducing; whilst fish costs are rising steadily, currently circa £2.75 to £2.95 per pound delivered.
53. There are 2 new issues this year that combined increase our stocking costs before we start:
- (a) The reduction in cage fish means that we have to increase the number of lorry fish purchased, which are dearer; and
  - (b) The cage fish need to be stocked earlier to avoid climate change and other risks, which means buying bigger fish in to the cages at the outset to meet size requirements when stocked
54. He also recognised that changes in stocking was a sensitive issue, but he assured members that there was sound reasons to support the further reduction proposed.
55. In particular, due to the low kill rate, the stocking density is higher than it has ever been at Cobbinshaw. Each time we go out we are therefore fishing over more fish ever before [catching them is a different story, but that's all about conditions - not stocking], so no-one can really argue that less stocking means paying more for less given current angler preferences and practices.
56. He also explained that the impact of stocking and climate change on quality of fishing are mutually exclusive ie we can have the best stocking plan possible - both numbers and sizes - but we will still catch sod-all if weather conditions are against us [and that's certainly been the case in recent years], so stocking extra fish to combat climate change issues is a waste of time. Instead, we need to maximise stocking numbers during the cooler water periods, which is what we are now trying to do, and reducing significantly any stocking in the high summer. This approach means that we can reduce overall stocking numbers without adversely affecting the quality of our fishing during the cooler, more productive periods.
57. He further emphasised the above points by saying that low catches at Cobbinshaw are not caused by stocking issues: they are the result of weather conditions caused by climate change, particularly prolonged high water temperatures. There is therefore no real benefit in stocking as previously in high summer when the water temperature is close to or above 20c because the fish won't feed and will be largely uncatchable - as we have found out. Our proposed reduction [and savings] in stocking therefore come from reduced stocking at this time, which does not impact the quality of fishing at other times.
58. He added that if the meeting decides, we can stock more fish in the cooler periods, but there are downsides:
- (a) It comes at an extra cost - the fish have to be paid for.
  - (b) The extra fish will not significantly improve catches as there are natural constraints eg weather and number of times one can fish

- (c) The low kill rate means that the vast majority of fish will die off within a year of stocking, so it's not good financial sense
  - (d) The abnormal high density of stock - which is what we have - will further reduce fly life, exacerbating further an existing problem
59. He summarised the board's view: the proposed reduction in stocking will not adversely affect the overall quality of fishing given the changes in stocking we have to make to mitigate climate change issues, low fish kill and financial matters.
60. He also wanted to make clear that these proposals were agreed unanimously by the board and have not been made to antagonise anyone - they have been made with the best interests of the Associations and its members in mind.

*Questions on stocking proposal*

61. **R. Brough** asked about progress with our cormorant application: he added that the fishing in 2023 had been 'faecal' for him with a number of [unspecified] blanks, but that was fishing. He also wished to give a special mention and 'thank you' to the Keepers whose help [to him and many other members] in getting him and his gear in and out of the boats was very much appreciated. **The Secretary** thanked him for his comments about the Keepers, which he fully agreed with. He also advised that the cormorant licence should be submitted in February once the Fishery Manager was back; and explained that there was a lot of hoops to go through in order to support an application, which included trying various scaring methods and daily counting of numbers.
62. A member asked if we would be taking down the cormorant decoys situated around the harbour. He felt that they only encouraged others to the water, and might also affect a licence application as using decoys for cormorants was illegal. Several others agreed. **The Secretary** replied that he would speak with the FM and arrange for them to be taken down.
63. **I. Prentice** commented that the numbers we used to be allowed to kill was very small - around 4 or 5, and queried whether it would make much difference. **M. Gordon** added that when we first applied we could kill around 20 plus, but the number fell rapidly in response to RSPB concerns. **W. Woods** commented that that we had a license for many years but it had lapsed for no apparent reason. **The Secretary** replied that the licence had apparently lapsed because it was not worth the effort ie the application process was extremely time consuming and the numbers allowed was very small. Things have now changed. The application process is still cumbersome and time consuming but there seems to have been a change to allow greater numbers to be shot; also, we are seeing more birds staying over the summer with the possibility of them roosting permanently, which we want to deter.
64. **G. Watt** asked if we needed to vote on bait fishing as part of the stocking plan. **The Secretary** replied that the two were discreet and bait fishing would be discussed and voted on as a separate item under Paper 8.
65. **J. Garnett** sought clarification on whether we planned to specifically stock the top loch - which he had concerns about - following earlier discussions. **The Secretary** confirmed that there were no plans to stock the top loch.
66. **N. Davidson** asked if we planned to stock blues in 2024. **The Secretary** replied - No. A stocking of 400 blues had been made at the end of last season and the intention was to see how they fared over the winter before any further stockings. He added that getting blues had been difficult, hence the late stocking last year; and they cost an extra 15p to 20p per pound, which was not ideal under present circumstances.
67. The Chair brought discussions to a close and asked for a vote on the stocking proposal at Paper 7.1.
68. The stocking proposal was **passed** unanimously

**AGENDA ITEM 8: Proposed changes to Articles and Regulations; Paper 8.1**

69. The Chairman handed over to the Secretary to go over the proposed changes.
70. The Secretary referred to the proposed changes set out in Paper 8.1.

**Changes to Articles of Association**

*Proposal (a): To retain the existing limit of £5000 on single signatory payments / orders by the Treasurer*

71. **Approved unanimously**

## Proposed changes to Operating Regulations

### *Proposal (b): An increase in annual subscriptions of £24 across all membership categories commencing 2024*

72. There was considerable discussion on this proposal.
- 73.
74. **I. Whyte** again expressed his concern that we were accepting a loss for 2024. He proposed an amendment ie increase of £50 which was seconded by **F. Jackson**. Following a vote, the amended proposal was defeated 36 votes to 22.
75. **J. McCaig** then proposed another amendment ie an increase of £35. **I. Prentice** commented that we need to be careful on the scale of increases in subscriptions alienating a number of members, especially those that do not fish the loch frequently. He felt it would be fairer to the membership as a whole if increases were split across both subscriptions and fishing charges. Several suggestions for a range of increases were put forward.
76. **The Secretary** agreed with the general point made by I. Prentice ie a significant rise in subscriptions would adversely affect membership numbers, which is why the current approach of cost savings, subscription increases and reserve subsidy has been proposed this year.
77. **W. Woods** commented that several Ordinary members he knew were considering resigning because they wished to change down category to Week Day but could not do so under current rules. He felt that the Association would be losing income - especially fishing income - because of this. **The Secretary** explained why the membership had decided several years ago to close both WDDO and WD categories: the introduction of these categories many years ago was intended to relieve pressure on weekend boat bookings at a time when most members worked, which is not the case now [indeed, weekends are the quietest period]; from a financial context there is no difference in when a member fishes - week day or weekend - as the cost is the same to the Association; and lastly he pointed out that differential subscription levels meant that the higher payers were effectively subsidising the lower payers, and that any re-introduction of reduced cost categories would simply result in a fall in overall income that would need to be addressed by appropriate increases in all subscriptions categories. He added that when those reduced cost categories closed, the membership also agreed to allow protected rights to those already in those categories, with the caveat that they could move up a category but could not go down. He also pointed out that the difference in cost between Ordinary and WD categories is only £72, - hardly significant sum.
78. **I. Whyte** added that having been a member at Cobbinshaw for many years he could not contemplate dropping a category simply to get subsidised fishing: he felt that was immoral and not in the Cobbinshaw spirit.
79. The Secretary suggested that the simplest way forward would be to take a vote on the current proposal: if that passed then there was no need to proceed with amendments that could go on almost indefinitely.
80. The Chair then asked for a vote on the current proposal ie an increase of £24 on all subscription categories.
81. The motion was **passed** 46 to 10.

### *Proposal (b) cont'd: An increase of £3 on the 4-hourly guest rate from 2024*

82. **S. Maxwell** expressed his disagreement with the proposal. He explained that he paid the full cost of any guest fees, and raising it by this amount would make him reconsider bringing guests.
83. The Secretary referred to the AGM papers setting out the rationale for the proposal ie that the differential between member fishing costs and that of guests had significantly reduced because of equal flat rate rises over many years. Guest fishing costs were therefore now comparatively cheap compared to member rates [and to commercial fishery rates]. He also advised that the current cost structure encouraged anglers to 'share' a membership and split all costs - both membership and fishing charges - between them, and that the proposed increase would help redress that.
84. The Chair then asked for a vote on the current proposal ie an increase of £3 on the 4-hour guest rate.
85. The motion was **passed** 43 to 10.

## Proposed changes to Trout Fishing Regulations

### *Proposal (c): With the exception of March, October and November [for which the latest fishing time is 5pm] the latest fishing time in the evening will be 30 minutes after sunset until capped at 10pm*



86. The Secretary explained the rationale behind the proposal, namely a combination of working time directive rules and the very long hours staff have to be at the fishery in the high summer period [starting at 8am and finishing at 11.30pm or later, followed by a start again at 8am].
87. There were no comments from members and the Chair asked for a vote.
88. The motion was **passed** 45 to 6.

*Proposal (d): Amending the definition of trawling as follows: For purposes of clarification, trawling is defined as fishing out of the back of the boat, either drifting or under power. It does not include side casting and allowing flies to swing around the rear of the boat whilst still actively retrieving in the normal way. Note that this definition is a local one and may not fall within the definition used in international and similar competitions run externally.*

89. There were no comments from members and the Chair asked for a vote.

**90. Approved unanimously**

*Proposal (e): Fly fishing from the bank will be allowed in the main loch throughout the year in accordance with the established Trout Fishing Regulations.*

91. There were no comments from members and the Chair asked for a vote.

92. The motion was **passed** 46 to 4.

*Proposal (f): Any method fishing for trout will be allowed in the main loch after the normal season ends in compliance with related rules prepared by the board*

93. **The Secretary** referred to comments made in the AGM papers relating to this proposal. He emphasised that members needed to look at this objectively in terms of what was best for the Association as a whole ie it adds another dimension to the fishery that will increase income and possibly attract new members. He also pointed out that: it would have no impact on fly fishing during the main season; it was an add-on to enable members to make more use of the facilities; and it would make use of some of the large numbers of fish that would simply die off over the winter.
94. **J. Garnett** repeated comments made last year: since there was no detrimental affect on fly fishers and most fish left died off, he saw no reason to vote against it. Members had a choice on whether they did it, and it seemed churlish to prevent others doing it just because you do not want to.
95. **M. Gordon** recorded his strong disagreement with the proposal. He argued that Cobbinshaw was a fly fishery and it should remain so. He added that at least two members he knew of had left when it was [temporarily] allowed a couple of years ago; and another member here today had his resignation ready if it was approved now.
96. **C. MacKenzie** recorded his strong disagreement with the proposal, on similar grounds to M. Murray. He also disagreed with the view that most fish die off. He felt strongly that all fish should be given the chance to over winter regardless of the survival rate. He added that he would resign if it was passed.
97. **I. Drummond** commented that allowing bait fishing over the winter helped encourage youngsters in to fishing and should be seen as part of a youth development plan for the future.
98. **I. Whyte** supported the proposal. The two key point for him was that most fish do indeed die off so why should members not have the use of them? In response to the point about letting fish over winter, he pointed out that fly fishing was allowed after the main season: should that be stopped too because it risked killing some fish that might successfully over winter?
99. **W. Woods** commented that the rationale of additional income might be eroded if members left because of this motion. **The Secretary** replied that we could not satisfy everyone so a degree of compromise was needed by all concerned for the benefit of the Association as whole. He hoped members would understand this. He explained that trout fishing is now an all year sport with winter being a particularly popular time for small fisheries where bait fishing was a key part of some fisheries, so we need to understand this and adapt accordingly. He pointed out that Cobbinshaw of old used to allow trawling and spinning in early season to help catch fish in difficult conditions, so the idea that we are breaking with any high moral tradition on fly fishing is not correct.

100. During further discussion a member asked if the impacts of bait fishing could be kept under review by the board and reported to members. The Chair considered this a good idea and gave an assurance accordingly.
101. Chair called for a vote: the motion was **passed** by 35 to 20.
102. **C. Mackenzie** handed his resignation letter to the Secretary and left the meeting.
103. **C. Joynes** raised a point of order. In his opinion the agreement to review the bait fishing constituted an amendment to the proposal, in which case that amendment should have been voted on first before proceeding to the main vote. The Chair disagreed. The assurance to review the impact of bait fishing was an administrative matter for the board, which he acknowledged and would ensure happened, but it was not part of and did not affect the underlying proposal. He had also made no mention of the supposed amendment when asking for a vote on the main proposal. Another member thought he was voting on the supposed amendment rather than on the main proposal. The Chair repeated his comments to C. Joynes. He felt that the meeting was fully cognisant of the substance of the vote and the result would stand.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 9: Election of Office Bearers**

##### **Election of Chair**

104. The incumbent Chair - Mr D. Moon - was willing to stand again. There being no other volunteers, Mr Moon was duly re-elected.

##### **Election of Secretary**

105. The incumbent Secretary - AW Anderson - was willing to stand again. There being no other volunteers, Mr Anderson was duly re-elected.

##### **Election of Treasurer**

106. The Treasurer post is currently vacant and the duties have been carried out by the Secretary. There were no volunteers and the duties will continue to be carried out by the Secretary.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 10: Appointment of Directors**

107. The Chair advised that there were two vacancies to be filled on the board and asked for volunteers. If the vacancies could not be filled the board would co-opt as needed.

108. He then called for volunteers and the following member was appointed;

R Rudkin;

The Chair said it was disappointing that no other volunteer had come forward. In these circumstances the board would try and co-opt to fill the vacancy.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 11: Appointment of Auditor**

109. Mr M. Ritchie was willing to stand again. There being no other volunteers, Mr Ritchie was duly appointed.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 12: AOB**

110. **J. McCaig** felt that the reduction in the Entrance Fee had resulted in a significant loss in income and should be reinstated at its original amount of £450. **The Secretary** advised that some 90 plus members joined following the reduction, and that most of them would almost certainly not have joined if the EF remained at £450, resulting in an overall and continuing loss to the Association from reduced annual subscriptions and fishing fees.

#### **CLOSE**

111. The Chairman brought the meeting to a close at 16:20 and thanked Members for their attendance.

**AW Anderson**  
**Honorary secretary**  
**February 2023.**