

Annual statement to members of the Isle of Wight Freshwater Angling Company Ltd for the 2025/26 membership year

Once again, another year has passed with many new members joining us, and sadly some leaving us.

The Board of Directors strive to ensure that every member can voice their opinions on things that are important to them and that those opinions will be considered carefully before any decisions made. As you can imagine with 793 members there is a lot of different opinions on what is the best way of dealing with something, so robust debate can often occur. If you wish to voice an opinion on something, or you have a complaint about an issue or another member, the correct procedure is to e mail the Company Secretary who will acknowledge your communication and forward it to the Board for discussion. We want to move away from the bankside complaints and move forward with constructive and realistic ideas and opinions.

If it is a complaint about another member, then written evidence will be required and if there are witnesses their details will also be required so that we receive a true picture of what occurred, so that disciplinary procedures can be instigated if necessary.

The Companies Facebook page is not a forum for debate, so comments are often switched off to prevent exchanges that have in the past become heated and personal. We have therefore found a need to introduce a social media policy giving guidance on what is acceptable and what is not. This will be attached to your renewal membership e mail.

The Facebook page is to inform members of venue closures, maintenance work or events that are occurring in the near future. We do realise that not every member is a fan of Facebook, so we do try and send out information in e mails via our membership database. Provided members don't change their e mail address without telling us or unsubscribe from the e mails, information is broadcast to the whole membership simultaneously.

Administering a large company such as ours is never an easy task and no officer or Director can be expected to be responsible for every action or task that needs to be done. We are very lucky that some Board members are willing to freely give their time to deal with a lot of maintenance, but some are finding it more and more difficult to find the time, or their age is starting to catch up with them. The Board therefore have to consider the use of contractors to deal with some of the workload. Work parties are a great way to deal with maintenance but in our Health and Safety environment somebody has to be in charge of it and direct everyone to do what is required and abide by Health and Safety policies. Unless we have a core of volunteers wishing to undertake this role it is often easier and more convenient to use a contractor. The recent Siltex application at our venues was an example of volunteers available and willing to help with the exercise, which was very encouraging, but tight distribution schedules and delivery meant that those

experienced with the task were not available, so a contractor was used. Bailiffs and volunteers completed this task at Gunville which was greatly appreciated

As usual there has been lots of things happening during the year. Some good, some not so.

Gunville pond/lake has continued to benefit from considerable tree work after much consultation with the Isle of Wight Council Tree Preservation Officer. Site examinations had to be undertaken, and an approved arborist appointed to deal with the tasks. As reported last year Treecare was appointed for the job, and has been our preferred contractor and was used on a number of occasions on difficult tree work on various sites.

Japanese Knotweed which was discovered at Gunville continues to be treated by Groundsels. Full eradication can take up to ten years, and the site is closely monitored each year to ensure the treatment is successful. The projected costs are likely to be in the region of £10,000, but fortunately thanks to the persistence of Gary Thornton who completed an Angling Trust grant application, and we received a payment of £5,000 towards the cost. It is essential that we comply with the full eradication plan for as long as it takes.

During the late summer a team of around 15 members/bailiffs formed a weekend work party at Gunville to repair and upgrade the access track both inside and outside the gate. They also realigned the gate, so it hung better, removed many obstacles and tree roots as well as generally tidying up. Well done to all involved and many thanks for all the hard work.

Flooding has been a longstanding issue with Gunville, potentially affecting surrounding houses and resulting in venue closure due to unsafe flooded paths around the lake. We have also been badly affected by silt and water entering the lake from adjoining farmland. Steve Penman has been a Company representative at various meetings with Gunville residents and has been liaising with the Isle of Wight Council, and local councillors. The Company are very grateful with his determination to ensure our interests in this matter are heard and understood. There appears to be a stalemate at present with the council who appear not to be interested in the silt overflow onto our land, and the farm owner not accepting responsibility. The increase in flooding would seem to possibly be due to the blocking of ditches by the housing estate developer and not ensuring adequate drainage alternatives.

In this next membership year funds are being set aside for improvement and maintenance works with swim construction and path maintenance being a priority. There are also plans for the consideration of the construction of a silt trap.

The very heavy rainfall has also caused delays with the cutting back of brambles at all sites, and damage to the Holliers access lane with deep furrows gouged out by the volume of water running down. There are plans afoot in the new membership year to deal with this issue.

Disappointingly there was some deliberate tree damage down the access lane at Holliers which created some correspondence with the owners of the lane. We do like

to keep the owner onside as relations can often be strained. Many of you will have noticed that notices have been erected recently stating the speed limit is 5mph. Our rules state 10mph and there is nothing in our sale agreements that specifies 5mph. However, to maintain good relations can you please keep the speed down when accessing the Holliers venue.

Holliers has benefited from the renewal of 18 swims, improved drainage, and the installation of a concrete path to help those with mobility issues. A number of trees had been removed that were likely to cause issues with Health and Safety.

The stock ponds at this site are showing encouraging signs of fish growth with Hunters pool having young Crucians, Tench and mirror Carp. These will eventually be used where required.

Merstone has also had its fair share of flooding issues over the winter with the venue closed on occasions. There are plans to improve the drainage situation with the construction of a drainage channel to the river, and the construction of a bund at the far end of Heron lake with a water storage pool.

Merstone being our most popular site does tend to require the most maintenance, with swim repair, tree maintenance and undergrowth clearance akin to painting the Forth bridge. Any help however small with advertised work parties are always greatly appreciated.

We have purchased additional aerators that can be used when the older models cease to work or as supplementary units to assist when oxygen levels drop unexpectedly at any of our venues.

We have had to have a new pump for the sewerage disposal unit at Merstone as the old one suddenly stopped working.

Our energy Company "Yu energy" have finally accepted that we run lakes rather than houses and our electricity bills are going to be lower in the winter than the domestic consumer. We also now have a smart meter that finally works and appears to be recording accurate information. However it has taken 3 visits to Holliers to finally get it resolved. The visiting engineer was not used to installing smart meters in a field.

Once again, we will be holding our very popular junior fishing competition later in the year, so watch out for dates. Last September 11 juniors fished in Minnow Lake, and everyone was once again rewarded with a quality raffle prizes and burger/hotdog and refreshments afterwards. They went down well with mums and dads as well. The only cost to the company was the refreshments as Tim provided the bait and the cooking done in house, and all prizes donated by members. If anybody has good tackle that is no longer required and would make a great raffle prize, please let us know. Thanks to all helpers and those that organised the event.

Whilst talking juniors can we please point out that if you are accompanying a junior and are an associate member it would be wise to hold an Environment Agency rod license even though you don't fish. We would hate to see you assist your junior by holding the rod for them and then get accused by a EA Bailiff should they visit, that you were fishing! Fines can be hefty.

The Board would like to thank Ian Jones for picking up the mantle of Match Secretary duties. He has embraced social media by accessing Facebook and having a dedicated e mail address for this role. He has done a sterling job, particularly during the keep net ban which was introduced for fish welfare reasons and the more recent changes to net limits and general match rules. It is our belief that all competitions should be generally free to enter for any member that wants to have a go. Separate pools can be run alongside the match, but participation remains optional.

Water level markers are to be incorporated on some of the pegs to make it easier to assess changes in water levels.

The long running saga of Somerton has now been resolved with all liability for the site terminated. Despite the protracted period our solicitor has been dealing with the issue their costs were capped at £500 so a final settlement of £4000 was paid into our account.

Membership

The Company membership currently stands at 793, but this does include partners/wives/husbands and children in Family memberships. The actual number of active members amounts to 639

The membership can be broken down as follows:

224 - Family memberships

232 - Full memberships

177 - Concessionary over 66

33 -Concessionary disabled

55 - Juniors under 16

10 - Juniors 16 to 18

52 - Non fishing associates

5 - Honorary members

5 - Life members

The 2 free Guest tickets each membership year continues to be popular, but please remember unless 48 hours' notice is given supply can't be guaranteed. Guest tickets are only available for dawn to dusk fishing, and the member must accompany the guest and assume full responsibility for them. Additional tickets can be purchased at £10 per day per person but again the member must accompany them.

Finance

Income and expenditure for the year ending 31/03/2026

Our membership income = £75,292, a decrease of £982 on the previous year

Guest tickets = £29 a decrease of £11 on the previous year

Deposit account interest = £4260 an increase of £69 on the previous year

Total income = £89,078 an increase of £8028 on previous year

Our expenditure was £68,780 plus depreciation of £6,992 (total of £75,772), a decrease of £1375 on the previous year.

We have therefore lived within our budget for the year and produced a net surplus of £13,306 as compared to £3903 in the previous year

This has allowed the Board to not increase membership fees for the next membership year.

As at 31/03 our accounts stood at

Nat West current account = £170.79

Nat West Business reserve account = £6.07

Nat West 95 day account = £130,363.30

Santander account = £34.94

Once again, we confirm that all Directors, Bailiffs or officers of the Company give their services voluntarily and receive no monies, honorariums or benefits of any kind. All pay their own membership

Thank you for your patience, and if you do have any issues you wish to discuss please raise them in the any other business on the AGM agenda. Those issues will be taken away, discussed by the Board and you will be given a considered reply as soon as possible

The Board of Directors