

# COCKERMOUTH ANGLING ASSOCIATION A.G.M. 2025 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

## ANGLING REPORT

- In the past season, on Cockermouth Angling Association Waters 70 salmon were caught on the Derwent, all of these were returned to the water. There were 33 sea trout caught on the Derwent and all of these were also returned. These figures continue the improving trend which we noticed last year. Hopefully, this will continue further.
- For comparison figures for Cockermouth Angling Association for earlier years are as follows:

Season	Derwent Total Salmon	Derwent Salmon Returned	Derwent Sea Trout	Cocker Total Salmon
2002	58	?	?	3
2003	20	?	?	0
2004	93	30	26	8
2005	55	33	10	6
2006	61	27	17	7
2007	121	53	4	22
2008	64	23	1	25
2009	82	44	14	11
2010	72	38	27	11
2011	55	19	13	13
2012	44	22	10	5
2013	34	17	6	15
2014	24	20	46	15
2015	31	25	28	0
2016	34	31	35	0
2017	79	69	22	0
2018	17	17	23	3
2019	37	37	30	30
2020	54	54	8	8

2021	14	14	6	6
2022	26	26	21	NA
2023	32	32	33	NA
2024	60	60	33	33

- Mark Hastings is the Chairman of Derwent Owners' Association and is in the process of collecting returns for the river as a whole, but it does seem to have been a better year all round.

### **CASTLE FISHERIES LEASE**

Our current 20 year agreement with Castle Fisheries expires at the end of December 2025 and for the past two years I have been in discussions with Lord Egremont's land agent, Charles Baker to come to an agreement on what should take its place.

To give some context and background, the present 20 year agreement came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006. Cockermouth Angling Association agreed to pay an initial annual rent of £10,800 +VAT i.e. £12,600. It was also agreed that this would be increased, in January 2011, and every 5 years thereafter, in accordance with the Retail Price Index. However, the real value of Derwent salmon fishing declined as salmon numbers dwindled and interest in fishing fell.

Matters came to a head in 2018, when the rental had increased to £14,900, in line with the RPI, but the Association had only taken in £13,000 in permit fees. I had meetings with Lord Egremont and Charles Baker, who were very understanding and agreed that it was untenable for the Association to continue at an annual loss on this scale. We, therefore agreed that we would hand over to the Estate the total sum we collected from the sale of Derwent salmon permits each year. This represented the "true market value" of the fishing. This arrangement was never formalised in writing but has been accepted practice since 2019, with Castle Fisheries giving us a "rent rebate" each year.

By way of illustration of the scale of things, in January 2006, the RPI was 193.4 and is expected to be about 410.5 by the end of 2026. This means that, if we had been sticking to the original agreement we would have been paying Castle Fisheries £22,923 + VAT i.e. £27,508 per year. To recover this cost, we would have had to charge £425 for each of the 40 local rods and £705 for each of the 15 outside rods!

Last year we sold 40 local rods at £180 and 15 outside rods at £300 giving a total of £11,700, which we paid to Castle Fisheries in rent i.e. about half of what the original agreement would have required us to pay. From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2026, after our discussions, Charles Baker suggested that we should pay the same annual rent as we agreed 20 years ago, i.e. £10,800 + VAT = £12,960. This is £1,260 more than we paid last year and, if we sold the same number of permits there would have to be about a 10% increase in annual permit fees.

The number of Derwent Permits we can sell was limited by the original Castle Fisheries lease drawn up 40 years ago. However, in discussions with Charles Baker, it was

suggested that there could be no objection to increasing the availability of local rods to 45 and the number of outside rods to 20.

The Committee therefore proposes that in 2026. we keep the prices of Derwent salmon permits the same, i.e. £180 for local rods and £300 for outside rods. We hope to make up the potential shortfall of £1,260 by selling more permits in 2026. If we fail to do this, we will stand any shortfall out of club funds for 2026 and review things next year.

same way we have been doing in recent years i.e. based upon a common sense approach and what we receive from the sale of permits.

### **CONTROL OF FISH EATING BIRDS IN THE DERWENT SYSTEM**

The Area Based Bird Control Licence for 2025 /2026 was issued by the Natural England Wildlife Licensing Unit and the number of cormorants licenced was the same as last year i.e. 51 for the whole season and we were given a slight increase in the numbers of goosanders, from 25 up to 26.. David Magrath has taken over as the Primary Contact for the Licence and has allocated the numbers of birds to the Specific Sites.

We have a separate Licence for control of the cormorants at Cogra Moss which Adrian Mills manages superbly.

### **ENVIRONMENT AGENCY / DERWENT OWNERS' ASSOCIATION SALMON CONSERVATION ACTION PLAN**

In addition to being Vice Chairman of CAA, Mark Hastings is Chairman of Derwent Owners' Association and has been working closely with Phil Ramsden (EA), Mike Farrell and others in the development and implementation of the EA / DOA Salmon Conservation Action Plan. The overall aim of this is to increase the numbers of salmon in the Derwent system. Mark, Phil, Mike and colleagues have put a hell of a lot of work into this and their efforts are, to some extent undervalued or un recognized. Some of the areas being worked on include

- Relocation of salmon fry from areas of over-abundance into other areas with a deficit
- Relocation of salmon smolts downstream when they become trapped in low water conditions
- Plans to improve redd counting throughout the Derwent system by organizing a drone survey
- Improving the reporting of intelligence on poaching on the Derwent
- Following up with United Utilities on plans to make changes to Yearl Weir to improve migration of adult salmon upstream and smolts downstream
- Habitat improvement work throughout the Derwent catchment
- Working with others to improve water quality
- Decreasing predation by birds
- Removing other barriers to fish migration
- Controlling the spread of non-native invasive species
- Etc.

Cockermouth Angling Association actively supports the work of the Derwent Owners' Association and we will inform our members of progress by making available DOA Minutes / Reports etc. appropriately.

### **RIVER BANK MAINTENANCE**

I would like to record the Association's thanks to members who have helped with river bank maintenance work throughout the year, particularly John Smith, Robert Parks, Neil Barcock, Karl Mugaliski, and Paul Cass. Access to parts of the Cocker fishing which were very overgrown have been improved by a contractor, supervised by Terry Barnes and John Smith. This was funded by a Fisheries Improvement Grant which comes directly from EA fishing licence money. Access to Wood Bottom on the Derwent was also similarly funded. Further work, on improving stiles on the Derwent is planned this year, organized by Robert Parks. Again, this will be done by a contractor paid out of FIP grants from EA. Thanks are due to Mike Farrell for helping us obtain this funding. Separately, Robert Parks, Terry Barnes and Mark Hastings are in contact with Peter Kerr to see what work he will allow us to do at Stanger. Peter wants to concentrate on repairing some flood damage to fences initially and it may be that Derwent Owners' Association can help with this financially.

### **HABITAT IMPROVEMENT WORK ON THE RIVER DERWENT**

We continue to give an annual donation to the DOA and actively support habitat improvement work on the Derwent system, mainly through our involvement with the River Derwent Rivers Corridor Group (RCG). The RCG is supported by donations from DOA members and grants from EA, mainly from Fisheries Improvement Project funding which comes directly from licence sales.

We have also worked with the Cumbria Coastal Community Forest Project, RAISE Cumbria, which has funding available for the planting and maintenance of trees. Derwent Owners' Association obtained £35,000 from the EA Water Environment Improvement Fund for specific projects on Snarey Beck and Black Beck at Mockerkin, which are tributaries of the Marron and Derwent catchments. These additional funds only become available to us because of the independent funding donations from CAA and other DOA members.

Mike Farrell is the EA Project Manager who plays a very significant part in getting habitat improvement works organized and completed on the Derwent system.

### **AVAILABILITY OF FISHING ON THE DERWENT**

Mr. David Pattinson is changing the way that he lets out the Woodhall fishing from next season and has offered the bottom beat, right bank from L'aal Lad's Hole down to the top of Lady Boat on a 3 year lease. The asking price was £3,000 per year and, after discussion at the CAA Committee, we have told Mr. Pattison that we are not interested in taking up this offer because we already have the fishing on the left bank and his price would mean a significant increase in Derwent rod prices.

### **COGRA MOSS**

Thanks to all the volunteers from CAA, EA and Oakfield Special School, Nottingham who organised the planting of the trees on the copse dedicated to the memory of Eric Brown at Cogra Moss. The memorial cairn on the site, set up by Terry Barnes, Stephen Black and Trevor Cowell, was most appreciated by Eric's family, who regularly visit the site. The trees are thriving and will be a lasting and appropriate tribute to Eric.

Thanks are also due to the Sellafield Supply Chain who designed, built and installed the new notice board and ticket box at Cogra Moss. Again this is marked as a tribute to Eric Brown.

Cogra Moss has fished well for most of the season and Terry Barnes will be presenting a report later in the meeting. Anglers seem to be well satisfied with the quality of the fish stocked at Cogra. The ownership of Invicta Trout has changed and we have had a better financial offer from the Bessie Beck Fishery which we have accepted. Committee members have visited Bessie Beck and were impressed with the set up and the quality of fish.

The on-line booking system, devised by John Smith has worked well and has allows day and week tickets to be ordered and paid for easily and this has made us less dependent on the Inglenook Caravan site office.

Our thanks are also due to Terry Barnes, John Smith and other helpers for all the work done in organising and carrying out stocking and the general management, maintenance etc. carried out at Cogra Moss.

## **WEB-SITE**

John Smith has continued to maintain the Cockermouth Angling Society web-site and I would encourage members to visit it at [cockermouthanglingassociation.co.uk](http://cockermouthanglingassociation.co.uk)

## **FINALLY, THANKS ARE DUE TO**

- Our Secretary Steve Moore and our Treasurer John Smith.
- Terry Barnes, together with Steven Black and John Smith and others for their excellent work at Cogra Moss.
- John Smith, Robert Parks and other colleagues for organising and carrying out river bank maintenance work and grass cutting throughout the season.
- David Coulthard and Michael Cleeland for running the guest schemes.
- The whole of the Committee which has worked very well as a team, not only in meetings but also when it comes to getting things done on the river bank.
- All our members, for generally fishing in a sporting manner, looking after new comers and giving the committee very few problems!

STAY SAFE AND TIGHT LINES IN 2026.

Jack Abernethy  
Chairman, Cockermouth Angling Association  
11<sup>th</sup> December 2025