

## Outcomes of Upper Thurne Refuge Meeting – 17/03/11

### Attendees

Brian Wilkins	Robin Buxton	Steve Lane	Tony Risebrow	Stephen Prowse
Chris Bielby	Eilish Owen-Rothney	Martyn Page	Chris Wright	Robin Allard

NWT

Apologies – Andrea Kelly

### Key points raised during the meeting

#### Patrols/Angling activity this season

- All angling incidents occurred in 2011 – ice in the first half of the season before Christmas prevented boat access.
- No out-of-hours patrols were carried out due to a combination of Jon Hope's lack of availability or availability only at short notice, which was insufficient notice for Rupert Pyett to plan accordingly and be available.
- When Jon Hopes was available to join the patrols, his presence was a great asset in dealing with potentially difficult anglers.
- Patrols were greatly helped by excellent communication and reporting by stakeholders – NT, Horsey Estate, NWT. Tony also made a big effort to respond whenever possible and re-positioning the launch at Catfield Dyke improved response time.
- Knowing which anglers had permits helped the patrols identify anglers.
- All offending anglers are believed to have launched from Martham
- Some anglers complained that the launch approached them in inappropriate fashion, crossing their lines and disrupting their fishing. However, offending anglers often deliberately made it awkward for the launch to approach them – as reported by Tony Risebrow and witnessed by Stephen Prowse through his scope.
- Anglers with a permit often requested that their permits be checked to prove and show they are fishing responsibly.
- Towards the end of the season, a few persistent offenders refused to leave the exclusion zone when asked to move.
- At a recent meeting of the Norwich and District Pike Club, members showed general support for the permit system, mainly on the basis that it 'guaranteed' exclusive fishing on the Mere. It is important that this is enforced.
- Hickling is passively patrolled on-route to the Horsey/Martham parts of the system.

- The Hickling refuge areas (with the possible exception of Duck Broad and Holkham Pits) are virtually self-regulating, in that only one boat is likely to enter each of these areas at any one time.
- It would be helpful if Broadsbeat could run for 12 months of the year.

#### Other boat users

- Virtually no sailing occurs during the winter months
- It is difficult for sailing boats to navigate Meadow Dyke so they are unlikely to access Horsey Mere via that route.
- No disturbance from canoeists was reported on the Mere.

#### Bird counts/activity

- It is the opinion of the group's stakeholders that, in terms of supporting wintering waterfowl, Horsey is the most important part of the system.
- Increased boat activity on the Mere in February following the cold snap caused a noticeable fall in wildfowl numbers.
- Records show that it can take 7 – 10 days for wildfowl numbers to recover following a disturbance incident.
- Angling does not appear to disturb the bittern
- Richard Starling has previously reported that when birds are disturbed on Horsey, they tend to move to the Martham Broads.
- A single boat fishing in the permitted area does not appear to significantly disturb the birds.
- Birds respond differently to boats than they do to bank disturbance – more likely to fly off when boats get too close, where-as bank disturbance tends to just cause them to swim further away.
- It is hard to prove bird disturbance at night but night fish was not perceived to be as big a problem as it has been in previous years.

#### Fisheries/angling perspective

- Martyn Page would like to look at the possibility of increasing the fishing area on Horsey to open up more swims.

#### **Actions**

- Tony Risebrow to inform the new ranger team of the need to; use a specific launch craft and move it up to Catfield Dyke prior to the season, fit the buoys with lead/iron weights rather than concrete and general updates to patrol procedures (GPS, avoiding disturbing anglers where possible). **Already auctioned – reminder may be needed immediately prior to next season.**

- Tony Risebrow to feed back to Jon Hopes on how helpful his assistance has been when he has been able to attend patrols and suggest that Broadsbeat be extended so that it runs year-round. **Already actioned.**
- Robin Buxton to arrange with Dave Batten for updated permit application forms to be put up on the website requesting that the name and post code of both anglers be submitted. This will allow anglers licenses to be checked without the need to approach anglers while fishing.
- Chris Bielby/Kate Jackson to investigate (through Jon Hopes) the possibility of special constable(s) attending out-of-hours patrols.
- Natural England to use bird count data so show evidence of disturbance events and look at putting together the beginnings of an enforcement case.
- Chris Bielby/Steve Lane to produce press release, including graphic presentation of evidence that angling causes bird disturbance.
- Chris Bielby/Robin Buxton/Martyn Page to look potentially increasing extent of permitted fishing area on Horsey.
- Natural England to review need for buoys on Hickling refuges. *Note – Eilish Rothney reported that, 'the exclusion zones on Hickling were setup as part of the Planning permission for the Windsurfing club beach and, although voluntary for other craft may be binding for the windsurfers. Any changes to current arrangements must consider this.'*