

COFTON LAKE CONSERVATION LTD

NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2011

Dear Member,

We are pleased to see that the lake is now starting to fill. This has taken longer than expected due to the dry summer season. The Committee met in October and a copy of the minutes of this meeting can be found on the web site.

We are keeping our fingers crossed that the valves are now both working correctly. It has been noted that there is a very slight leak from the lower valve and British Waterways have been informed but in their opinion the amount leaking was minimal and should not affect the water level. These valves have to be opened and closed bi annually and it was suggested to BW that a member of CLCL be present at these checks. It was also pointed out to BW that they would be held fully responsible should either of these valves not function correctly in the future.

Work has started on clearing the pathways and the Committee thank the Fishing Club for their hard work and also the volunteers who erected the benches. There is still some work to do on the southern shore where in places the pathway is very narrow and is being eroded away. More working parties need to be arranged in the early part of next year to tackle this problem. Anyone willing to help - please contact a member of the committee.

It was agreed that boards be put along the boardwalk as members walking their dogs were having problems getting the dogs across. This has been measured up and the work to be carried out in due course.

The fishing club agreed that their notice board could be used for photographs taken around the lake and two committee members agreed to inspect it and paint if necessary.

A few problems had arisen during the year with members backing onto the lake when their house was put on the market for sale. It should be remembered that the majority of members do not back onto the lake area and the 'share' is owned by the member and should not be part of the house sale. This has caused problems when solicitors get involved and in some cases the sale of the house has been held up. The transfer of the 'share' should be between the seller and purchaser direct and not as part of the house sale. It should also be pointed out to residents around the lake that in the rules it does state that no trees are to be cut down or trimmed and the pathway leading down to the lake should be no more than 1 meter wide. It should also be noted that no vehicular access from the car park is allowed.

Simon Munn who designed and runs our website has resigned from the Committee due to pressure of work. Simon has kindly agreed to continue hosting the web site – we thank him for his work over the past years.

FISHING CLUB REPORT – Dave Townshend

Finally the works at the Lake are completed and we are fishing there again. The year has not been without it's fair share of drama though.

The prolonged cold period and heavy snow during December had affected our storage pools at Bayton quite badly. The bottom pool where the Cofton fish were stored had iced over with 4 – 6 inches of ice and this, covered in snow for a period of time caused a massive fish kill. When a group of us went to the pools one Sunday morning in early January, we were met with a sorry sight. The pool, still frozen over, was covered with dead carp set in the ice. Around the margins where ice had cleared, further groups of dead fish. That day we removed 80 carp and buried them. The following Sunday, a further 100 carp were removed and buried. The carp lost were an average of 10lb in weight. This, together with the fish we had lost in the storage pools before they were moved to Bayton, brought the total fish lost to around 240. This was the majority of the fish removed, and it was decided that transferring the remainder back to Cofton would not be cost effective and new fish would need to be purchased .

We had hoped that the works at Cofton would be completed in February. British Waterways' contractors did finish fitting the new valve on schedule, but as the lake began to fill it became clear that the valve was not going to seal properly, and so the water was drained again. The new valve was removed and taken away to be remachined before being refitted in March.

The lake began to fill, and we made an initial stocking of 200 carp between 1 ½ and 7 lbs, 3000 roach – around 500 of which were 1 lb+ and 250 fingerling chub.

The spring was one of the driest for a long time. The much needed rainfall for the Lake did not come, but we still opened the lake for fishing on 1st May. It was a fairly dry summer too, so the water level of the lake rose very slowly, and now in November as I write this, we are still around 4 feet below being full.

The lake has been drained or partially drained for around 3 years now. The bed of the lake which has been exposed has grassed over. A large number of saplings had started to grow close to the bank, which we have now had removed by a contractor. The top end of the lake has turned into marshland, and is now thick with reeds. When the lake does fill to capacity, much of this will be under 5 feet or more of water – too deep for the reeds to survive, but they will be there under the surface and it will be 18 months – 2 years before you will be able to fish there without losing your gear!

There will be a further stocking of larger carp towards the end of this year. Around 100 fish between 7 and 18 lbs will be introduced, together with more silver fish. This will then have replaced all of the fish we have lost during this process

What is the cost of all of this? British Waterways have reimbursed the Club for all of the costs involved with the Cofton operation. We have received a little over £27,000 - £7k of which is for the netting and storage of the fish, with the balance of £20k being for fish loss. All of this money will be spent in replacing the fish stocks at Cofton and restoring this to the thriving fishery it was before the works started over 2 years ago.

The drainage of the lake has also damaged the floating islands. They were not designed to rest out of water, and so some have buckled. When the lake fills completely, we will remove the islands, repair them, replace the anchors and replant them.

Our maintenance programme for this year has consisted of general maintenance of the pathways. We have again employed a contractor to keep the grass on lower pathways and across the dam in check. Our plans for next year are to make more improvements to the

pathways, and we also plan to build a fishing platform suitable for disabled anglers by the car park. This will also double as a jetty from which we can launch our boat when needed.

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY - AGM WILL BE 22ND APRIL 2012 IN COFTON HACKETT VILLAGE HALL AT 4.00 PM.

The Committee thank you for your continued support and wish you all a Merry Christmas and Healthy and Prosperous New Year.

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Can we respectfully remind you that subs are due in by the end of January. The annual subscription is now £12 but the Committee would thank all those who paid more and can be assured that this money will be put to good use.

COFTON LAKE CONSERVATION LTD

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

Please return this slip with your cheque:

Cheques to be made out to Cofton Lake Conservation Ltd and to be paid by 31st January 2012

Name.....

Address.....

Please send cheque to: The Treasurer, 58 Ashmead Drive, Cofton Hackett, Birmingham B45 8AB or the Registered Office 19 Cofton Lake Road, Cofton Hackett, Birmingham B45 8PL