

Conservation key to the future



Part of the big crowd who attended the official salmon season opening ceremony hosted at The Popinjay Hotel. Picture by Nigel Duncan Media

Many Lothians anglers fish the Clyde and conservation and the encouragement of young anglers were the two key messages stressed at the official salmon opening ceremony hosted by the United Clyde Angling Protective Association (UCAPA).

Chairman Ken Mackie's remarks were backed by John Henderson, sales director for fishing tackle manufacturers Hardy, who were the main sponsors of the event which attracted around 200 hundred guests to The Popinjay Hotel at Rosebank.

Mackie revealed that last season was one of the worst on record for salmon on the river. Abnormally low water levels followed by almost continuously high water throughout the key months of September and October which are not conducive to good fishing were the main factors.

This, he said, was reflected in the numbers submitted in annual returns but he added that the Clyde probably fared

better than many other rivers in Scotland with both the Tay and Tweed reporting virtually no back-end run.

He added: "Overall, in Scotland, 2017 was one of the poorest salmon seasons on record. In the latter circumstances therefore, it is somewhat ironic that the Clyde, a recovering salmon fishery, has been upgraded as one of only four in Scotland, to a Category 1 river, for 2018."

And Mackie added: "Despite this upgrade, UCAPA will continue to maintain its existing conservation policy."

The top salmon landed, despite the difficult conditions, was around 17lbs by Russell Shearer who was presented with a trophy and a permit for next season.

Mackie underlined that trout anglers reported good results with many specimen fish recorded, particularly on the upper reaches and he said the river has a justified reputation as one of the top ten trout rivers in the UK.

And he added: "To this end, we must make every endeavour to maintain it as a premier wild trout fishery."

The association continues to encourage young people into angling and Jim Mathew has been appointed youth development officer.

He has established young, enthusiastic angling groups in a number of local schools and has organised a number of outings and competitions.

Mackie said young people were the future of the organisation going forward and told anglers in the room: "We are the conservation team for the river and I would encourage you to bring young people into the sport as they are the conservation team of the future."

Henderson said the age of the Northumberland-based company – formed in 1872 by William Hardy who set up a shop as a

gunsmith – and that of UCAPA, which is in its 131st year, were similar.

And he revealed that talks are under way about helping UCAPA in the future.

Henderson said: “Both are outstanding brands in their own right and there is a direct connection between equipment and anglers.”

He was pleased to hear of the Category One status and that the Clyde was one of the top ten trout rivers in the UK and he added: “Important things are happening here and that’s fantastic.”

On conservation, he said: “It is vital. People don’t live for ever and anglers tend to be of a certain ilk and a certain age. Without more children and people coming into the sport we do not have a sport.

“Unless we excite children and bring them into the sport and keep them excited then we don’t have a sport.”

The Alnwick-based company certainly excited the young people in the audience by supporting a junior casting competition and also presented goodie bags to all children present.

Fly tying demonstrations from the Semperfli pro team and the Sharpes Gentles fly Tying Club were also held before the annual parade along the Clyde Valley road to the Mauldslie Bridge for the official toast and the first cast.