

Fishing – coarse angling chairman explains background to canal permits

Gus Brindle, chairman of the Scottish Federation for Coarse Angling (SFCA), has responded to social media criticism over the issue of permits to fish Scotland's canals.

The response followed publication of an article featuring the new Facebook page for the Union Canal and Fife-based Brindle confirmed that the SFCA does not charge for permits to fish the Forth and Clyde and Union canals.

The charge is, however, for membership of the SFCA which, he said, protects and promotes coarse fishing across Scotland and provides all members with public liability cover when they are fishing.

He added: "It is important to note that the primary reason why people who fish the canals should join the SFCA is that the membership acts as the permit for the canals and it is unlawful to fish there (or virtually anywhere else in freshwater in Scotland) without written permission. For this reason there have always been permits required to fish on the lowland canals.

The official added: "Until 2009, permits were issued by the Lowland Canals Angling Partnership Scheme (LCAPS) between the Scottish Federation for Coarse Angling (SFCA) and British Waterways, Scottish Canals predecessor.

"In the summer of 2009 the SFCA signed a landmark agreement with British Waterways to replace the old Lowland Canals Angling Partnership Scheme and take control of all fishing on the Forth & Clyde and Union Canals.

“The priorities for British Waterways at the time were to have a representative body for anglers that boaters and other canal and towpath users could engage with over issues related to anglers and angling.

“The aim was also to ensure that everyone fishing on the canals was issued with written permission to fish and a copy of the rules for fishing on the canals.”

Other objectives were to assist with promoting the responsible use of the canal network by anglers and the importance of protecting the unique biodiversity of the canal environment and to ensure that appropriate public liability cover was in place for all angling activity.

He confirmed: “Having obtained the fishing rights, the SFCA decided to revolutionise the way in which that fishing was controlled and paid for.

“Instead of continuing with the old ineffective, labour-intensive and costly mechanism of selling day and season tickets, a decision was taken to include the fishing as part of the annual individual membership of the SFCA and to use the membership card and the written consent rather than issuing separate day or season tickets.

“When the SFCA signed the agreement in 2009, a day ticket cost £3.50 and a season ticket cost £10 per year, now, 11 years later we have managed to keep the price of annual membership below those 2009 levels, and give away the fishing on the canals with that membership.”

He added: “This has ensured affordable and accessible angling is available to everyone and that the requirements of British Waterways, now Scottish Canals, including public liability insurance cover, were met.

Annual membership runs from April 1 to March 31 of the following year and prices are: adult annual

membership £8, OAP/disabled annual membership £5. Junior annual membership is FREE.

Junior membership is open to everyone aged 18 years or under on April 1 of the year for which membership is applied.