

Over 50 shopping trolleys hooked in Almond clean up

A staggering total of 55 shopping trolleys were removed from the River Almond by members of West Lothian Angling Association (WLAA) during an initiative and that's not all.

Trolleys from leading supermarket chains were prominent with over 30 from one but bikes, scooters, road signs and fencing were also lifted from the water along with ten bags of rubbish.

Used vapes were also recovered from the swoop at Howden and near the town's skatepark and frustrated Jason Rennie, chairman of WLAA, said: "I'm sure everyone will agree something needs done to stop trolleys entering the river."

He also revealed that several trolleys were so embedded in the river that they had to be buried under rocks and Rennie said: "We believe the trolleys are thrown from bridges in the expectation that they will make a splash. That's wrong."

Scot Muir, association secretary, confirmed the clean up was at the Howden Weir and near the town's skatepark where the bulk of the rubbish was found.

It was dangerous work, particularly as some of the trolleys were badly rusted and several had to be winched out of the water, but the guys who waded into the river, he said, were well aware of the risk and used to dealing with the equipment needed.

Fraser Thomson, vice-chairman of WLAA, added: "So proud of the effort. I truly love the Almond, The war will be long but we won a battle today. Thanks to all those who turned up to take part."

West Lothian Litter Pickers were also involved in the initiative and other clean-ups will be held during the summer but Rennie said: "We can't work out what people achieve from throwing the trolleys into the river."

This is one of a number of initiatives hosted by the ambitious WLAA. Under way is a move to encourage more people into fishing. The first session at Mid Calder Community Centre concentrated on fishing theory, rod set-up, and fly tying, the second is a still water fishing session focusing on casting technique and fish handling plus fly selection and the venue is Pottishaw Fishery.

The third session is on the River Almond when attendees will learn techniques, fly selection and river history and techniques.

The cost is £60 for all three sessions and a dedicated women's session, hosted by the Scotland Ladies Fly Fishing team, is available as well as kids sessions which cost £30 for all three events.

Thomson explained: "Fishing offers many recognised social and health and well-being benefits and the club wants to share their passion for all things fishing and the outdoors.

"This a friendly and enjoyable course introducing people to the essential skills of fly fishing from experienced members of the association. We want some new blood into the sport and show people responsibilities from the start. rather than training after they have been at the river."

Those responsibilities include the proper way to dispose of used line and notification of pollution on rivers which is responsible angling according to Thomson who confirmed that the minimum age is from ten upwards

A fee permit for West Lothian Angling Association and a free day ticket to Pottishaw Fishery is included in the package.