

# Lets Fish! initiative hooking youngster interest

Coaches Sam Paterson and John Rae stood at gaps strategically cut in the bankside vegetation, and in the shadow of The Kelpies, detailing the basics of coarse fishing to two young boys.

They had noted the Scottish Federation for Coarse Angling gazebo while using their scooters along the towpath of the Forth & Clyde Canal near Falkirk and stopped to find out more.

The boys heard about how to catch fish, different tactics, even how to attach a squirming, white maggot to a tiny hook, and they were quick to ask more questions.

The coaches were also keen to talk about the environment in which the fish live and about water safety, a key element in the free Lets Fish! sessions which are being held during the school holidays.

Sadly, the rain came, cutting short the chat, and it is too early to say if the pair will be hooked, but they appeared enthusiastic to come back and try their luck in a basin near the iconic steel structure which has become a major tourist attraction.

Paterson and Rae, both experienced anglers who both hold coaching certificates, plus Gus Brindle, chairman of the Scottish Federation for Coarse Angling (SFCA), have also been on the Forth & Clyde Canal at Applecross Street, behind the headquarters of Scottish Canals, and situated near the Glasgow Angling Centre in The Point Retail Park, Saracen Street, Glasgow, during the October holidays.

Next summer, the SFCA hope to extend the 40-minute taster sessions to the Lothians, giving young people here an

opportunity to try fishing.

However, these sessions, which must be booked online, are not just for young people and interested adults are also welcome as are those who may have drifted away from the sport.

The coaches are keen to answer questions which anglers may have and Brindle confirmed that they vary the programme to suit those who either book online or walk-up.

Some students, like a little lad of around seven who was proudly clutching his rod, and others, who were initially handed a whip making it easy to cast out, listened intently but, were obviously anxious to dip a line in the water and hook a fish.

As the session continued, applicants were introduced to waggler fishing which entails casting with the aid of a fixed spool reel, a more complex process.

Hooking into a fish, a key element in encouraging people to take the sport further, is key and this is a praiseworthy initiative but, on the crisp, cool day I visited in Glasgow, somebody forgot to tell the fish. They refused to come out and play, possibly due to the overnight frost, even for Brindle who is team manager for Scotland and a highly-competent angler in his own right.

PICTURE: Forth & Clyde Canal in Glasgow, site for one of the Lets Fish! sessions. Picture by **Nigel Duncan**