June 2026 Newsletter

Peg 66 by Surrey Hills Plein Air Painters

Well, the waiting is nearly over. After 3 months of resting our banks, it's time to dust off the trotting rods, prepare the hemp and return to moving water. Let's face it, there's a magic to rivers that stillwaters just can't replicate. Whether you're targeting specimen chub, hard-fighting barbel, or quality silvers, the Mole has it all. What's more, with the close-season maintenance work that's been carried out, the river is looking an absolute picture. Tight lines to everyone heading out on the 'Glorious 16th' ><>

IMPROVING ACCESS FOR MEMBERS ON THE MOLE

Following a call from Dorking anglers for improved access to river pegs, volunteers have been busy installing new steps, particularly on the popular North Bank section. This much-needed upgrade across numerous pegs will make tackling steep and slippery banks considerably safer and easier for all our members.

The steps have been sympathetically constructed to blend seamlessly into the natural surroundings and preserve the river's character. Beyond significantly improving access, they actively stabilise the riverbanks against erosion - a persistent issue on the River Mole, especially after increasingly frequent flash floods.

BEFORE **AFTER**

PEG 78

PEG 81

PEG 84

PEG 89

BATHING FIELD

DONKEY FIELD

KICK STARTING THE RECOVERY OF OUR RIVER SECTIONS

Maintaining a healthy, thriving fishery is about striking a balance between creating angler access and ecological preservation, including the establishment of no-fishing sanctuaries. It's an approach that is vital to the long-term sustainability of a river. The extensive but carefully managed tree work we have carried out on Castlefields and Puddenhole is part of a nature-smart strategy to restore habitat and kickstart the natural recovery of the Mole.

By selectively thinning and creating dappled light, we have encouraged vital weed growth while reducing excessive leaf build-up that leads to silting. Far from simply opening up casting space for members, this work ensures the river sections remain a resilient ecosystem for supporting healthy fish populations.

NEW PEG MARKERS ON PUDDENHOLE

Work on Puddenhole has continued in readiness for the new season. All 18 peg markers have now been installed along this peaceful and productive stretch of the Mole.

LEVEL 2 COACHING AVAILABLE

In response to an article in the March Newsletter regarding coaching bursaries from the Angling Trust, we were contacted by Dorking member Jason Sawyer. Jason is an experienced angler but relatively new to the club. Since joining, he has thrown himself into volunteering for a number of events, including litter picks, gravel cleaning and work parties.

Jason has successfully completed his online training. He is now awaiting assessment before taking a one-day practical at Marsh Farm. I am sure we'd all like to wish him the best of luck in gaining his coaching qualification.

If you'd like to take advantage of these bursaries and enrol on the Angling Trust Level 2 coaching course, please email: volunteer@dorkingas.co.uk For more on the course itself, click on this link: https://anglingtrust.net/training-courses/angling-coach-qualification-and-licensing

PUDDENHOLE PROGRESSES AT PACE

Kenward Construction returned to Puddenhole in early May and has made great strides, completing the ramp, installing Armco barriers and creating a car park area. They have also submitted a planning application to install the new gate.

Taking advantage of plant machinery already on site, the committee approved the full excavation of the lake. This work is fully funded and leaves the club with a healthy working capital. The car park will be closed to anglers while development continues.

THE NEXT STAGE

A number of tasks remain, including profiling the lake, ensuring it's watertight and establishing marginal plants. We have obtained quotes for this next phase of the project. However, due to budget constraints, club volunteers may need to carry out some of this work.

WHAT'S THE TIMELINE?

We anticipate the lake will take around two to three years to mature properly before it becomes fully fishable, with the EA committed to providing stock from their Rearing Unit in Calverton. This is a highly ambitious and exciting project which, when completed, will make Puddenhole one of Surrey's premier stillwaters.

A HAVEN FOR ANGLERS AND WILDLIFE

As well as creating a first-class fishery, this 15-acre site will be developed into a conservation area - a haven for both anglers and wildlife. We will be consulting with relevant groups, such as Surrey Wildlife Trust, on how best to achieve this.

FUNDING THE PROJECT

The lake extension represents a significant investment of both time and money, which the committee firmly believes is vital for the future of the angling club. While fisheries improvement funding will be available, we are actively pursuing external funds to help accelerate the project's completion. We would also greatly appreciate any member donations via Clubmate.

THE GREAT BRITISH SPRING CLEAN

SOME OF OUR VOLUNTEERS

Our Dorking AS volunteers were out in force again in March, with no fewer than twenty one members supporting the Great British Spring Clean - an annual event linked to the 'Anglers Against Litter' campaign.

Roadside verges, riverbanks and pathways were all cleared of unsightly rubbish. What's more, the glorious weather made the task so much easier for our willing team of helpers.

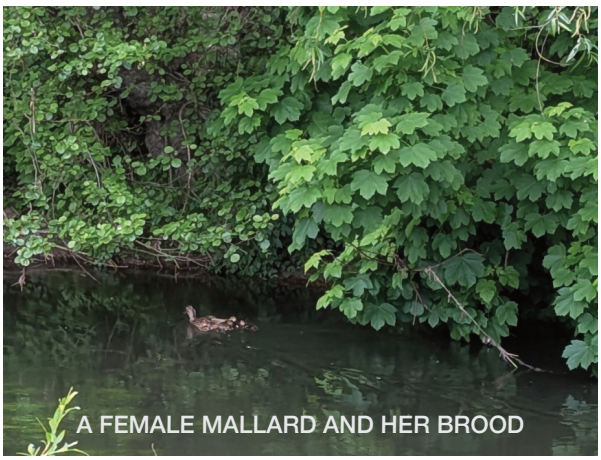
As with previous events, recyclable litter was separated from general waste and all rubbish was collected by Mole Valley District Council.

It was great to see our litter pick get a mention on the Angling Trust's social media pages, with the club receiving well-deserved praise for its efforts. As always, a massive thank you to everyone who stepped up to help on the day.

SOME KEY RULES TO OBSERVE FOR THE NEW SEASON

RIVER MOLE SEES SURGE IN BIRDLIFE

After 18 months of mink trapping, we're beginning to see the return of a thriving bird population on the Mole. This is thanks in no small part to the continued efforts of our fantastic volunteers, who work tirelessly alongside the waterliferecoverytrust.org.uk


A FEMALE MALLARD AND HER BROOD

Mallards, moorhens, coots, cygnets and kingfishers are all highly vulnerable to American mink. These destructive predators can kill up to 500 native animals a year, highlighting the importance of the angling club's conservation strategy.

However, there is no room for complacency, as female mink and their kits will soon start to venture out to prey on local wildlife. This is a critical time for monitoring and controlling these voracious, non-native carnivores, which is another reason why we have extended the trapping programme to cover more sections of the river.

ANGLING CLUB ALLIANCE COULD BE A GAME CHANGER

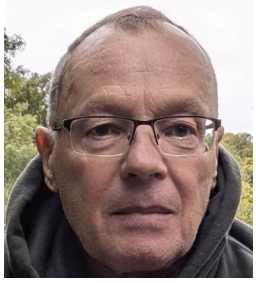
In April, the Environment Agency convened the inaugural meeting of River Mole angling societies. This represents an important first step towards greater dialogue between clubs.

Dorking AS has played a major role in helping establish this collaborative initiative - something that could prove vital in securing the future of the River Mole for the next generation of anglers.

At the meeting, our very own Jon Elliott, treasurer for our club, was elected chair for the first 12 months. A WhatsApp group was set up among the nine member clubs to share relevant regional updates.

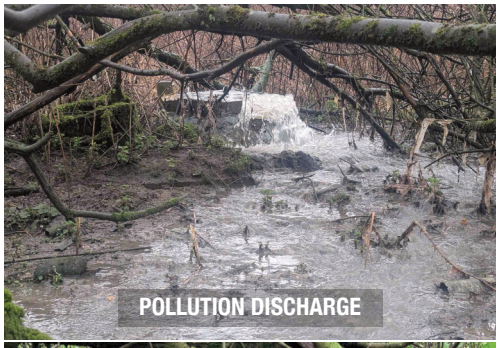
Meetings will be held quarterly to discuss issues affecting clubs, ranging from habitat improvement to fisheries enforcement. The alliance will also look to partner with other interested parties such as the Angling Trust and the South East Rivers Trust.

STOPPING ILLEGAL DISCHARGES ON CASTLEFIELDS



Fisheries Officer Phil Waddicor has spearheaded a local campaign to halt pollution from a manhole on our Castlefields site. As you'll see from the images below, this poorly constructed manhole has two built-in overflow pipes that regularly release raw sewage into the river. These discharges generally occur when the river is in flood during the wetter autumn and winter months. Alarmingly, this has been happening for years.

All pollution spills are promptly reported to the Environment Agency Incident Line. This process guarantees Thames Water is dispatched to clear and sanitise the affected manhole and surrounding area.



Phil has been collaborating with River Mole River Watch, local landowner Martin Smith, Chris Coghlan MP, and the Angling Trust's legal team, Fish Legal, to force Thames Water to address the problem of these polluting pipes.

Thanks to tireless campaigning, the club can now officially confirm that the water company has finally sealed the defective manhole to prevent further unauthorised discharges.

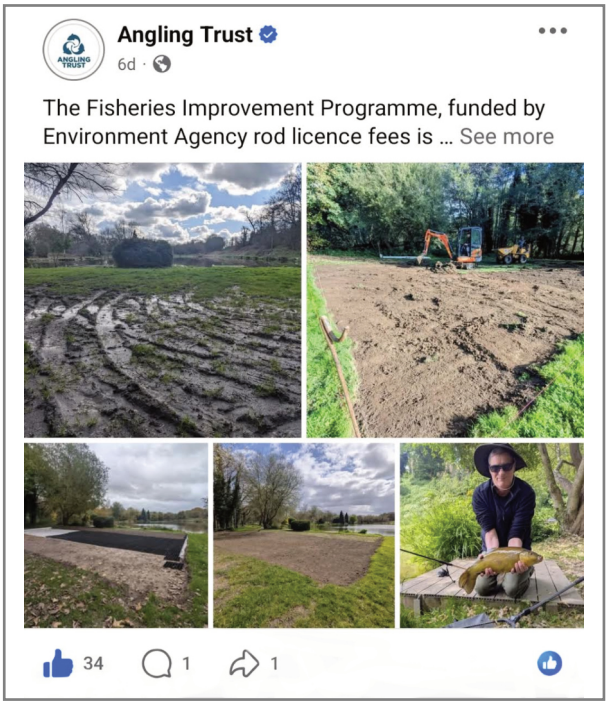
While hydraulic analysis and flow monitoring remains necessary to ensure system integrity, this is a major step forward in helping to protect our watercourse from pollution. It's a small victory, but an important one nonetheless.

Since stepping into the role of Fisheries Officer in 2024, Phil has placed conservation at the very heart of the fishing club, prioritising the river's ecological health by working with local environmental groups.

He was also responsible for introducing water quality testing on the River Mole, through the Angling Trust's groundbreaking 'Anglers Against Pollution' campaign. The club has recently completed a three-year monitoring milestone as part of this initiative.

IMPROVING SOCIAL MEDIA AWARENESS

The great work being carried out by our club has not gone unnoticed. We regularly feature on both the EA and Angling Trust social channels, which helps to raise the profile of Dorking AS. The club recently helped draft a post promoting the 'Fisheries Improvement Programme' (FIP). It detailed our successful funding bid and the benefits the Castlefields car park upgrade will bring to anglers.



We also use the members' Facebook group to great effect, posting regular updates and showcasing upcoming events - all with the aim of building on a growing sense of community at our club. If you'd like to join, click the link: DorkingMembersFacebookSite

AN OVERWHELMINGLY UPBEAT AGM

ALL READY FOR OUR AGM

Our AGM was very well attended and the mood in the room was overwhelmingly upbeat. All club officials were re-elected, with the exception of Lee Blower who has decided to stand down as a committee member. The club would like to thank Lee for his time as members' secretary and the many hours he devoted to helping set-up the Clubmate App.

Following a brief debate on the increase to annual subscriptions, the proposal was unanimously approved. This was considered necessary in light of the rising costs of our fishing leases and the need to fund ongoing improvements to our fisheries.

Key officers submitted their reports during the evening and members received year-end figures detailing club expenditure. After an update on the Puddenhole project, attendees learned about the club's positive trajectory and the recent surge in new membership applications. The committee also outlined planned work for the close season, which directly addresses feedback from the member survey. It's safe to say that the future is looking very bright for our angling society.

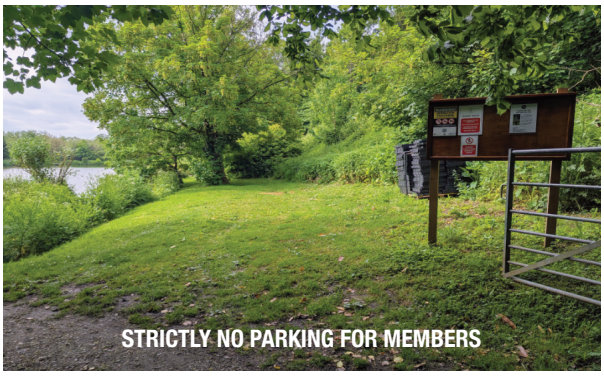
LEAVING A ROD UNATTENDED IS ILLEGAL

Since Castlefields opened to anglers on May 1st, there have been a number of reports of rods being pulled into the lake by carp. Under Environment Agency national byelaws, it is illegal to leave a rod and line in the water unattended. The definition of unattended being that you are too far away to take immediate action if a fish takes the bait.

Of course, losing your tackle this way is bad enough, but from a fish welfare point of view it is wholly unacceptable. Despite using barbless hooks, fish can become tethered to a snag, which may result in severe injury or even death. It also poses a danger to other wildlife. Be a responsible angler and help to protect our precious fish stocks by retaining control of your rod at all times while fishing.

PLEASE USE THE CAR PARKING AREA

Members are asked to refrain from parking on the grass next to the lake. Please use the designated area and park responsibly to allow the maximum number of vehicles to use the available space. Bailiffs will be checking to ensure anglers qualify for the gate code.



CRAYFISH TRAPPING COMMENCES

Signal crayfish trapping is underway again at Castlefields, with large numbers of this alien invader already caught. It is yet another non-native invasive species plaguing our waterways.

To boost our own trapping programme, we will soon be joined by commercial fishermen who trap along the River Mole. We hope this collaborative effort will significantly reduce the crayfish population.

BALSAM BASH ON CASTLEFIELDS
MONDAY, JUNE 22ND

As part of INNS (Invasive Non-Native Species) Week, our club is once again teaming up with the Angling Trust and the South East Rivers Trust to hold a balsam bash.

Timing is key in tackling Himalayan balsam, and now is the perfect opportunity to remove this invasive weed before it goes to seed. By grasping the balsam near the base of the stem and gently pulling, you can remove the entire shallow root system. Afterwards, leave the plants in a unmown area where they can safely rot down.

For any plants in flower, gently pinch or snip off the blooms and drop them straight into a plastic bag to stop the seeds from spreading.

To find more about Himalayan balsam and other invasive non-native species, click on the following link: www.anglingtrust.net/invasive-non-native-species

Overview

Fishery Closed from 9am - 2pm: As a result of the balsam bash, both Castlefields Lake and the river will be closed to allow our volunteers to remove the balsam. It will open to anglers again from 2.00pm.

Meeting Point: Meet at the Castlefields Lake car parking area for 9.00am on June 22nd. The session is scheduled for around 4 hours, but you can choose to participate for as long or as little as you like.

Volunteer: If you would like to join us in helping to root out Himalayan balsam from our Castlefields site, please email: volunteer@dorkingas.co.uk