

**SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
3 SEPTEMBER 2025**

Officer: Helen Ball Town Clerk

ROWLEY & FENEMERE ANGLING ASSOCIATION APPEAL

Purpose of Report

To consider an appeal by the Rowley & Fenemere Angling Association against the decision of the Town Council not to allow the installation of 3 fishing swims at Castlewalk Recreation Ground.

BACKGROUND

Castlewalk Recreation Ground was purchased by the Corporation over 50 years ago for use as a recreation ground. At the time the rights to fish the river at this location was withheld by the previous owner and subsequently sold to the Ditherington Angling Club. Whilst not a regular location for fishing, the Town Council has had to undertake grounds maintenance works to allow the club to exercise its fishing rights.

In 2019 Ditherington Angling Club sold the fishing rights to the Rowley & Fenemere Angling Association who formally registered Pret-a-Prendre rights with the Land Registry. The club subsequently made contact with Town Council Officers about their wish to develop the fisheries and discussions took place similar to those regular discussions staff hold with the Shrewsbury Town Fisheries.

At the same time the Castlewalk Trees were being inspected under the Council's Tree Policy. This identified a number of trees along the bank that needed felling. This resulted in both resident and member perception that the two activities were interlinked.

Appended to this report are the various extracts from the Recreation & Leisure Committee Minutes to show representations made to Council.

Various representations were made by the Community to Shropshire Council to impose Tree Preservation Orders on all of the trees in Castlewalk Recreation Ground and to the Environment Agency to refuse any application by the club to the Fisheries Improvement Programme. Both were declined.

In an attempt to appease the community it was suggested that the Town Council should establish a Memorandum of Understanding with the Club to determine what could and couldn't be undertaken on site, but the amendment requests made by both elected members and the community was such that the Club would not agree to.

It had been hoped that a face to face meeting on site with the club in January this year would bring about an amicable situation but despite a solution being discussed on site, Councillor Mosley submitted a report (appended to this report) to Committee in March requesting refusal of any application for the installation of infrastructure.

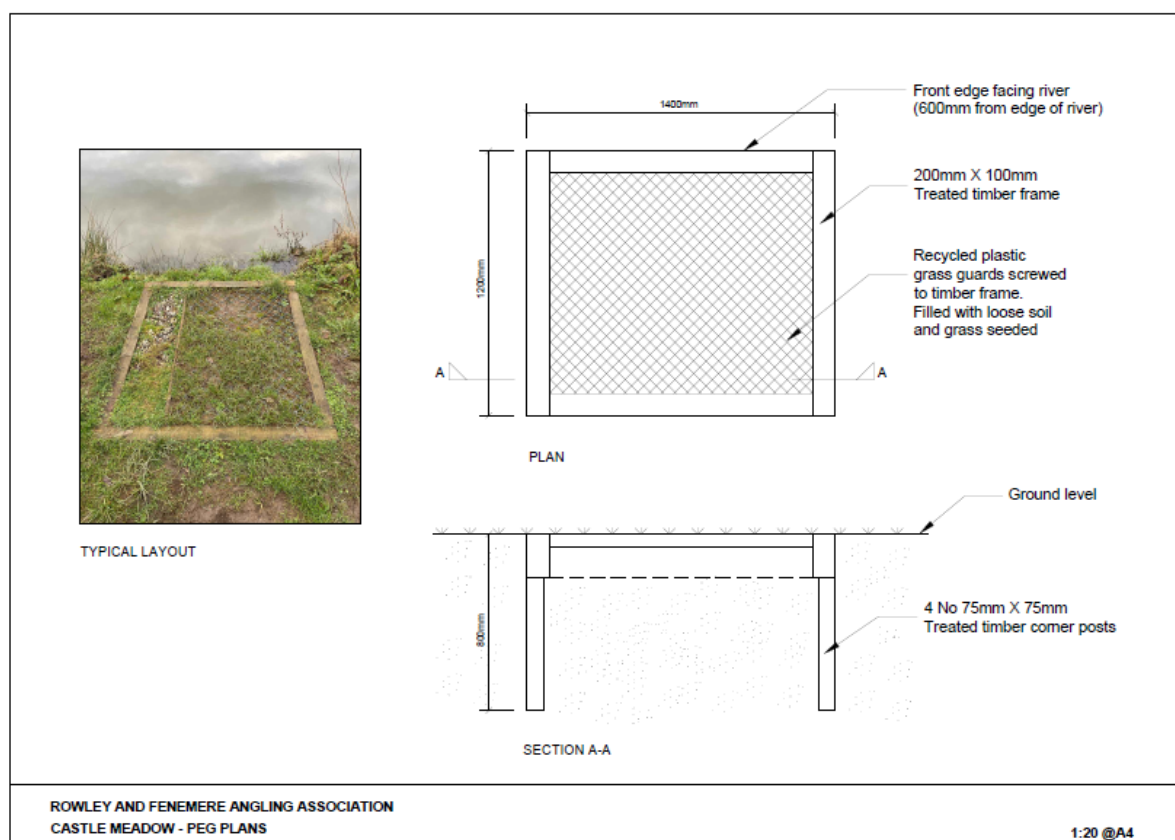
CURRENT POSITION

At the request of the Recreation & Leisure Committee in March a letter was sent to the Club refusing any requests for infrastructure.

The club subsequently appealed to the new Leader in the hope of reaching an amicable solution.

PROPOSAL

In facilitation of the exercise of their existing rights, the Club wish to install three fishing swims upstream of the Castlewalk Footbridge. Details of the construction is below



Construction includes digging out four square feet of grass, installing timber edging and grasscrete and backfilling with soil to allow the grass to grow back. This would create a sold, safe surface to fish from. Environment Agency are content with the proposals and Planning have established that there is no requirement for planning permission.

Whilst downstream of the Castlewalk Footbridge would pose an operational problem as the pathway is too close to the bank, the upstream path is of a distance from the proposed locations so as not to interfere in the enjoyment of both facilities.

The agreement of three swims will in effect restrict the quantity of fishing in this location as members of the club would be instructed to use these locations rather than the current position of them swimming anywhere along the bank.

There also needs to be trust in Officers that they would have a good working relationship with the Club and work in the interests of the Castlewalk Recreation Ground similar to the relationship that exists with the Shrewsbury Town Fisheries with all other grounds they operate from

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) That the appeal be upheld;
- (ii) That permission is granted for the installation of 3 swims in the locations as presented, with any further requests being considered on a case by case basis;
- (iii) That officers be given delegated authority to work with the Club to re-establish relations and develop a Memorandum of Understanding

MINUTE EXTRACTS

RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE – MARCH 2023

79.2 Rowley & Fenemere Fisheries at Castlewalk

Committee members were updated on the work of Rowley and Fenemere Angling Association. The area in question was situated between the Railway Land and the Fish Pass above the Weir.

It was noted that in 1972, the Ditherington Angling Association purchased the fishing rights for the sum of £2500. Various Angling Clubs were concerned that the fishery had not been maintained or managed properly for a number of years and the pegs had fallen into disrepair and become overgrown, this was leading to increased reports of poaching on the site and no one available to manage the problems.

Rowley and Fenemere Angling Association purchased the fishing rights from the Ditherington Angling Association in 2019. When Fenemere acquired the rights, a site meeting was held in 2021 to look at the site in question, and it was identified that safe access to the pegs was not possible. Under the deeds for the fishery, the club had the rights to trim trees and bushes along the said banks and to cut reeds and other water plants that may be detrimental or an obstruction to the fishery. As landowner, they had to ensure the anglers could access and use the site in safety. At the site meeting, location of the priority pegs were identified and pegged (this phase was between rail track land and the footbridge) and any potential hazards noted for inspection by a competent person. Mike Pugh (Contracts & Arbs Officer) carried out an initial inspection in March 2022 and concluded that two branch removals were required to provide safe use of pegs and various works listed however due to safety concerns and the Safe Useful Life Expectancy (SULE) of the trees, Mike Pugh (Contracts & Arbs Officer) arranged for a consultant to visit the site.

On the 29 March 2022 the consultant identified three additional trees required work at the same time for safety reasons. A planning application was made on the 4 April and the issue was discussed at the planning committee on the 26 April 2022 and then adopted by full council on the 27 June 2022. At a recent site visit a large number of trees along the riverbank had broken limbs with two large limbs in the river, with one from Network Rail land. Having had a number of complaints about people poaching from this location, the club was advised to erect some signs to indicate the fisheries were now being managed. The Association was waiting for the tree works to be carried out before they applied for Grants to install a minimum of five

fishing pegs along this stretch of the river, at the moment only one fishing peg was currently accessible. The Association reported that they would be looking to make a bid to the Environment Agency during 2025 and work to commence on the pegs in 2026. Once this phase was completed or well under way, they would look at what works were required from between the bridge and the weir. The Association had been liaising with officers of the Council and the Environment Agency to ensure they were not in breach of any rules, as they had found elsewhere, some clubs had not liaised, they had nailed signs to trees, dug out parts of the riverbank and felled trees which had created issues with local landowners and speeded upriver bank erosion. When the Association was notified as to whether they had been successful with their grant applications, they could update the committee of progress. The Town Council had no intention of funding major works, signage or pegs associated with this fishery as it was not part of their management area, however they did need to ensure that the club had safe access and could safely use their facility and that any works would not be detrimental to the local wildlife, residents or the river itself, and that the Association managed the site to prevent and report anti-social behaviour.

Councillor Mosley added that himself and Councillor Vasmer had a meeting scheduled with Mike Pugh and Mike Cox about the land. He was disappointed that the Town Council had not purchased the land and described this as a lost opportunity. Gary Farmer responded that it had been too late to do so by the time the Town Council found out it was for sale. It was asked if enquiries could be made if the land could be purchased now and agreed that this would be discussed further at the scheduled meeting.

Councillor Mosley also commented that five posts had been erected with significant signage which was on Town Council land and discussion needed to take place about this. Some clearance work was underway but more needed to be done. There were also concerns about the future usage of the land and if competitions would take place as both of these had the potential to significantly affect the amount of car parking needed in an already congested area.

Councillor Lemon commented that the report states Rail Track land, but this is actually Network Rail land.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) That the report is noted.**
- (ii) That officers continue to liaise with Association and Environment Agency.**
- (iii) That Officers update the committee and local councillors of progress.**

RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE – MAY 2023

Matter Arising - 79/22 Rowley & Fenemere Angling Association – The Town Clerk reported that at the last meeting the Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager presented a report on what they knew of the Angling Association and their recent purchase of the Fishing Rights. The minutes of the last meeting went to Council which resulted in a motion of no action being taken on proposed tree works. The Town Clerk provided some additional clarification.

Fishing rights were established in 1972 when the Corporation bought the land from the estate of Mr Dekin. All rights to the land were purchased by the Corporation with the exception of the Fishing Rights to the river; they were retained by the Estate and subsequently sold to the Ditherington Anglers. That club had since folded, and those rights were sold on to the Rowley & Fenemere Angling Association so predecessor Councils to the Town Council had never owned those rights.

The original conveyance which saw the purchase of Castlewalk Recreation Ground provided certain rights including rights to fish, right to install pegs, rights to clear vegetation & trees around those pegs and rights of access. This could not be challenged as they were conditions of that 1972 Conveyance, even if fishing hadn't taken place on that site for some years. There had been suggestion from the public that fishing hadn't taken place on site for forty years. Fishing ceased in 2013 and for a number of year the Town Council would remove the Himalayan Balsam from the riverbank so the Angling Club could fish.

Last year, officers met with the new owners of the rights to discuss tree works and a minimal amount of work was required; whilst they would do that, all other trees were reviewed as part of the Council's Tree Management Plan and a schedule of works was prepared with a view to seeking Conservation Area Consent to prune and fell. The schedule was reviewed by Stephen Shields of Shropshire Council; he added some additional limbs and the application was submitted and approved with a view to undertaking the works in the winter programme.

95% of that work was for Health & Safety grounds and not for supporting the anglers. That work had been reviewed under the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment model and had been flagged as a priority. The work could not be deferred any longer; the fact that the works had been identified as a risk and a priority would leave the council with an undefendable claim were any injury to be caused from those trees. The majority were cracked willows and pollarding willows which allowed the trees to thrive and if the work was done now, they stood a chance of summer growth. Additionally at Full Council there was a request to seek talks with the Club to determine whether those rights could be purchased; the Town Clerk had a meeting arranged with the club the following week and she sought permission to undertake the works as proposed last year for which there was an existing planning permission for.

Councillor Wilson commented that under Health & Safety the proposed works had to be completed. The Town Council could issue a press release explaining the tree work that would be taking place, so the public are fully aware.

Councillor Mosley reported on local opposition to the fishing rights and necessary tree works. He and Councillor Vasmer had only recently been made aware of these rights and was disappointed this had not been raised by officers. He expressed his concern about the devastating effects the work on ten trees would have to the area but realised there was no alternative but to accept the works on Health & Safety grounds.

RESOLVED:

That Council agreed to the tree works at Castlewalk Recreation Ground as proposed for which planning permission had already been agreed.

RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE – JULY 2023

25.2 Rowley & Fenemere Angling Association

The Town Clerk reported that she and the Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager) had met with the Chairman, Secretary & Treasurer of the Rowley & Fenemere Angling Association alongside their specialist, Bruno Broughton, who was an eminent Fisheries Specialist. They spoke about the rights they had purchased, what could and couldn't be done on site and they had come to an agreement that any works required on site would involve a discussion with the Town Council.

The Club didn't envisage any works taking place in this fishing season. Officers had forwarded details of required planning permissions and the necessary approach with the Planning Authority. All tree works that the Town Council raised at the last meeting had been done. They did however, lose one of the trees they were trying to save as part of the tree works as it uprooted in the storms and fell into the river potentially affecting some of the adjacent trees, so staff would monitor. The Town Clerk had continued to receive representations from residents, and she had tried to respond in as full and frank a way that she could to advise on their proposed course of action. To try and give comfort to residents the Town Clerk asked whether the Angling Association would enter into a Memorandum of Understanding, and they had agreed.

Councillor Mosley commented that if the Town Council had known about the sale they would have stepped in and purchased but this was no longer an option available. The removal of trees and pollarding was being observed as part of the planning application over a year ago. All tree works were based on expert advice, and they would be wrong to ignore tree advice.

The motion previously proposed was to seek purchase and rights; the Club were not interested in selling the rights. There was nothing further that could be done regarding them fishing but need to control where they fished from. The land was rich in wildlife. The intention was to minimise disruption whilst not involving the Town Council with legal misunderstandings regarding rights. The Club would submit an application for Certificate of Lawful Development to the Planning Authority for the installation of swims.

Councillor Vasmer added that Castlewalk was well used, and they should ensure that residents were informed of the Memorandum of Understanding and have a full consultation with the residents to reassure them that their concerns were being taken into account.

RECOMMENDATION:

- (i) That the Town Clerk undertakes a discussion with Rowley & Fenemere to agree terms to be included in the Memorandum of Understanding regarding usage and rights at Castlewalk. This would then be reported to a future Recreation & Leisure meeting;**
- (ii) That the Town Clerk liaise with local members how they wished to engage with local residents regarding the proposed terms within the Memorandum.**

RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE – SEPTEMBER 2023

44.2 Rowley & Fenemere Angling Association

Councillor Mosley informed the Committee that himself, Councillor Vasmer, The Town Clerk and Outdoor Recreation & Assets Manager had met to discuss the content of the draft Memorandum of Understanding that had been prepared. They continued to liaise with Rowley & Fenemere Angling Association and awaited feedback from the Association.

Councillor Mosley hoped the Committee were happy for himself and Councillor Vasmer to continue this work and that they hoped to reach a satisfactory agreement for all parties.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted

RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE – NOVEMBER 2023**61.2 Rowley & Fenemere Angling Association**

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that Officers continued to liaise with the Rowley & Fenemere Angling Association. The Town Clerk along with the Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager had worked with Councillors Mosley & Vasmer to prepare a Memorandum of Understanding which they hoped might give residents some assurance that they would continue to manage the Castlewalk Recreation Ground for the wider benefit of the local community. The Club were still reviewing how this fishery would work and they were awaiting proposals of where they would like to place pegs, recognising the discussions they had around pathways, nature trails and the public's general enjoyment of the area. They would like to place a throwline board in the area, and this was something that the Town Council could and should assist in accommodating, providing it matched the existing boards elsewhere and operated in the same way.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted

RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE – JANUARY 2024**78.2 Rowley & Fenemere Angling Association**

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that Officers continued to liaise with the Rowley & Fenemere Angling Association and had met with Councillors Mosley & Vasmer regarding a Memorandum of Understanding. The initial Draft of the memorandum had been shared with the Rowley & Fenemere Club. This was the first time that they had ever been asked to enter into such an agreement, particularly as they owned the rights, so in effect could do

what they liked. Having said that, they had sent it to a national eminent Fisheries Consultant who had suggested a few amendments. They had also shared their ultimate vision for the site beyond the three swims they would like to develop this year and the three the following year. From continued discussions with the club, the Town Clerk sensed that they were keen to continue engagement and be good neighbours, but they had been insistent that the Town Council did not have any statutory rights to demand such an agreement as they had the rights to fish our land. The Town Clerk asked committee if she had authority to proceed with the agreement.

Councillor Mosley commented that there were still residential concerns regarding the number of pitches from the original proposal and requested that the Town Council did not yet proceed until himself and Councillor Vasmer could meet with the Town Clerk to discuss further.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted

RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE – MARCH 2024**95.2 Rowley & Fenemere Angling Association**

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that there was nothing further to report to Committee at present. She would be meeting the new Environment Agency Place Manager for Shropshire & Herefordshire in a couple of weeks, and this would be added to the list of items to discuss.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted

RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE – MAY 2024**114.2 Rowley & Fenemere Angling Association**

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that she still had not been able to resolve local member concern about the Rowley & Fenemere fishing rights. Rowley & Fenemere did have the rights to fish and any objections locally was not going to address that. Therefore, as officers their duty was to deal with the matter as best they could. This had included finding locations that they could fish from. The Town Clerk and Stuart Farmer (Acting Operations Manager) had met with the club on site so that they could show them where they wanted to create swims. These are four feet square locations that would be dug out, bounded by railway sleepers and laid with grasscrete. The vegetation would then be allowed to grow through the grasscrete. These would only be strimmed to cut back vegetation but no area around the swims would be cut – in their words anglers would have to walk through the nettles to get to the swims. The locations were a considerable distance away from the desire path that had been created and a long distance from their main path. The structures had been referred to Shropshire Fire & Rescue who had said this was a safe way for anglers to fish near to the riverbanks, without risk of slips, trips and falls. They could also be used to access the river in the event of river rescue. The specification and layout had been forwarded to Kelvin Hall in Planning who originally made comment to local resident complaints; he had advised that the swims were so deminimis they did not require planning permission. The club had also made a formal FRAP (Flood Risk Activity Permit) requested to the Environment Agency and that was awaited. The Town Clerk stated that they did now need a position statement from the Town Council as to what they would allow. Granted the right to fish does not allow infrastructure but authorising specific sites did allow the Town Council to assert some control over the number of locations. If not, the Club had said they would allow their anglers to fish anywhere from open banks.

Councillor Mosley commented that he had tried to negotiate with Rowley & Fenemere, but the Memorandum of Understanding had not been put to them as he had wished.

There was lots of local opposition to this regarding the trees and number of fishing pegs and it would inhibit residents who used it. Councillor Mosley suggested that they reaffirmed the view of the Memorandum of Understanding with Rowley & Fenemere and have talks with himself and Councillor Vasmer and bring the subject back to a future Recreation & Leisure Committee.

Councillor Mosley also commented that the Environment Agency had confirmed as landowners they did have some rights and could control some of the work. Councillor Mosley agreed to distribute this correspondence to all.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the update be noted;**
- (ii) That Councillors Mosley & Vasmer meet with the Town Clerk to determine a Council position statement.**

RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE – JULY 2024**09.2 Rowley & Fenemere Angling Association**

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that she had met with Councillors Mosley & Vasmer regarding the request for siting fish swims. There were three swims requested that were all upstream of the footbridge and were enough away from the desired path that had been created by public usage. The damage to the bank was minimal and vegetation clearance would be restricted to the swim with no landscape clearance from the pathways being allowed. These swims will be 4' square, built from railway sleepers with grasscrete

installed and vegetation allowed to grow through so impact would be minimal. The club had sought a Flood Risk Activity Permit (FRAP) from the Environment Agency which had been granted. They had also sent the details to the Planning Authority and Kelvin Hall, the planner who had responded to residential concerns, had advised that no planning permission was required. Members were minded to approve the locations but were abjectly opposed to any installation of swims downstream of the pathway towards the weir as the desired path was so close to the riverbank. Councillors also wished to be assured that participation was controlled to the approved locations and anglers could not fish if they turned up and there was no swim available. They wished to be assured that swims were discreet, and any other locations needed to be positioned so as not to be impactful on the community. Councillor Mosley was keen to stress local opposition, particularly from the Castlefields Action Team, but not withstanding the fact that the Angling Club had rights to fish, they may be amenable to working with the community as Castlewalk Recreation Ground was a valuable amenity area. The Club had been asked to meet with Councillors Mosley & Vasmer so that they could convey resident concerns and the appropriate Memorandum of Understanding was approved.

Councillor Mosley had hoped to come to a reasonable arrangement and that they recognised the importance of this land to residents. It was a countryside site with new interpretation boards installed. There were still many fishing points within Shrewsbury, so he still believed this was not needed.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted

RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE – SEPTEMBER 2024

23.2 Rowley & Fenemere Angling Association

The Town Clerk reported that she had met with local members on site to discuss the long-term future aspirations, whilst appreciating that they did still hold the fishing rights. A letter had been sent to meet with them to discuss how they would manage the site and swims. They had asked for meeting dates with the club by the end of September.

Councillor Mosley was pleased with the letter that had been sent to Rowley & Fenemere and he had hoped they would return with a reasonable response and understand the objections himself and residents had.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted

RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE – MARCH 2025

66.2 Rowley & Fenemere

Councillor Mosley reported to Committee that the Fishing Rights to the Shrewsbury Town Council riverside land at Castlewalk had been held by the Ditherington Angling Association but for many years but had not been taken up. Rowley and Fenemere Angling Association had purchased the rights in 2019 and had been in talks with their officers about facilitating their usage.

He and Councillor Vasmer had only learned about this following the marking of pegs and significant tree works along parts of the riverbank. They were also alerted by expressions of concern by local residents.

After further inquiry they identified plans for C14 swims and associated riverbank standing works and raised issues with Helen Ball and Mike Cox (retired Town Council staff). Residents also raised objections, and the Environment Agency was contacted. Correspondence from EA suggested that it was a matter for the Town Council to approve any works.

The Committee had supported a request to purchase the rights but this had been rejected. The Committee further agreed that the Town Clerk, Councillor Vasmer and Councillor Mosley should reflect the concerns and take up negotiation with Rowley & Fenemere. Councillors Mosley & Vasmer sought to restrict usage as much as possible in a bid to protect this well used and very highly valued Countryside Site environment with its unique ambiance along a narrow strip of riverside with an abundance of flora and fauna.

Councillor Mosley felt it was difficult to see how the riverbank could be turned into a fishery without significant detriment to its present value to the local community, visitors and to the environment as a whole.

During discussion, Councillor Mosley proposed a Memorandum of Understanding with appropriate controls on usage. This was largely ignored by Rowley & Fenemere. They restated their rights to fish which they said trumped landowner rights.

Issues identified in the Memorandum of Understanding covered:

- Car parking conflicts in residential streets or on already well occupied parks off Underdale Road or at the Weir
- Potential conflict of interest between anglers and walkers
- Night fishing
- Potential contest fishing
- Bailiff arrangements

Councillor Mosley and the Town Clerk met with Rowley & Fenemere on site; Councillor Vasmer was unavailable. Reflecting on the meeting Councillor Mosley further expressed his concerns on the attitude and planning of Rowley & Fenemere who he felt seemed to be continuing with their arrogant 'like it or lump it' approach.

Whilst requesting permission to install three swims this year, they wished to install 4 the following year and 6/7 downstream in following years. They were also asked for further tree works to enhance their swims.

Councillor Mosley said he was veering to the opinion that they should not allow any infrastructure and be very clear that they should not compromise the environment and public amenities in any way by doing works themselves.

The meeting to discuss outcomes and policy did not happen due to pressures of work on other issues.

Councillor Mosley acknowledged that the Town Council could not remove the fishing rights unilaterally, but they could withdraw all support and exercise landowner rights to protect their asset and the use by residents and visitors wishing to enjoy their current activities in the area unencumbered by changes to the characteristics of the riverside in this much cherished facility. The aim would be to minimise their use and hence, interference with those enjoying the current uses.

Councillor Mosley stated that it should be noted the area was much used by residents not just of Castlefields & Ditherington and Underdale but many from Monkmoor, Abbey, Belle Vue and the Town centre. Numerous emails recording objections had been received while a well-attended meeting of the Castlefields Action Team expressed dismay at Rowley & Fenemere's proposals.

With Councillor Vasmer's full support, Councillor Mosley proposed that the R&L Committee resolved to:

- **Recognise the excellent and extensive provision we provide along our fisheries and that provided by others already. These provide more than adequate angling opportunities in and around Shrewsbury.**
- **Withdraw all cooperation from R&F and request that staff do not help in any way. This includes rejecting permission for any infrastructure and any work which impacts on vegetation or wildlife.**
- **Recognise the value of protecting the flora and fauna of the area and be clear that the Council will strictly enforce available rights to prevent harm to the naturalised environment along the riverbank.**
- **Ensure that the established and very well used footpaths along the riverside are not obstructed by anglers and/or their equipment in anyway.**
- **Consider the application of TPOs within the designated area.**
- **Inform the Environment Agency and the Angling Trust of our decisions on this issue.**
- **Review developments after the next fishing season.**

Councillor Bentick enquired if the tree work had been undertaken by the Angling Club. The Town Clerk reported that the tree work was scheduled work across the whole of the recreation ground and had nothing to do with Rowley & Fenemere and no trees had been felled during the process. This was about good tree husbandry.

Councillor Addams commented that there was regular wildlife in this area, and it would be a negative impact if more swims were given as these spaces needed to be maintained.

Councillor Gillam questioned whether Rowley & Fenemere were under the misapprehension the Town Council granted permission.

Councillor Lemon commented that the Town Council should let them know their stance before withdrawing any all support.

The Town Clerk queried the factuality of the motion seeking the evidence that supported the statement that there was adequate angling opportunities in and around the town. Angling membership had increased substantially since COVID and the Shrewsbury Town Fisheries month on month continued to increase the number of pegs; this was contrary to the statement in the motion. The Town Clerk also wished to clarify that the Town Council could not seek TPO status on the trees at Castlewalk. There had been a similar request made by a resident of Castlefields & Ditherington to tree officers at Shropshire Council; this had been declined as those trees were not at risk of being felled. The Town Clerk also questioned inferences that staff do not help Rowley & Fenemere in any way was not helpful. Officers have an excellent relationship with the Town Fisheries and agreed work was always in the best interests of Town Council assets. There needed to be trust in officers and any work proposed would not harm the vegetation on site.

From Councillor Mosley's initial proposal it was suggested that;

- In the first point, "These provide more than adequate angling opportunities in and around Shrewsbury." should be removed.
- The second bullet point should be completely removed.
- To develop an awareness of acceptable work on site with recognition of its public use should be added.
- The application of TPO's should be removed.

The Chairman suggested that a form of words could be brought back to the next meeting. The Town Clerk stressed that this matter had been ongoing for a considerable amount of time, and they could not delay it further by bringing it back to the next Recreation & Leisure Committee in May. Councillor Bentick suggested that a letter was sent to Rowley & Fenemere explaining to them what acceptable rights they had.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

- **Recognises the excellent and extensive provision provided for angling along its fisheries.**
- **Recognises the value of protecting the flora and fauna of the area and the need to strictly enforce the prevention of harm to the naturalised environment along the riverbank.**
- **Refuses permission of the Rowley & Fenemere Club to allow the installation of any physical infrastructure on site, and undertaking any work which impacts on vegetation or wildlife**
- **Develops an understanding with the club of acceptable management practices on site within its established fishing rights.**
- **Ensures that the established and very well used footpaths along the riverside are not obstructed by anglers and/or their equipment in anyway.**
- **Informs the Environment Agency and the Angling Trust of its decisions.**
- **Reviews developments after the next fishing season.**

COUNCILLOR MOSLEY'S REPORT TO RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE – MARCH 2025

Fishing Rights to the STC riverside land at Castlewalk had been held by the Ditherington Angling Association but for many years they were not taken up. However, the Rowley and Fenemere Angling Association have been in discussion with them for a number of years and purchased the rights in 2019 and have been in talks with our officers about facilitating their usage. You can find their video about the site and some of the convoluted background here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgwRwGtssdI> Note that they see it as a unique site but with only one swim available while SC and STC staff seem to have facilitated more. David Vasmer and I only learned about this following the marking of pegs and significant tree works along parts of the riverbank. We were also alerted by expressions of concern by local residents. After further inquiry we identified plans for C14 swims and associated riverbank standing works and raised issues with Helen Ball and Mike Cox. Residents also raised objections and the Environment Agency was contacted by them and myself.

The Area Director of EA wrote:

"I have been advised that the land where the fishery is looking to be developed is owned by Shrewsbury Town Council. I would see them being integral in any fishery development taking place on their land and they would be the lead authority in determining what, if any changes to the landscape i.e. tree and vegetation removal, could take place."

EA's Place Manager for Shropshire and Worcestershire has written:

"Landowner permissions are especially important for landscape alterations like bankside vegetation removal, which I understand has been raised as a concern."

While the Rowley and Fenemere Angling Association holds fishing rights, I understand Shrewsbury Town Council owns the land, necessitating their support for any FIP funding application involving land works at Castlewalk. Any decision to grant landowner permission for works to the bank as part of a fishery improvement would rest with Shrewsbury Town Council as the landowner.”

Our inquiries and objections led to an offer to purchase the rights to enable STC to control what goes on our land. The offer was put to, and rejected by, R&F. Furthermore, the matters were raised at R&L who determined that Helen Ball, David Vasmer and I should reflect the concerns and take up negotiation with R&F. So far as DV and I were concerned this would aim to restrict usage as much as possible. Hence, a need to protect this well used and very highly valued Countryside Site environment with its unique ambiance along a narrow strip of riverside with an abundance of flora and fauna.

Here is a quote from an email explaining the importance of the area:

“This length of the river

- Is one of the few semi-wild areas remaining within the Town.
- Is very popular with dog walkers and others of all ages for simple outdoor recreation.
- Has significant wildlife and ecological value.
- Has enormous visual amenity importance, including for those walking along the tow path side of the river.

It is difficult to see how the riverbank can be turned into a fishery without significant detriment to its present value to the local community, visitors and to the environment as a whole. Where there is a conflict of interests between the local community and an organisation such as R&FAA (as it appears, there would be in this case) then the local community interest should take precedence.”

During discussion I proposed a Memorandum of Understanding with appropriate controls on usage. This was largely ignored by R&F. They restate their rights to fish which they say trumps landowner rights.

Issues identified in the MoU covered:

- Car parking conflicts in residential streets or on already well occupied parks off Underdale Road or at the Weir
- Potential conflict of interest between anglers and walkers
- Night fishing
- Potential contest fishing
- Bailiff arrangements

After the recent meeting on-site with R&F I wrote to Helen and David as follows:

“Reflecting on our meeting yesterday has caused me to have great concern about the attitude and planning of R&F who seem to be continuing with their arrogant ‘like it or lump it’ approach.

We did discuss the possible siting of three swims this year and installation of pegs and may have given the impression that we would support that. However, they clarified that they would do a further 4 on the upstream side of the bridge next year. They were quite clear that they would develop 6/7 on the downstream side in following years, which clearly is against our already clearly stated wishes.

They were also asking for further tree works to enhance their swims.

I believe that we need to meet, perhaps involving other members in neighbouring wards, to discuss. Obviously, we did not discuss all the issues referred to in correspondence in the past though they were non-committal on “no nighttime fishing”.

I am veering to the opinion that we should not allow any infrastructure and be very clear that they should not compromise the environment and public amenities in any way by doing works themselves.”

The meeting to discuss outcomes and policy did not happen due to pressures of work on other issues.

Hence, this document.

What we are considering is whether we should comply with R&Fs request to support the development of this fishery by allowing/supporting the creation of infrastructure and works to enhance the development of swims while ignoring the large number of objections to such developments.

It is clear that we cannot remove the fishing rights unilaterally, but we can withdraw all support and exercise landowner right to protect our asset and the use by residents and visitors wishing to enjoy their current activities in the area unencumbered by changes to the characteristics of the riverside in this much cherished facility. The aim would be to minimise their use and hence, interference with those enjoying the current uses.

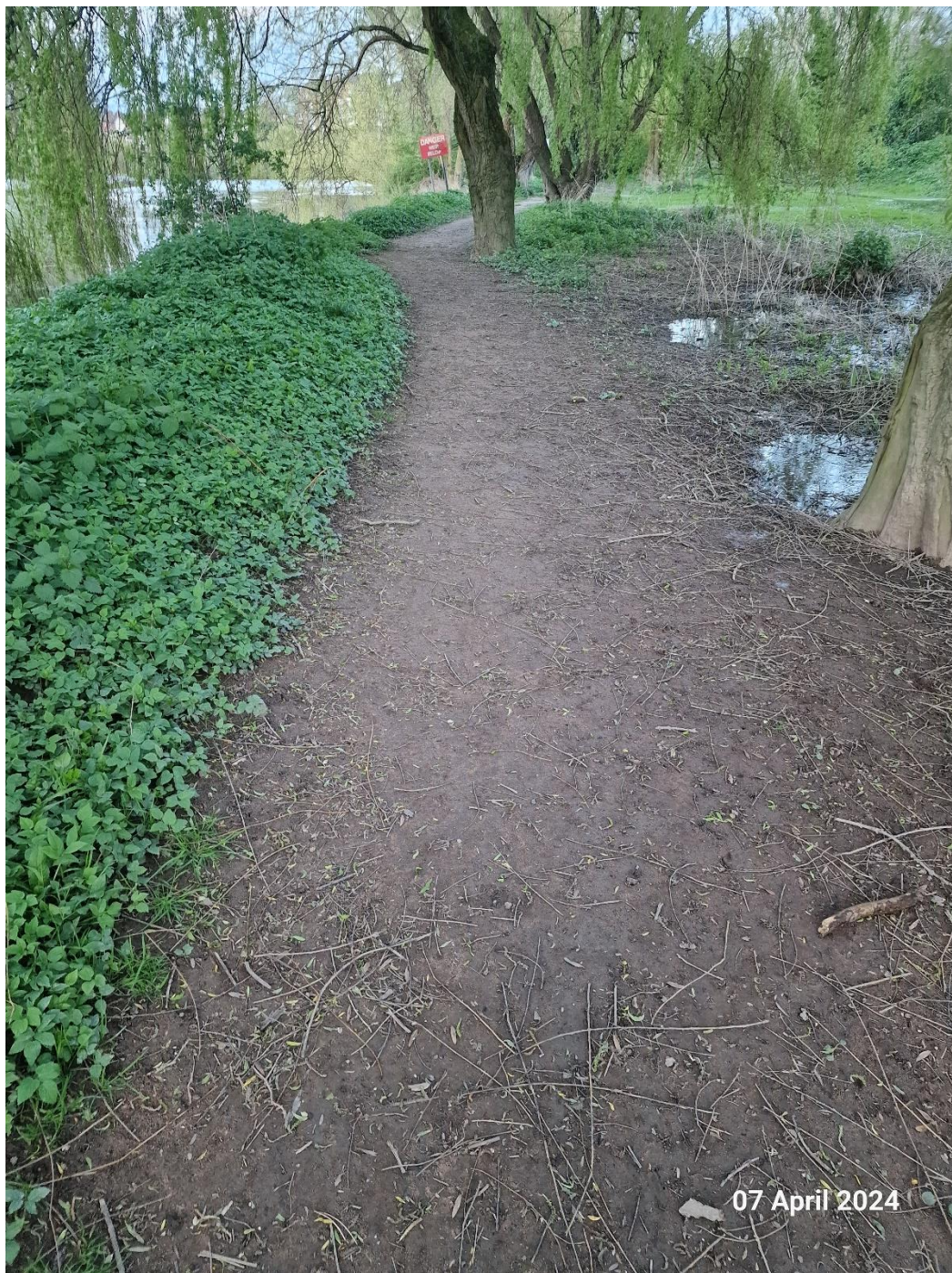
It should be noted that the area is much used by residents not just of Castlefields & Ditherington and Underdale but many from Monkmoor, Abbey, Belle Vue and the Town centre. Very numerous emails recording objections have been received while a well attended meeting of the Castlefields Action Team expressed dismay at R&Fs proposals.

Hence, with David Vasmer’s full support, I propose that the R&L Committee resolves to:

- **Recognise the excellent and extensive provision we provide along our fisheries and that provided by others already. These provide more than adequate angling opportunities in and around Shrewsbury.**
- **Withdraw all cooperation from R&F and request that staff do not help in any way. This includes rejecting permission for any infrastructure and any work which impacts on vegetation or wildlife.**
- **Recognise the value of protecting the flora and fauna of the area and be clear that the Council will strictly enforce available rights to prevent harm to the naturalised environment along the riverbank.**
- **Ensure that the established and very well used footpaths along the riverside are not obstructed by anglers and/or their equipment in anyway.**
- **Consider the application of TPOs within the designated area.**
- **Inform the Environment Agency and the Angling Trust of our decisions on this issue.**
- **Review developments after the next fishing season.**







APPEAL TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL – JUNE 2025

Dear Mr Wilson

My name is Max Taylor and I am Chairman of the Rowley & Fenemere Angling Association who own the fishing rights to the Castle Meadows stretch of the River Severn on the righthand bank above the weir up to the railway bridge.

We bought the fishing rights outright from Ditherington Angling Club five years ago. Since then we have been in conversations with Shrewsbury Town Council as to what we can or cannot do with regards to improving the safe use of the venue for the Members of our Club.

I won't bore you with all that has gone on over these last 5 years as Helen tells me she has regular meetings with you and she is more than aware of our efforts to get things sorted.

On the 21st of January this year we finally had a meeting with Helen and Councillor Alan Moseley at the riverside to map out where we could install the fishing swims for our members to fish from safely. The design of these swims are well proven on our other venues above Shrewsbury. We also have been advised by the EA that this design being set back from the river edge is no risk to flood or bank erosion and they have no objections to this design. We also had to send the drawings to Shrewsbury Council Planning Department who also had no problems with the design. The only other permission we needed was from the land owner, in this case the Town Council. After many months and emails January 21st 2025 was a date to finally sort things out.

This we thought we had done; only to find out that Mr Moseley presented a report to the Recreation and Leisure Committee that was at odds with what was actually decided at that meeting.

The following is the email I drafted to Helen that I wanted her to read out to the R&L Committee, detailing what had been talked through and decided on the day. However, after a recent phone conversation with her she has asked me to send it directly to you and to copy her in. I have also copied in some of our members that were at the meeting too should you have any questions for them directly.

Hi Helen

I have read the report presented to the Recreation & Leisure Committee by Councillor Alan Moseley after our meeting at the Castle Meadows riverside on January 21st this year between yourself, Mr Moseley, myself and some of our R&FAA Committee.

My Committee and I think that there were several points made to the R & L Committee by Mr Moseley that were incorrect. We therefore ask that you present this email to the R & L Committee as our response to his report on the events and what actually happened at our riverside meeting.

Mr Moseley states that the Memorandum of Understanding was "largely ignored by Rowley & Fenemere". This was not the case. We received the MOU and were asked for our comments. We did this as requested and in good time. No more correspondence about the MOU was forthcoming, so, it was not ignored by us at all.

Issues identified in the MOU:-

Potential conflict of interest between anglers and walkers. We have been fishing the venue for 5 years now and to date we have had no reports whatsoever of any conflict between our members and any type of user of the Castle Meadows area.

Night fishing:-

At every meeting with you we have said that we would not desire night fishing this area. This was again reiterated at our meeting on 21st January.

Potential Contest Fishing:-

Again, at every meeting we have had with you, we have made it clear that the R&FAA does not hold matches or competitions.

In paragraph 6 of his report, Mr Moseley accused the R&FAA of an arrogant "like it or lump it" approach.

We utterly refute this. Indeed we were open and truthful in all the statements and replies to questions by yourself and Mr Moseley on the day. We did wish to install the infrastructure for the swims in all 7 sites above the footbridge as per those marked on the map this year as we had been delayed by various necessary permissions you asked us to obtain from the EA and your Planning Department. These consents have now been given by these bodies.

At our meeting on the 21st January we did concede to installing only 3 swims this year, (even though we have been delayed doing anything for the last 5 years). This shows our willingness to compromise and not us being arrogant or indeed having a 'like it or lump it' approach.

Paragraph 7 of the report states:--

'They were also asked for further tree works to enhance their swims'. Please note - we did not ask for any help regarding any tree work; this was offered by Mr Moseley!

Indeed, 'he' offered the help of Council Operational Staff to take out trees and bushes where we needed.

To repeat; we did not request this help, we were offered it.

We are and have always been fully aware that we need the permission of the land owner (in this case the Council) to undertake any infrastructure work regarding making safe swims for our members to fish from along the riverbank. We were asked by yourselves to denote where we would be fishing from and this infrastructure was our preferred method of identification.

We had also sought the advice of the Shrewsbury Fire & Rescue Service initially about Throw Lines and training. In discussions with one of their officers, the installation of these swims arose. We were offered their help, if needed, with the construction of the swims and were told that once installed, the positions of the swims would be marked on their systems as an aid to the Fire & Rescue Teams when recovering bodies from the river in that area as it appears that the incidences of river call outs are on the increase.

I will forward an email I received from the Fire & Rescue Officer after a meeting with him at Castle Meadows when I told him that we had had verbal consent to install the swims.

So, in reply to Councillor Gillam's question as to whether the R&FAA were under the misapprehension that the Council had given permission, in your email asking for a meeting at the riverside it was written thus:- "we are minded to allow the infrastructure".

Then after our meeting on the 21st January when all attendees walked upstream from the footbridge to the top of the stretch deciding on the positions of the initial 3 swims to be put in, and being told we would soon be contacted by one of your Operational Staff to discuss what bankside and riverside vegetation was needed to be removed from said swims, I think I can safely say that yes, we were under the impression that we at least did have verbal permission.

Sadly, we all know that verbal permission and a hand shake are not as good as written consent.

So, now knowing the true version of the events that took place on the 21st January, we would hope that the R&L Committee Members would take a different view of the Rowley & Fenemere AA and our efforts to

keep our members safe whilst using the venue and appreciate our efforts to help the Shrewsbury Fire & Rescue Services.

We would like it to be noted that should further meetings regarding Castle Meadows be arranged, R&FAA strongly feel it would be best for Mr Moseley not to be involved in the discussions.

The R&FAA will be interested to know the thoughts of the R&L Committee on the opinions and recommendations of the Shrewsbury Fire & Rescue Officer.

::::::This was the end of the Email to Helen::::::

In closing, Mr Wilson, we would reiterate that we would be more than happy to attend any meeting with yourself - as we have done previously with any meeting involving Helen and her team. However, R&FAA strongly believe that Mr Moseley's attendance would only hinder any discussions. I am sure Helen will explain to you, that we have done everything asked of us over these 5 years and have been very patient during this time to try to get the venue safe for our members to use.