

Closed season for fishing at Newent Lake Agenda item 7

We have had a request from a member of public to review the fishing rules at Newent Lake, in particular the annual closed season of fishing. This is the email that was sent in.

Public correspondence.

I am sending this email about one of the rules on fishing Newent Lake.

The rule in question is the close season of between 14th March and 16th June annually.

This rule of a close season between these dates was brought in the late 1800s to protect spawning fish. In 1995 the close season was lifted on lakes and left to the owners/lake management discretion, and in 2000 the rule was lifted on canals. There is however still a close season on rivers which gets a national debate annually!

I have attached Environmental Agency bylaws for you to look at.

My suggestion is the rule be removed, with all year around fishing allowed, with the bailiffs monitoring the lake and when the fish are spotted to be spawning the lake shut for an initial period of 1 week and extended if required. This season the fish started spawning 5 days after the lake opened on 16th June and lasted for about a week.

I would appreciate you looking into this and review and letting me know of the outcome.

Currently the council's policy is for a closed season of the lake between 15th March – 15th June inclusive. This is to allow the fish a period of time to spawn which previously was guidance from the environment agency. The EA guidance has now changed and it is now up to the owners of the waters whether they have a closed season at all or allow fishing all year. I have asked for advice from the EA who came back with this response.

E.A. response

The short answer is that it exists to protect fish at their most vulnerable state before and during spawning and allow them to produce the next generation without disturbance. This was originally where fish were taken for the table and the close season was to protect future stocks. The fixed dates were simply from practicality of enforcement across the country. Since the national still water close season was abolished in 1995, most still water fisheries have been free to select any actions they feel appropriate regarding spawning fish – from adjusted dates, short term closures of whole or part lakes or remain open throughout.

Many still water fisheries suffer from excess production of juveniles, so disturbance of spawning may not be a bad thing, but the physiological stress that fish go through during the process is immense and being caught is likely to increase the level of mortalities of the existing stock.

Ultimately it is up to you how you approach it at your fishery, but from purely a practicality point of view, you may wish to stick to fixed pre-published dates so that anglers are aware of the restrictions in advance. This doesn't mean you need to keep the same dates of 15th March to 15th June – if you can remember roughly when the fish have spawned in recent years you use those to fix a new set of dates, but be aware that some species, particularly carp, can spawn multiple times in a season if conditions are right.

Considerations

- As referred to in the response from the E.A. if the closed season does not have fixed dates, it may be confusing to anglers and become difficult to police and enforce.
- If there is no longer a closed season a set date would need to be made for permit renewals with a period of time allocated to obtain permits from and a deadline when the previous year's permit expires.