WIRRAL GAME FISHING CLUB

FISHING SAFETY GUIDELINES

Please note that the following guidelines highlight the majority of the potential problems/ risks you are most likely to encounter when fishing on the WGFC waters. Clearly it is impossible to anticipate every single problem or potential risk. Remember when in close proximity to water, or fishing in water there is a risk of death by drowning or severe exposure. Remember that the responsibility for your own safety lies with you, so please ensure that you read the following before fishing.

PARKING
Parking as indicated on the beat maps in the members' handbook is for guidance only and WGFC accepts no liability for any accidents or damage to vehicles resulting from parking. In some cases, there is no designated parking. The WGFC cannot be responsible for your safety when parking. If parking on or near a highway you must obey the Road Traffic Regulations. Be very careful when driving off, as traffic can be moving very fast. If parking in a corral in a field, ensure that the corral is secure as cattle can damage your vehicle; be aware that the river level can rise and you may not be able to drive your vehicle to safety or become bogged down.

PATHS/CATTLE GRIDS
Where possible access to the river or lake is indicated on the beat maps. When walking to or beside a river, or around a lake, only use obvious paths where available, and where possible keep to the borders of fields. Take extra care when it is wet as paths will become muddy and slippery. Wooden bridges can be slippery and potentially unsound. Ensure suitable footwear is worn. Use stiles where possible to cross over barbwire fences. Take extra care when crossing a cattle grid.

STEPS
Steps can be very slippery especially when wet, this includes stone steps and wooden stiles.

BANKS
Beware of undercuts in banks especially near deep water, where it would also be very difficult to climb out of the water if you fell in. Stone/mud reservoir banks and dam walls are slippery and uneven, move slowly with caution.

WADING
When wading in rivers and still waters it is recommended that you wear a buoyancy aid, an auto- inflating model is best. Take particular care when wading in deep and fast water and on rocky bottoms. Be aware of quickly rising water or flash floods. Use a wading staff attached to your person. Move carefully in strong flows and have the right soles for the river bottom in question. Felt soles offer excellent grip on stone or gravel but are very slippery on mud or wet grass. Beware of sudden drop–offs in still waters. Be very careful when wading down-stream in fast water as it can be very difficult to get back to your entry point. Check the water for holes and hazards before wading. Check the pools again each season and after floods as they can change dramatically. Members intending to night fish should check the beat in daylight to identify wading hazards, and access/egress points for each pool.

ELECTRIC POWER LINES
Do not fish under or near power lines, as electricity can arc over considerable distances, and you are ideally earthed in water to conduct electricity. Carbon fibre rods are excellent

conductors of electricity as is a fly line coated in water. Remember electricity can cause death or severe burns. You should always carry your rods horizontally between pools, and also when walking near power lines, across fields or along paths. Be especially careful when fishing in the hours of darkness, and remember that you
should always carry out a daylight reconnaissance of where you are going to fish before the hours of darkness.

ELECTRIC FENCES
Electric fences which are used for the control of animals can give you a nasty jolt if you come into contact with the wire. The electric shock is not usually life threatening to humans but care needs to be taken, especially if you have a heart problem. They are difficult to see, especially in the hours of darkness.

CASTING
Always be aware of other people and animals on a river or lake especially when back-casting with a fly line, as you can easily hit them with the hook. A peak hat is recommended and glasses **should** always be worn when fishing to protect your eyes from injury. Be especially careful when casting in strong winds as the hook can be blown back into your body.

HOOKS/FLIES
Hooks are sharp and can easily penetrate the skin, and are difficult to pull out if they are barbed - use barbless hooks if possible. While hooks are in use, they come into contact with bacteria etc that can affect your health. Caution should be used when handling hooks, especially when tying and removing them from a fishing line. Rusty hooks should be avoided at all times. When carrying a rod always ensure that the hook is secured in the hook keeper near the base of the rod. If the hook becomes stuck in a tree or snagged under water, look away when trying to retrieve it, as it may come back with extreme speed, and hit part of your body.

WEIGHTED FLIES/SPINNING LURES
Weighted flies can cause unpredictable movement of the leader when casting. Spinning lures can be lethal as they can be heavy, and are usually fitted with treble hooks.

TREES
Fishing under trees can be unsafe in windy conditions. Beware of falling branches. Never shelter under a tree in a thunderstorm in case of a lightning strike.

LIVE-STOCK/ANIMALS
All animals can be dangerous so treat them with respect. They can cause bites, broken bones, laceration, or death. Some animals that you may encounter whilst fishing on WGFC waters are bulls, bullocks/heifers, horses, pigs, goats, rams, llamas, badgers, deer and farm dogs. It is always handy to carry a wading stick in your hand when crossing a field full of cattle. Try not to make direct eye contact with animals as this can often intimidate them. Treat all bulls with extreme caution. Assess the danger before entering a field with livestock in it, and establish an escape route, including via the river. Cattle can be very inquisitive. Cows with young calf's can be very protective so don't walk between the cow and calf. Deer can lose some fear of humans during the rutting season in autumn, and stags can become very protective.

SNAKES
Do not touch snakes and don't put any part of your body into burrows, holes, stone walls, or other similar openings.

INSECTS/BEES/WASPS
Avoid wasps, hornet nests and beehives. Wear insect repellent to reduce the risk of insect bites.

WEIL'S DISEASE AND SEWAGE EFFLUENT
Weil's disease is transmitted in rats' urine. Never put wet lines in your mouth or any items of tackle that has been in the water. Wear waterproof plasters on any cuts or abrasions, and wash hands before eating. Weil's disease symptoms are flu like. Report any unexplained flu like symptoms or fever to your doctor. There may also be a risk in some water from treated sewage effluent.

E-COLI
Avoid contact with animal faeces which can cause sickness, and diarrhoea. Always wash hands before eating.

SALMONELLA/LISTERIA
The risk of this can be high when fish are prepared and cleaned. Segregate fish preparation equipment from other food preparation equipment, and wash hands after handling raw fish.

LYME'S DISEASE/TICKS
Check for ticks after returning home, remove any ticks and swab with alcohol and apply antiseptic cream. Report any unexplained fever or rash around the bite as soon as possible to your doctor. It is import to inform your doctor where you have been fishing.

BLUE GREEN ALGAE
Avoid contact with blue green algae. If contact is made, wash off immediately and never drink the water. Never let your dog ingest blue green algae as there is no cure and it is always fatal.

POISONOUS PLANTS
Never touch any part of Giant Hogweed, their sap is caustic and causes potentially severe burns. Never lick, chew or eat any unidentified plants, berries, fungi or mushrooms.

FALLING IN WATER
Remember we recommend that you wear a buoyancy aid at all times when you are wading. If you do not feel comfortable near water you can now buy fishing coats that are fitted with a built-in life jacket. If you do fall in the water, try to get your knees up and manoeuvre yourself so that you are heading down stream feet first. That way you will hit things with your feet rather than your head. Use your arms to get back to the bank, feeling for the river bottom.

WEATHER CONDITIONS
When fishing be constantly aware of the changing weather conditions and its potential consequences. Check the weather forecast before you go fishing. Remember it might not be raining where you are, but further up river there may be a heavy down pour of rain which could cause a rapid rise in the river level later on where you are located. Wear suitable protective clothing to protect you from the elements. Avoid sunburn, wear sun block even when it is cloudy in the summer months, and tinted glasses or sunglasses to help protect your eyes from glare.

TIREDNESS
Tiredness can increase your exposure to risks, and slow down your reaction time. Take care if driving home when you are tired, drink plenty of coffee, and/or have a rest before leaving.

NIGHT TIME FISHING
The hazards of fishing in the hours of darkness are obviously emphasised. It is recommended that a full reconnaissance of the area you intend to fish is carried out in daylight hours, before you start to fish. Some sort of torch is essential at night. The best sort to use is a headlamp as

this leaves your hands free. A red filter that flips over the lens of the torch protects your night vision. Always ensure that you carry a spare torch, and spare batteries.

CHILDREN
If you take children fishing with you, then you are responsible for their health and safety.

MOBILE PHONE/GRID REFERENCES/FARMER'S CONTACT NUMBER/NEAREST HOSPITAL
Always carry a mobile phone with you especially if fishing alone. If possible, have the farmer's number in the phone memory of the beat you are fishing. Make them the first point of contact, then 999. Know the OS Grid Reference for your fishing location to guide rescue services. These are part of the beat descriptions on the club website. Know the location of the nearest hospital with an A & E department. Don't forget that in some areas such as Llyn Brenig reservoir you may not get a mobile phone signal, so it is important that you tell someone of where you are going to fish and of your expected return time. Always carry a whistle with you especially if you are alone for attracting attention to summon assistance.

POACHERS
Do not attempt to get involved with poachers. If you see or suspect that poaching is taking place report it **immediately** via the Natural Resources Wales telephone number 0300 065 3000 available 24 hours a day. Ask for the incident number. You should then advise the WGFC secretary giving him the incident number.

WORKING PARTIES
See separate WGFC, H & S Policy Document regarding working parties. This can be found in the club web site: www.wirralgamefishing.club

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