



General Secretary's Address – PAC Web May 2012

Firstly, many thanks to all those who attended the AMM to give thanks to the outgoing committee and welcome in the new.

Before I start to outline our many aspirations for the future of the club I'd like to extend my thanks and congratulations to Graham and the out-going committee for their dedication and individual contributions to the club during what has been very difficult and somewhat trying times. They have worked tirelessly behind the scenes and on many occasions, gone far beyond the call of duty in the interests of the club. You can rest assured that 12PAC will build on this progress and the club very much remains in safe hands.

12PAC is already in full swing

We have an advantage over previous committees in that some members are staying on for another term, which has given us some continuity. Graham also ensured that we were involved in committee issues in plenty of time prior to the handover, so we have not been thrown into our roles unprepared and are aware of all the major issues affecting our sport at present and will be following all these issues up in due course.

12PAC is already in full swing and we're going to make an impact. We have an awesome team with a good mix of knowledge, experience and business acumen. All of which is essential if we are to progress the club to where we think we should be. Most importantly, we are all motivated by our immense passion for the club and will be working hard to preserve our sport in its entirety.

I'll only be covering the basics here but I hope this gives all members an insight into 12PAC and what we'll be striving to achieve. We have a very capable team. Each member has been hand-picked for their individual roles based on their relevant skills, knowledge & experience. Most importantly, we are honoured to serve our members and will work tirelessly for the club.

Challenging times lay ahead

Our sport is under constant threat. Before I cover our plans for the coming term and our way of doing things, it's important for us to look at some of the present threats to pike and our sport:

Other angling groups – Other angling disciplines often undermine us by restricting our sport, for example where they implement a livebait ban. To them this may seem trivial but as far as I'm concerned, a livebait is as natural a bait to us as a worm or maggot is to the matchman. This is the thin end of the wedge. Any restriction or ban sends out the wrong message and only acts to support those who would ban our sport altogether. It's worth bearing in mind here, that all angling disciplines often benefit from the hard work of our members and for this reason, they should support us in what we do, not obstruct us.

Government Quangos - We are often left bewildered by the naive attitudes & responses of Government Agencies and are faced with having to challenge these on a regular basis. Chris Bishop was instrumental in uncovering the hidden agendas of Natural England, whose policies influence many other organisations and therefore effect us on a national scale. We are often in conflict with other agencies including the Environment Agency, Broads Authority, and British Waterways, to name but a few.

Large Conservation Organisations – these are often linked to NE and are pressuring our sport on a massive scale. We have long since been considered the guardians of the countryside & wildlife but in recent times we are being pushed aside to watch from the side-lines as the very countryside we've protected is being inappropriately re-developed. Often this decimation of our existing wildlife and environment is hidden behind an inappropriate SSSI and carried out without appropriate consultation or regard for local knowledge.

Other serious threats include; Eastern European fish theft, Prymnesium, Killer Shrimp, Cormorants, Otters, Pollution, Systematic pike removal, senseless pike culls, etc, etc.

The list goes on and on but the common denominator is that our main opposition comes from large organisations who, either cause these problems or continually fail to address them. These are usually well organised, well funded and have massive member support. It's also worth noting that many of these organisations are the very same organisations who we entrust to preserve our environment and our sport. Indeed, in some cases, angling funds their anti-angling policies. This in it's self is a disgrace. It's sometimes difficult to be positive about these organisations but we should be mindful that they also do some good.

12PAC is here to make a stand and get the PAC seen and heard

As a committee and club we have to stand our ground, while we've still got some ground left. To do this we have to make our presence felt. Though we have proved over the years that we can make significant progress at local level, the only way to make real long-term progress is to address the policies of these organisations and that can only be done at the highest level.

If we are to challenge these organisations and have our voice heard, we have to be taken seriously. To achieve this we have to be equally well organised and portray a professional image and shop-front. Our shop front being the magazine, web presence and of course the Convention. All of which we intend to bring bang up to date, with professionally re-designed web site & forum and face-lift for the mag. All with the backing of dedicated teams to ensure that these are also kept up to date and continually improved. Dilip has already set the standard here with the introduction of Team Pikelines and our dynamic Online Team will be announced shortly. We will not be stopping there. Where we find the need to set-up additional teams to support the work of the club, we will do it. We have many skills within our membership and to date, this has been a relatively un-tapped resource. The Committee is the driving force and will continue to steer the club in the right direction but we cannot do this without member support. We will be encouraging members to become more involved within their regions but also welcome anyone with specific skills to come forward and support our committee work.

We've got to work in partnership with others

We strongly believe that the only way forward is for the PAC, as a whole to engage with other organisations. All too often we have to bear the brunt of a decision, policy or rule introduced by another organisation or club. After the event we rant & rave and appropriately have our say, but the horse has already bolted. It therefore makes perfect sense that we try to become involved in these decisions. In some cases we may even be able to eliminate a threat at inception. At the very least, we will be more aware of potential problems and have an opportunity to have our say from the start. For this reason, we have to accept that we need to work 'with' these organisations but only where appropriate. In some cases, where there is a serious conflict of interest, we will not engage fully but even a restricted level of engagement could serve as a source of vital information for the club. 12PAC will be therefore be placing a strong emphasis on working with other organisations and groups as appropriate. Rest assured that we will not however, compromise on our beliefs and will fight strongly to preserve our sport in its entirety. We will also be fully prepared to take the hard-line approach when necessary.

We have allies and need to support those who share a common interest

Angling is by far the biggest participating sport in the UK but we are fragmented between numerous different clubs and organisations. Considering that it only takes 10,000 signatures to have a matter raised in Parliament, imagine what clout we would have if we could ever work together. The Angling Trust is the latest in a long line of organisations designed to bring us all together to unite against our threats. Though I have reservations about their worth to us as a single specimen group, we need to accept that we are a minority group amongst anglers and we wont get everything our own way. Like it or not, they are the best chance we have had for some time to get our voices heard and we will endeavour to work with them wherever we can.

Scotland's PAAS & LAIA are prime examples of like-minded groups and indeed many of their members are also highly regarded members of the PAC. These will appropriately receive our full support.

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Modernisation is the key to increased membership

One of the most serious issues facing the club at the moment is membership numbers.

Members are by far our greatest asset, we can achieve nothing without their support. Though we still have a healthy following, membership has decreased significantly over the last few years. Clearly the present financial climate has a bearing here. This is an area, which leaves us vulnerable and we have already started to address this issue. Our improved national profile and shop front is very much aimed at this, as is our intention to engage with all anglers & angling groups. We quite frankly have no choice but to become more attractive & receptive to new-comers. Some may argue that the more members we have the more angling pressure and competition for pike. I disagree, these anglers will fish for pike anyway so lets get them onboard and have them doing it properly and contributing to preserving our sport.

Businesses have to deal with the same economic climate to survive and we are no different. For this reason, although we are a club, we have to be more business-like in our approach. Modernisation, Publicity & Marketing is the key to this, and again the mag & web site will play a major role here. There are also many other mediums available to us today; Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, News Feeds, Interactive Apps and Forums and we will be using these to our full advantage and increasing our presence on a national basis.

We would encourage all members to embrace these technologies and get fully involved where you can in promoting the club and what we do. This particularly applies to forums but when interacting on forums I'd ask that you do this in a responsible manner. Those who seek to undermine angling often use abstracts from these forums to support their anti-angling agendas. The Committee will also be fully engaging with other forums. However, as committee members, what we say is often taken as official PAC policy and this has caused particular problems in the past, so our engagement will rarely be direct interaction but more a case of publishing statements and promotional articles and keeping these forums and fellow anglers fully up to date via news feeds, etc. Also, neither of us have an unlimited amount of time so what we do have, will be concentrated on routine matters and major issues. If pikers want to know more about the club or want to directly interact with the committee, they can do this via our web site & forum.

Though we as a committee will be openly encouraging interaction with all anglers, groups and forums, we are fully aware of the risks of us doing the same. Where there is a serious conflict of interest, we will not engage on any level. The principles, reputation and ethos of the club will always take priority and we will not compromise on any of these.

We are already developing realistic ways to make the PAC more attractive to our members and are confident that we will increase PAC membership in the short-term. There are many other issues to address here, not least the reputation of the club amongst fellow pikers and the many misconceptions about us and what we do. Often in the past, individuals have damaged our reputation, brought us into disrepute and rightfully left us open to accusations of elitism. This undermines the hard work of the vast majority of members who are unselfishly committed to the club. No single member is above the club, that includes the committee and all decisions will be based purely on the 'interests of the club and its members'.

Our members are second to none

Membership may be lower than we would like but on a more positive note; though limited in numbers, we are still a force to be reckoned with and highly regarded throughout the sport and industry. This is all down to you, our members. We get results because no other club shares our level of passion and this is an absolute credit to all our members, old and new. What I will say here is that I would rather have a club of 2000 dedicated members than 5000 numpties. One of the best ways to build membership is for existing members to introduce a fellow piker to the club. There are many responsible pikers out there who are not members and should be and there is no better way to recruit quality members than by recommendation. We are one of the most successful angling clubs in the UK and have made significant progress regarding pike angling & conservation. Sometimes we need to cast our minds back 35 years to fully appreciate what we have achieved. It's impressive!

We take membership so seriously that the Membership Secretary's duties will now be a shared role and I hope that Brian and John will be flat out busy for the next 3 years.

We all need to be pro-active

We have to be more pro-active in our approach to succeed. The PAC relies on a network of Representatives, LO's & RO's to establish and maintain Regional Associations. This is our direct link with members, other organisations and indeed the public in general. This is our front-line and an essential part of promoting the club and recruiting new members. Sadly, we are under-represented in some areas and this is something we need to rectify if we are to increase our profile & support on a national basis. As can be seen recently in Scotland and Norfolk, we can make real progress if we have a pro-active approach and the right individuals onboard. These individuals are rare creatures and will appropriately be given our full backing and support.

For regions to be of significant use to the club they must be active. Some regions are very pro-active and this is an absolute credit to those who run them. To progress the club further, this has to be extended to all regions and indeed LO's & RO's, all of whom I'll be contacting directly within the next few days. As a pro-active Committee we will be leading from the front and by example.

We are not here to play at it - our plans extend way beyond our 3-year term. We intend to use this term to set the standard for the next 35 years of the PAC.

On behalf of the entire committee, thank you all in advance for your support.

Alan Dudhill
General Secretary

