

Final Report of the Council on the Recreational Use of Waterworks

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IN the last few years public demands for access to reservoirs have greatly increased, particularly as a result of the growth of interest in sailing. Since some of the activities involved may be incompatible with each other and with the primary function of drinking-water reservoirs, the Council of the Institution of Water Engineers appointed a Committee "To consider and report upon the recreational use of waterworks reservoirs of all kinds and the extent to which such reservoirs may be used to the public advantage without detriment to the public water supply." The Committee, with Mr. L. H. Brown, B.Sc., M.I.C.E., serving as Chairman, consisted of twelve Members and an observer on behalf of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. Comments were invited from the Royal Yachting Association, the Salmon and Trout Association, the Wildfowlers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland, the Ramblers' Association, the Nature Conservancy and Mr. Peter Scott.

In presenting their views, the Wildfowlers' Association referred to G. L. Atkinson-Willes' paper on "The importance to Wildfowl of the Reservoirs in England and Wales" (Wildfowl Trust 12th Ann. Report : 29-33. 1961), supported its views and urged the granting of total protection to birds on all the reservoirs of major importance to wildfowl. Mr. Scott commented that one of the main advantages of bird-watching over other activities was that no direct access to the water was required or indeed desirable.

This report should be studied in full. Its general conclusions are that sailing, fishing and bird-watching can usually be permitted, if administered by responsible organisations. "Permits for bird-watching should be restricted to members of recognised ornithological societies, or other accredited persons." "Shooting, if allowed at all, should be very carefully controlled." Several activities are regarded as impermissible: water ski-ing (because of immersion of the skiers, use of noisy power-boats and interference with other activities), canoeing (because of the need for specialized training to make it safe), swimming (as a source of pollution, and a possible danger to the individual and hence a liability upon the water undertaking) and camping (unless on sites specially provided and equipped so that pollution of the water cannot occur). "It is unwise to provide for incompatible recreational uses at the same time and place, e.g. fishing and sailing. Different areas of a reservoir may be allocated for different sports, or different days may be set aside for each sport."

The Committee carried out a very thorough investigation and have reached carefully balanced conclusions. In our view they have performed what in future will be seen to have been a great service to the community.