

Annual Review 2015 | 16

# DID YOU KNOW?



ORNAMENTAL  
AQUATIC TRADE  
ASSOCIATION

# DID YOU KNOW...

## OATA HAS...

more than 800 business members from shops and importers to dry goods manufacturers, wholesalers and pond consultants.

## OATA SAVES...

the industry tens of millions of pounds by fighting to keep products and fish on sale or challenging costs to the industry, like fee structures.

## OATA PROTECTS...

its members by tackling local authorities about illegal pet traders.

## OATA'S BEHIND...

the successful AQUA show in Telford – the biggest trade show in the UK just for the aquatics industry.

## OATA'S WRITTEN...

free care sheets and leaflets for retailers to give to customers with all the information they need to keep a wide range of fish, marine invertebrates, plants and reptiles as well as how to set up ponds and aquaria.

## OATA'S FILMED...

seven 'How to' videos for people wanting some advice on how to set up freshwater and marine aquaria and to keep fish successfully.

## OATA'S CREATED...

a Troubleshooting Fishkeeping android app for smartphones to help fishkeepers solve basic problems with their fish, aquarium or pond.



## OATA OFFERS...

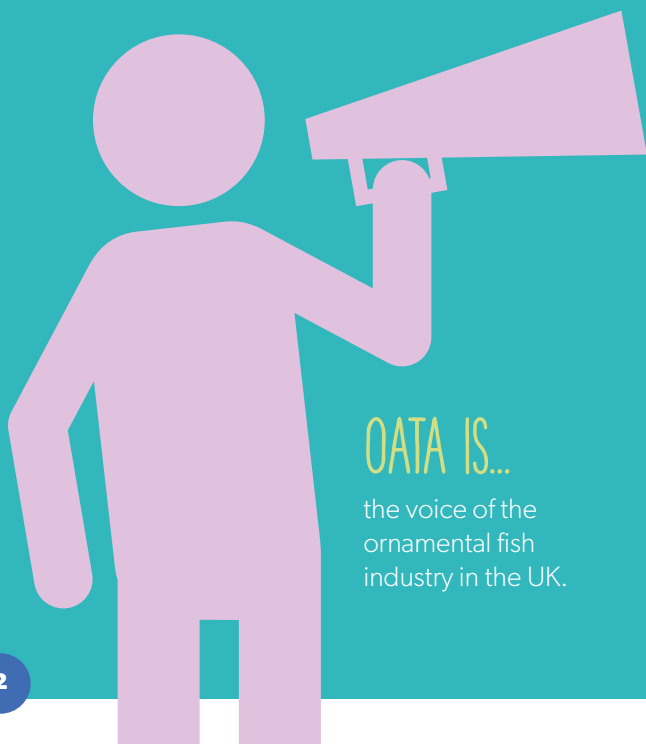
training courses to help people gain specific fishkeeping qualifications that are highly respected in the industry.

## OATA'S GOT...

global reach by representing the UK industry at European and world meetings.

## OATA HAS...

saved the industry more than £250 million through its work.



## OATA IS...

the voice of the ornamental fish industry in the UK.

## OATA'S ON...

Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn where we share info about our work and the industry as a whole.

# DIRECTORS' REPORT

THIS HAS BEEN A YEAR TO BOTH REFLECT ON THE PAST AND TO LOOK TO THE FUTURE.

OATA celebrated 25 years and also said goodbye to our hard-working Chief Executive Keith Davenport. What a legacy he leaves – just turn to pages 12 & 13 to see what we mean. At the beginning of the 1990s we feared for the industry's future as we faced restrictions on live fish imports which effectively could have cut off the lifeblood that supports what we all do. Then, ornamental fishkeeping was barely recognised in the corridors of power. You certainly can't say that now, largely

thanks to Keith's tenacity and the team that's grown around him. He's often cleared the road ahead of obstacles that could have greatly affected the way we do business, leaving us to smoothly carry on without realising there had ever been any danger. We all have much to thank him for.

But now it's time we look forward with our new Chief Executive Dominic. He brings a wealth of experience at government and global level that will be

invaluable. Many issues remain the same – particularly around the need to show another side to the story about exotic pets (like ornamental fish). And there are new issues to keep him busy, like how leaving Europe will affect us.

And lastly we must again thank all those businesses who join us as members. Without your support nothing would have been achieved over the past 25 years – or for the next quarter of a century.



## CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

THIS IS INDEED A TIME OF CHANGE FOR AN INDUSTRY THAT CONTINUES TO FACE MANY CHALLENGES

There is ever growing pressure on our industry from elements of the animal rights lobby that are opposed to any trade in or keeping of exotic pets. There is the uncertainty presented by Brexit but also the opportunities that presents. And we have a Government that is more than ever keen to listen to the interests of business.

This does not mean the road ahead will be a smooth one. On the contrary I believe the challenges we face will increase. Thus it is more important that we can build our membership to ensure we can truly represent the wider interests of our industry but also to ensure we have the resources we need to face the challenge of the well-organised and well-resourced animal rights lobby.

I have spent more than 20 years working in Government dealing with a wide range of interest groups. What became clear to me during that time was that the voice of the industry was often poorly represented when compared with the well-funded environmental sector. As an official this was something I always wanted to see change, so that in developing new policies and laws, a balanced view could be taken. This is what attracted me to this job. For nine years I was aware of OATA and of Keith's efforts to improve industry standards and have been truly impressed by how such a small organisation with limited funding has operated well above its weight and achieved so much for the industry it represents, ensuring Government policies are balanced and proportionate.

I am grateful for the opportunity I have been given to represent your industry and will seek to continue and build upon the reputation that you have built for yourselves over the last 25 years as responsible and trustworthy businesses.



DOMINIC WHITMEE

# DID YOU KNOW...

## A VERY TINY %...

of the total number of fish caught from global seas are caught for home aquariums.

0.0001%



## MANY FISH-CATCHING COUNTRIES...

are on the UN's Low Human Development and Least Developed Countries' lists and/or hold Small Island Developing States status, making them some of the world's poorest and most challenged communities.

## CATCHING LIVE FISH...

rather than fish for food provides people with a better and more sustainable income.

## VITAL LIVELIHOODS...

Catching live fish provides livelihoods to tens of thousands of people and supports communities in remote parts of the world which have few welfare benefits & limited alternatives to earn a living.

## Hands Off heard in devolved elections

As Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish voters went to the polls in May 2016 we asked them to tell their local politicians about our #handsoffmyhobby campaign.

Ornamental fish are not native to the UK so anyone who keeps fish essentially has an exotic pet. During the devolved elections, we asked businesses and hobbyists to proclaim their pride at keeping exotic species like ornamental fish and ask their local representatives where they stand on the issue of exotic pets.

We want politicians to know what's involved if they seek further controls on exotic pet-keeping because the trade is already under scrutiny by the Scottish government, which announced a review of the exotic pet trade in 2015. We believe it's only a matter of time before animal campaign groups push for similar reviews in Wales, Northern Ireland and England.

Elections give us a great opportunity to raise awareness among politicians that exotic pets cover a wide spectrum of species that perhaps they hadn't realised. Their decisions could stop a whole host of animals from being kept as companions so we have continued to use the #handsoffmyhobby campaign to get voters to ask politicians if they really want to see pets like goldfish and guppies banned from our homes.

However, we also use any opportunity to raise the issue with politicians and government officials, as our *Wild Caught Ornamental Fish* report shows.



# Making the case for wild caught fish

**We have long argued that fish caught in the wild from reefs, rivers and Rift Valley lakes can offer much-needed opportunities in remote parts of the world for people to earn a sustainable living from their local environment.**

So we were very proud to launch our new *Wild caught ornamental fish: the trade, the benefits, the facts* report in June 2016. Based on a literature review and livelihood reports commissioned from the Durrell Institute for Conservation and Ecology, the report looks at where fish are caught across the world, how they travel to the UK and the regulations that govern each part of that journey. It also examines the alternative livelihoods that might be open to fisher communities if they could no longer provide live fish for the aquarium trade.

We believe the people who catch live ornamental fish are often the forgotten story in this issue and do not have a voice in developed countries in a debate that threatens their livelihoods and the wellbeing of their families. So the report also features four case studies from across the world showing the work of local communities in catching ornamental fish and how this contributes to conserving where they live.

One of the biggest challenges facing these artisanal fishermen is the

increasingly vocal campaigns emphasising the negative aspects of wild caught/exotic pets. But if best practise is followed the livelihood benefits to some of the world's poorest communities can be huge.

We wanted to get this message across so we produced both a digital report and a printed document and we sent it out across the globe. We've had some great feedback and were invited to meet Sir David Amess MP, a keen aquarist himself, at the House of Commons.

YOU CAN READ THE REPORT IN FULL AND SEE THE CASE STUDIES ON OUR WEBSITE.



"I agree that sustainable wildlife trade can make a valuable contribution to the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Your points about the potential benefits of low volume, high value trade in ornamental fish along the supply chain are well made. I would like to thank you for your help and informative input into what is undoubtedly a complex subject area, and for your organisation's efforts to encourage best practice in the trade and keeping of ornamental fish."

**RORY STEWART**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Environment and Rural Affairs, July 2016 in response to the report

# Time to get a grip on pet shop licensing

**This was a big year for our industry as the UK government announced a huge review of how it licenses animal establishments – including pet shops – in England and Wales.**

This was our chance to again highlight at the highest level how inconsistent pet shop licensing is and call for mandatory standards that English and Welsh pet shops have to live up to.

We joined forces with fellow industry organisations the Pet Industry Federation (PIF) and the Reptile and Exotic Pet Trade Association (REPTA) to submit a joint response to the government consultation. In it, we put forward our views about the need for mandatory standards properly enforced by competent, experienced and trained inspectors who understand animal welfare. We also called for proper enforcement so that those businesses

which invest in meeting the standards can rely on enforcement organisations to come down hard on those who flout the law.

We said: “Any future licensing scheme must also robustly enforce the law against those who choose to ignore it. The investment in training, education and equipment by licensed and responsible premises must not be eroded by those who flout the law and undercut them commercially by failing to protect the welfare of animals. Any future enforcement regime should ensure that bad practice is stamped out and that good business practices are protected and rewarded.”

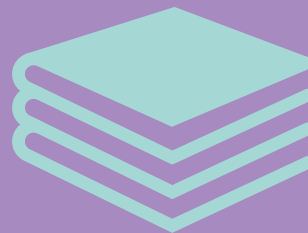
Yet another of our Freedom of Information requests to local authorities in 2016 revealed that barely half of councils which licence pet shops are using the most up-to-date advice on how to do this – showing that even when there’s guidance to ensure a level playing field local authorities aren’t using it. We also found at least one council didn’t seem to be aware they were the licensing authority for pet shops in their area after subcontracting out the actual inspection process. The council also had no idea what standards are used by the inspectors it pays to licence shops in its name.

And, unsurprisingly, we discovered a growing trend for licences to be granted

## DID YOU KNOW...

### DATA INVESTIGATES...

pet shop inconsistencies and highlights these regularly to government departments. Our latest data was cited in an Environment, Food and Rural Affairs’ subcommittee evidence session during its inquiry into pet shop licensing.



### OATA'S BIOSECURITY DOCUMENT...

And our Pet Code of Practice got positive comments in the England Aquatic Animal Health Strategy.



to private dwellings, despite about a third of councils carrying out no checks on these home-based businesses to see if they had the relevant planning consents, were registered for business rates and had public liability insurance.

It's imperative that our industry can demonstrate to customers that it has high standards of animal welfare. A better licensing scheme might prove challenging to pet shops because it could mean more demanding inspections and higher fees. But it has to be worth it over the longer term to protect the reputation of this industry which is coming under ever greater scrutiny from animal campaign groups.



### OATA PROVIDED EVIDENCE...

on closed Facebook pages selling corals and other ornamental species to the Pet Advertising Advisory Group which presented this information to the Defra's Secretary of State over illegal selling online.

### OATA REPORTS...

back garden traders to local councils for investigation and encourages local authorities to take action over illegal pet shops.



# Winners and losers in UK garden ponds

**Keen gardeners can use barley straw to clear algae from their garden ponds thanks to us. But they'll soon no longer be able to plant water hyacinth and *Lagarosiphon major* which have now been banned by the European Union.**

After several decades challenging the Health and Safety Executive, the government body finally agreed with us that chopped barley straw made into pouches for ponds should no longer be covered by the EU Biocides Regulation in the UK. We had spotted an exemption made for chopped lavender flowers bagged to repel moths and used this to argue the case for barley straw, which is added to garden ponds to tackle algae. However, the exemption does not cover extracts so we are still in talks with the HSE to see how these can continue to be sold.

But we were disappointed that the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs would not argue our case with the European Union over water hyacinth, which is posing problems in southern Europe. We have made the case repeatedly that this plant can't survive UK winters.

As the UK voted to leave the EU, the first list of problematic species was finally published by the European Commission after months of delay. It outlined 37 species that can no longer be kept or sold in the EU, including four aquatic

plants (*Eichhornia crassipe*, *Cabomba caroliniana*, *Lagarosiphon major* and *Lysichiton americanus* as well as terrapin *Trachemys scripta*).

The next round of species of EU wide concern – which also contains more aquatic plants – is on its way and we'll continue to fight to protect species that we feel are not an invasive issue in the UK.

WE ARE A KEEN SUPPORTER OF THE BE PLANT WISE CAMPAIGN AND HAVE URGED OUR INDUSTRY TO STOP SELLING CERTAIN INVASIVE POND PLANTS YEARS BEFORE AN OFFICIAL BAN ON SALES.





# DID YOU KNOW...



## DATA IS...

a member of the new Home Aquarium Fish Sub-group, set up by the Freshwater Fish Specialist Group (part of the International Union for Conservation of Nature). This new group has big ambitions, including an idea to harness the inspiring power of public aquariums to encourage people to create their own home tank by choosing fish that support communities involved in sustainable management.

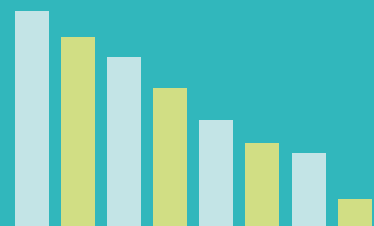


## DATA HAS ENSURED...

Border Inspection Post (BIP) charges for imported species are based on actual costs rather than a minimum fee specified by Brussels.

## DATA HAS SAVED...

The industry hundreds of thousands of pounds in BIP charges by challenging the way the fees are set and prevented the highest fee from being introduced.



# Online selling guide

**With the rise of online retailing the thorny issue of how live fish are sold and transported is a growing concern for the industry, animal welfare groups and Government.**

In August 2015, we launched a new *Guide to the responsible distance selling of livestock* to help people to sell fish responsibly online and transport them correctly to customers.

The guide aims to improve fish welfare and raise awareness and standards among both sellers and customers about the best way to buy and move fish.

We firmly believe bricks and mortar shops are the best place for people to buy fish. Shops offer customers the opportunity to watch and enjoy the beauty of live fish swimming around. We believe this helps to inspire and captivate people to become the next generation of fish-keepers which online shops can't do in quite the same way.

But with changing consumer habits internet sales are here to stay and more people are buying live fish online. And for some people living in remote parts of the UK, travelling to their nearest aquatics shop involves a long trip so they turn to online shops to enable them to pursue their hobby.

The guide gives advice on issues such as sales, packing and transporting fish. It outlines the law on distance selling and also makes clear our expectations of what a responsible seller – whether business or private – should be doing when they sell fish and arrange delivery to customers.

By knowing the standards that a responsible seller should be working to, we also think it will help customers to decide who are the best people to buy fish from online.

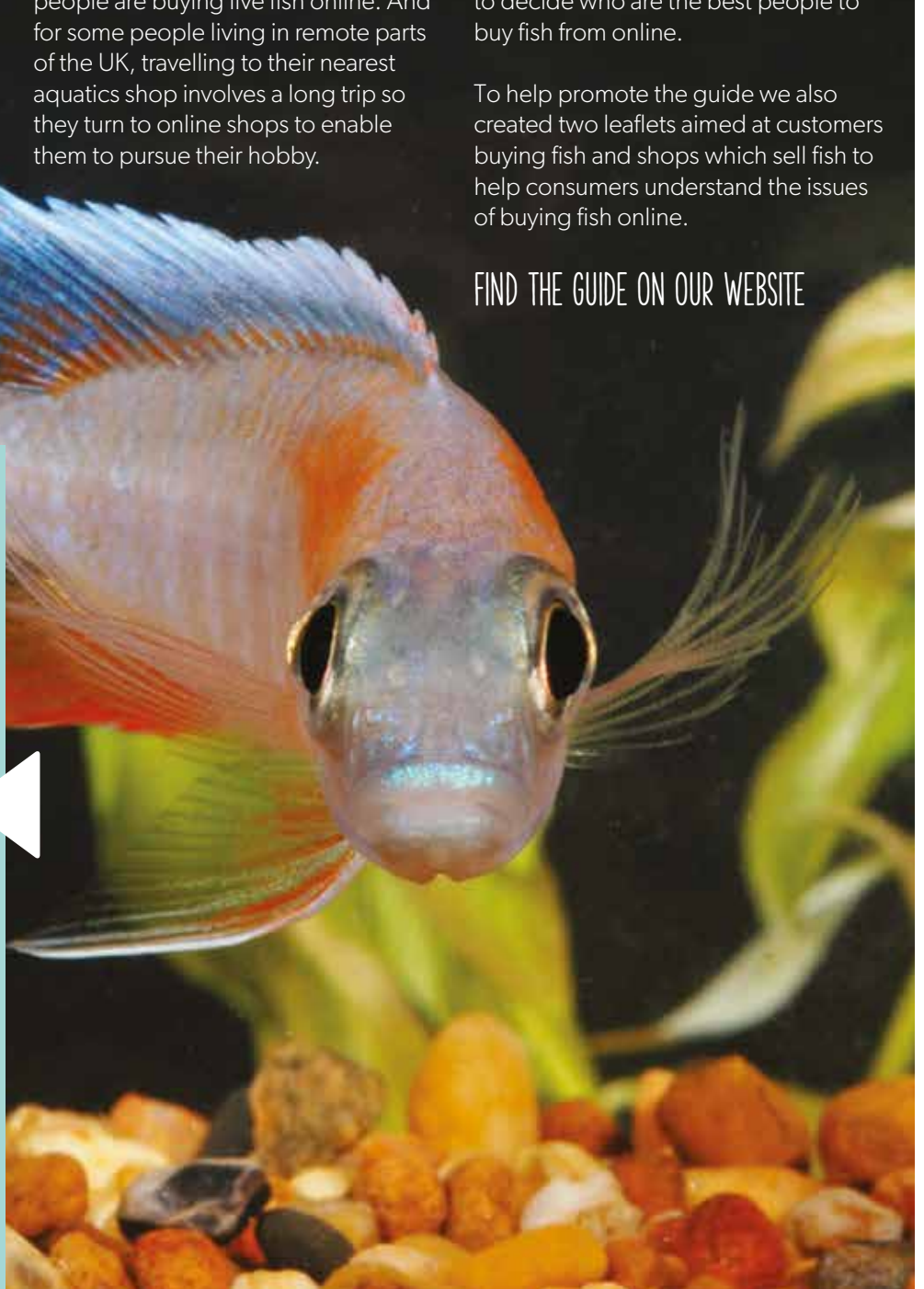
To help promote the guide we also created two leaflets aimed at customers buying fish and shops which sell fish to help consumers understand the issues of buying fish online.

[FIND THE GUIDE ON OUR WEBSITE](#)

## DID YOU KNOW...

### DATA WARNED...

Against buying regal tang fish on a whim in the run-up to the release of Disney's *Finding Dory* in July 2016. We were concerned that the advent of online retailing would make buying this specialised marine fish too easy for inexperienced fishkeepers so we offered advice and created a flyer on great 'beginner' tropical freshwater fish that retailers could use in their shops.



# DID YOU KNOW...

## OATA LAUNCHED...

A new membership deal for pond and aquarium contractors at AQUA 2016.



## OATA JOINED FORCES...

With Cambridgeshire County Council in a primary authority partnership on product safety in 2016.



## Goodbye... and hello

**We said goodbye to our long-standing Chief Executive Keith Davenport in 2016 after he announced his retirement after 25 years in the post. And we said hello to our new CEO Dominic Whitmee who joined us from Defra.**

Keith was recruited to help set up and run OFI UK, as it was known then, to tackle a number of big issues facing the industry at the beginning of the 1990s. He came to OATA as a fresh-faced lecturer at Sparsholt Agricultural College where he taught the ornamental fish-related courses. Recruited to help set up and take forward the new trade association he really hasn't stopped (as our look-back over 25 years of OATA on page 12 and 13 shows) and has taken the organisation from strength to strength, raising standards and awareness over a quarter of a century

The fact that members – and indeed all companies that work within the ornamental aquatic industry – are still doing business is in no small part down to Keith's tenacious efforts representing UK businesses at national, European and even world level. We estimate that because of his work he has saved the industry more than £250 million in that time.

Keith was awarded the Ornamental Fish International Lifetime Achievement Award at Interzoo 2016 in recognition of his work for the aquatic industry in the UK and internationally. OFI's Shane Willis said Keith had become 'a true leading light in the community of trade associations'. He was also given another Lifetime Achievement Award by the Pet Industry Federation in November 2015.

In July 2016 we welcomed Dominic Whitmee to the hot seat. He has joined OATA from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs where he was Senior International Biodiversity Policy Adviser. Dominic has worked in the civil service for more than 20 years, latterly delivering CITES policy for the UK government, so he brings more than two decades of work at national, European and international levels in highly relevant areas such as biodiversity and wildlife trade. Coupled with his experience in the mechanisms of government and how to influence policy, he brings a wealth of experience to OATA.

The pet industry – and the ornamental fish industry in particular – faces challenging times over issues such as exotic pets and invasive species. So it's very welcome to have someone with Dominic's knowledge and experience to represent all aspects of the industry.



**KEITH DAVENPORT**  
**'A true leading light'**

*"It's my ambition to build on Keith's legacy by giving the OATA membership an even stronger voice at all levels in Government and beyond. This is an exciting opportunity and I look forward to working with members and the Board to ensure OATA continues to grow and be a strong and successful organisation."*

**DOMINIC WHITMEE**



# DID YOU KNOW...

OATA celebrates 25 years protecting and promoting the industry

**1991** OFI UK set up with Keith Davenport at the helm

**1992** Code of conduct launched for members

Our water quality standard is taken up by the Association of District Councils in pet shop licensing

**1994** We prevent a ban on coldwater fish imports which would have cost the industry £60 million per season

We succeed in excluding outdoor electrical items like pond pumps from the Plugs and Sockets regulation

**1995** First customer posters with 'no release' message are created – later endorsed by both the Environment Agency and CEFAS

**1995** We launch our first training packages for staff

**1997** We ensure soft corals and live rock are not listed under CITES

**1998** We work to avoid a ban on owning sturgeon ensuring a continued £2 million in sales for the industry

**2000** We launch advice on minimum aquarium sizes

**2002** We create special fish bags for shops to use

**2004** We advise members not to sell five problem pond plants (later banned by Defra in 2013)

**2005** Our biosecurity document and calculator is launched to help businesses measure and minimise risks

We lobby to avoid additional courier vehicle checks, ensuring vans can still transport live fish around the country

We succeed in ensuring the continued sale of fish medicines

**2006** Keith is asked to join the Non-Native Species sounding board

**2007** We work with OFI to question the CITES listing for Banggai Cardinal fish

We help to avoid restrictions on exports from the Maldives

We help to form ProPets to promote the place pets have in society which sends its first leaflet to UK politicians

**2008** Keith is commissioned by the Council of Europe to co-write its Invasives pet code

We work with OFI to avoid a ban on importing tropical fish from Malaysia

We succeed in stopping the requirement for imported tropical fish to be tested EUS free

**2009** We collaborate with Defra, the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly on the Be Plant Wise campaign which remains a key message in following years

We create 7 YouTube videos to help people set up aquariums and keep fish successfully

40 care sheets for fish and invertebrates are launched to help customers look after their new pet

We collaborate with CIEH on its guidance on pet vending to try to improve pet shop licensing

We take part in the Animal Welfare Act review and push for secondary legislation to ensure mandatory consistent standards







**2010** We launch our Android smartphone app for fishkeepers

We attend a Convention on Biological Diversity event on invasive pets and work with OFI and other trade bodies to launch a document showing the global industry's work in promoting the 'no release' message

**2012** The EU bans the movement of apple snails, effectively halting all sales, despite lobbying by OATA

**2013** Defra bans the sale of five pond plants 10 years after OATA first advised members not to sell them. We ensure *Lagarosiphon*, water hyacinth and water lettuce remain on shelves, worth £3million a year to the industry

We lobby the HSE to remove barley straw products from draft EU Biocides Regulation

Our constant questions over AHVLA fees ensures its new pricing scheme is delayed, saving the industry nearly half a million pounds.

We welcome new CIEH pet shop licensing guidance but we question its voluntary nature

**2014** We launch with REPTA our Code of Practice for Pet Keeping

We work with CEFAS and OFI to review the Import of Live Fish Act and win concessions on the need for risk assessments to add or remove species

#handsoffmyhobby campaign targets MEPs during European Parliament elections for the first time

Freedom of Information request to local councils reveals less than a third of councils are using new CIEH pet vending guidance

We work with the City of London Corporation to launch a members' only Primary Authority scheme for pet shop licences and health and safety to promote high welfare standards

We join other international trade associations to highlight the work of the industry globally on the no-release message at the Montreal CBD meeting

**2015** #handsoffmyhobby campaign relaunches in the run-up to the General Election

Scottish Government announces its intention to review the exotic pet trade and we question its lack of trade engagement

We're invited to join IUCN's new Home Aquarium Fish Sub-group

We launch our new guidance on selling fish online

**2016** We launch our new report on the benefits of wild caught fish

Another FOI by OATA reveals lack of consistency over pet shop licensing and our data is used in a Commons' committee

We join with PIF and REPTA for a pet industry response to the Government's consultation on Animal Establishment licensing, including pet shops

HSE announces barley straw is exempt from Biocides Regulation but water hyacinth is banned by the EU despite intense lobbying by OATA






Keith announces his retirement and Dominic Whitmee joins as Chief Executive

# Join OATA – *and feel the benefit*






## Strength in numbers

We make the voices of our members heard at local, European and even global levels because we represent a broad range of businesses involved in the industry. So membership support is vital to our continued success. By joining OATA businesses help to keep the industry alive.

## What does OATA do for the aquatic industry?

-  We lobby and challenge UK, European and world bodies/governments to make sure fish/plants/invertebrates/dry goods/medications remain available for sale
-  We offer high quality training/qualification packages on fish-keeping for staff and individuals which are recognised by local authorities
-  We seek to promote high standards of husbandry and welfare within the industry with our Code of Conduct
-  We help our members to keep up-to-date with the latest news that could affect their business through our monthly e-newsletter and the broad range of information on our website
-  We promote the hobby of fishkeeping through our online videos, social media and our work with the press

## As a member, you benefit from:

-  Practical help and information to help you stay ahead of the competition
-  Safeguarding the future of industry and your business
-  Discounts on our fishkeeping courses to give businesses the best-trained staff
-  Free membership of our Primary Authority partnerships on pet shop licensing, health & safety and product safety, giving you access to assured advice
-  Free legal help at the end of a phone line when businesses need some advice fast
-  A free audit of insurance arrangements to take the hassle out of getting the best cover



FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BECOMING A MEMBER

VISIT [WWW.ORNAMENTALFISH.ORG](http://WWW.ORNAMENTALFISH.ORG)

GIVE US A CALL ON 01373 301352

# About OATA

We believe OATA is an organisation that punches above its weight. Our small staff of four can only achieve what they do with the support of our voluntary Board of Directors who each bring their particular industry expertise to our work.

Our Board meets four times a year and we have a programme of New Blood, offering others the chance to take a seat at the table. If this interests you then email or talk to our Office Manager Ray Valovec.

## Staff

Dominic Whitmee (from July 2016)  
Chief Executive

Neil Hardy  
Neil Hardy Aquatica Ltd

Keith Davenport (until August 2016)  
Chief Executive

Simon Langdale  
Maidenhead Aquatics @ Iver

Gabriela Solano (left July 2016)  
Assistant to the Chief Executive

Philip Lawton  
Kidsgrove Tropicals

Ray Valovec  
Office Manager

David Pool  
FishScience Ltd

Pauline Davey  
PR and Marketing Executive (part-time)

Kevin Rose  
Lynchford Aquatics Ltd

## Directors (as at September 2016)

Mark Evenden  
Chair  
Devotedly Discus Ltd

Andrew Stagg  
NT Laboratories Ltd

Ruth Low  
Vice Chair  
Gordon Low Products Ltd

Paul West  
Cranswick Pet and Aquatics (Trading as  
Tropical Marine Centre)

James Allison  
Aquapic Solutions

Ben Windeatt  
Pets Choice

Kevin Barton  
ALF (Aquatic Distributors) Ltd

Peter Wheeler  
Aquajardin Ltd (Gloucester)

Pete Carey  
Pets at Home Ltd

Mark Winter  
Aqua Pacific Ltd

Robert Edgecock  
Independent Aquatic Imports Ltd

**New Blood (non-voting)**  
Barry Allday  
The Goldfish Bowl

Jane Flaherty  
JMC Aquatics Ltd

Matthew Stevenson  
Seneye

Richard Hale  
Berry Ring Herpetological and Aquatic  
Supplies Ltd

## Annual General Meeting

This year's AGM is on Wednesday 2 November 2016 at 12.30pm at The Manor, Weston-on-the-Green, Oxfordshire, OX25 3QL. All OATA members are welcome. Please email the office if you would like to come.

## Contact our office

By phone on 01373 301352

By email on [info@ornamentalfish.org](mailto:info@ornamentalfish.org)

By writing to OATA, Wessex House, 40 Station Road, Westbury, Wiltshire, BA13 3JN

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# THE VOICE OF THE ORNAMENTAL FISH INDUSTRY

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