

Tragic dad frustrated by 'dismissive' attitude

THE dad of a tragic teenager who drowned in Ulley Reservoir has told how his heart sinks when he sees thrill-seekers risking their lives in open water.

Simon Haycock has become an advocate for open water awareness and improved safety since the death of his 16-year-old son Sam in May last year.

This often involves him attending events at beauty spots to encourage people to try out throwline equipment and consider the risks of what might appear a harmless dip on a hot day.

But he admitted it was "too much" when, on one recent occasion, he saw large numbers in the water at Manvers Lake, where the family's campaign group Sam's Army Mission have funded a new throwline.

"There must have been 30 or 40, including young kids, going in," he said.

"I'm OK going into schools, talking to them and showing videos but with this, I couldn't cope with how dismissive they were when I spoke to them about the risks."

Simon, of Western Road, East Dene, cited shocking statistics on open water deaths, with 28 people having died across the country in July and two already by early August.

"I dread putting on the news as I know it's going to happen again," he said.

Sam's Army Mission will be attending Sprotbrough Summer Fair on Saturday to spread their awareness message and raise funds for new equipment.

Story by:
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They want to see throwlines installed at all open water spots.

Simon said while the Manvers Lake Trust had been welcoming and accommodating, it had been frustrating trying to make changes at other locations.

Changes at Ulley, including the removal of laybys next to the bridge notorious for attracting jumpers and swimmers, were welcome but had not gone far enough, Simon said.

He said he had thought the new parapet along the bridge — aimed at deterring visitors from going into the water — would have been higher.

"There are reports coming back that people are still swimming at Ulley," Simon added.

But the determined dad reflected that the past year of campaigning had made a difference, although he's determined not to rest on his laurels, with having padlocks removed from throwlines still his top priority.

"I still feel having padlocks costs lives," said Simon. "I've been told data is not recorded about what happens after throwlines are accessed so we don't know if lives are being saved or if it's too late."

Simon also wants to see a reflective strip around throwline boards to make them more visible in low light and for people who are colourblind.



Simon (second right) and Gaynor Haycock present a cheque to Manvers Boat Club back in May to finance a throwline. 220348