

**Avon Waterbody Classification and
the Water Framework Directive
Notes of meeting at Follaton House, Totnes
Friday 11th November 2011**

Attendance:	Representing
Stuart Watts – Chair (SW)	Aune Conservation Association (ACA)
Peter Marsh (PM)	Aune Conservation Association (ACA)
Paul Kenynon (PK)	Chairman of Avon Fishing Association
Chris Peach (CP)	Avon Fishing Association
Michael Cooper (MC)	Avon Fishing Association
John Peters (JP)	ACA and South Devon AONB
Roger Furniss (RF)	South West Rivers Association
Martin Ross (MR)	South West Water Environment Manager
Robin Toogood (RToo)	South Devon AONB Manager
Robert Torr (RTor)	Environment Agency (EA) - Communications Officer
Tracy Reeve (TR)	Environment Agency - Senior Environment Planning Officer
Kelvin Broad (KB)	Environment Agency - Fisheries Technical Specialist

Item	Description	Action to
1	Welcome and introductions round the table	
2	Presentation A brief presentation was given by Rob Torr on the classification process for Water Framework Directive and the specifics of the River (Devon) Avon. This also covered the no deterioration policy from the 2009 baseline.	
2.1	TR described the potential for raising the issue of pH and some fish failures at a National level within the Environment Agency.	
2.2	RF commented that National waivers were not in the spirit of the WFD and that existing conditions should be compared with naturally pristine water quality.	
2.3	RTor agreed that the EA needs to keep an open mind with regard to the pH issue.	
2.4	There was a lively discussion on the merits of biological and chemical indicators RF/JP	
2.5	Rob Torr introduced his role as Communications Officer for partnership engagement for WFD. Contact Rob on 01208 265152 Email Robert.Torr@environment-agency.gov.uk Tracy Reeve is Senior Environment Planning Officer for WFD. Contact Tracy on 01208 265406 Email tracy.reeve@environment-agency.gov.uk The freephone number for reporting incidents remains 0800 807060	
3	Avon Classification Status & identification of issues	
3.1	SW expressed concern that 'moderate' ecological status (MES) might lead to complacency about making improvements but was reassured by the EA that this would not be so (see 2).	

3.2	Waterbody ID GB108046004940 is a priority waterbody as identified in the River Basin Management Plan which set the baseline in 2009. EA identified the potential to achieve an elemental improvement in this waterbody to Good Ecological Status (GES) for fish only. The pH failure will be more difficult to address and has a delivery of GES scheduled for 2027.	
3.3	Fish failure – EA described the fish model which predicts abundance and diversity of species based on various parameters. Survey results showed less than the expected densities and diversity.	
3.4	KB made the point that where a waterbody is a priority, issues in downstream waterbodies may be addressed to help achieve good status in the waterbody in question. This may apply to fish passage issues.	
3.5	<p>Flow/Water Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field Officer has looked at the Operating Agreement with SWW and there are no reported issues. MR – it should be recognized that there were naturally occurring very low flow conditions in the River (Devon) Avon prior to dam construction. RF – flows affect wetted areas, gravels etc and cover a range of issues not just compensation flow. RF suggested that the dynamics of flow should not be good status. There was a query from PM over the status of the fish population in the reservoir. Query whether the Avon Dam operating agreement is in the public domain. JP : CAMS – Previously reported that the river is over-abstracted. Refer to Karen Abrey for more information. Criticism of the Hydropower scheme at Gara Bridge – refer to Karen Abrey for more details. 	<p>Action to EA to circulate if appropriate (TR)</p> <p>TR</p>
3.6	<p>Water Treatment Works</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> JP-Historic releases containing Alum may have contributed to the siltation problem in the upper reaches. Query whether there has been any analysis of silt and gravels – analysis/monitoring required. KB there are currently no gravel studies going on by the EA. SW stated that Peter Downs (PD) from Plymouth University is studying the flux and source of the coarse sediment in the lower Avon catchment. <p>RTor queried whether ACA could assist with this?</p>	<p>SW to contact PD</p>
3.7	<p>General Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> absence of the traditional Water Bailiff role. PM : requirement for bank maintenance. KB – fish survey programme is reducing – action to EA to ensure that surveys are targeted in an appropriate way. RF – believes that the failing classification is correct and should be addressed not fudged. SW - Salmon Action Plan (SAP): actions were identified in the plan. Is there now an opportunity to refresh interest in delivery of the SAP? 	<p>KB</p> <p>EA to investigate best way forward (RTor)</p>
3.8	Other waterbodies in the River (Devon) Avon are not scheduled for delivery to GES until 2027 for all elements.	
4	Update on the WIP Document and possible actions	

4.1	<p>Heavily Modified Water Body (HMWB)</p> <p>There is a proposal to split this waterbody and to designate the upper part as heavily modified due to changes associated with the Avon Dam. There was some discussion around this proposal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General view of the group was that it may be better not to split the water body but to improve the current MES • Splitting the waterbody is likely to mean that the fish survey sites within the main waterbody could be derogated and GES be achieved. • Status of upper waterbody would then be driven by Good Ecological Potential and mitigation measures would be identified. • RF: Proposal is not in the consultation – it is not necessary to re-designate to take action re flows etc. 	<p>Further comments to follow from Steven Stanbridge (EA). See below</p>
4.1a	<p>HMWB – post meeting comments</p> <p>There are several changes in the pipeline for the Avon Waterbody GB108046004940.</p> <p>The first occurred in response to the Review of the HMWB designations. Before the review, the waterbody was not designated, it was put forward for designation as it was considered unknown if the waterbody could reach good ecological status because of the impoundment modification associated with the Water Resources use.</p> <p>This change is currently out to consultation as part of the wider HMWB review public consultation – due to close on the 17/11/11.</p> <p>The next requested change occurred after the HMWB Review was completed internally. As part of the Delineation Review (review of the blue lines waterbody extent), it was suggested that this waterbody could be split to more accurately represent the impact of the reservoir on the fish populations, as it was not felt that the impact was felt throughout the whole length of the waterbody. Therefore the upper section from the confluence of Bala Brook was put forward to be HMWB and the lower section from Bala Brook down not designated. The lower section could then likely reach good status.</p> <p>This change has been accepted, but not yet signed off. There is going to be a public consultation of the Delineation Review changes starting either late this year or early next (2012) for 3 months.</p> <p>The designation of the upper section to HMWB is by no means a lower classification, it is simply an alternative classification (of good potential, as opposed to good status), whereby we are accepting that the waterbody will not get to good status (near natural condition) because of the impacts of the reservoir. It does give us the opportunity to identify mitigation measures to address the pressures and impacts, caused by this reservoir, on the waterbody. Once all of the mitigation measures are in place then the waterbody will be considered to be at good potential. Mitigation measures could include things such as regulation of flows and instalment of fish passage.</p> <p>Once mitigation measures have been identified – a process that will happen after the external consultation on the Delineation Review, investigations into how best deliver those Mitigation Measures will take place. This is likely to occur late 2012.</p>	

4.2	Venn Weir SW - May cause delays to migratory fish if and when the fish pass becomes blocked, as in recent past Greg Armstrong is the national fish pass expert and perhaps he could look at Venn Weir	KB to take this forward.
4.3	Action For a group of volunteers to undertake gravel rehabilitation, possibly co-ordinated by Westcountry Rivers Trust.	Initial contact to be made by RF
4.4	Joint observations session EA/other interested parties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Leader for local Environment Management Officer to be approached to organise observations session on the river from Shipley Bridge to Avon Dam, ideally for December. • Request that members of the attending associations are vigilant when on the river and report issues to the EA. The above to populate a "wish list" of actions on the river for discussion at the next meeting.	RTor to set up
4.5	Walkover Surveys RF - EA lacks resources. WRT can do comprehensive walkover surveys/train volunteers and possibly bid for funding from other sources. RF to make initial approach to WRT to discuss	RF
4.6	RToo – Funding Government and Defra recognize resource difficulties. There was an invitation for interested parties to express an interest for co-ordination of activities on a catchment wide scale. South Devon AONB has expressed interest.	Meeting with Ben Bunting pending (RToo)
4.7	Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MR – EA needs to circulate measures for delivery of GES or elemental improvement on priority waterbodies asap. This should show costing and timelines • TR - The EA is currently recruiting two Special Project Officers for WFD delivery. Post holders will be based in the Area Environment Planning Team and liaise closely with Lesley Newport – Regional Programme Manager. 	
5	Responses Covered throughout and a submission by PK about the Gara Bridge hydropower generation scheme (see3.5)	
8	Next meeting – to be arranged in February following observation outing (see 4.4)	SW