## DEVON AVON WATER QUALITY GROUP Notes of meeting at Follaton House, Totnes Monday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2013

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Attendanc	e:	Representing			
Stuart Watts - Chair (SW)		Chair, Aune Conservation Association (ACA)			
Neil Osborne (NO)		Environment Agency – Principal Environment Pla	nning Officer, WR		
Kelvin Broad (KB)		Environment Agency - Fisheries Technical Specialist			
Glenis Pew	. ,	South West Water (SWW) – Resources Strategis			
Roger Furniss (RF)		South West Rivers Association			
Robin Toogood (RT)		South Devon AONB Manager			
Bruce Stockley (BS)		Head of Fisheries WRT			
Chris Klee (CK)		Formerly of SW Fisheries Advisory Committee			
Scott West (SCW)		SHRimP (WRT)			
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Apologies					
Mike Cooper		Avon Fishing Association (AFA)			
Peter Marsh		ACA			
John Peters		ACA and South Devon AONB			
John Robei	rts	Chair, AFA			
Nia Snowden - Minutes		Environment Agency (EA) Environment Planning Officer			
Emma-Rose Herrera		Environment Agency (EA) Catchment Coordinator – South Devon			
Mike Blackı	more	Wild Trout Trust			
Mike Maslin		Environment Agency - Environment Officer			
Tracy Reeve		Environment Agency – Senior Environment Planning Officer			
Agenda	Description		Action		
Item	-				
1	Welcome, introd	ductions and apologies for absence.			
		taken over as SHRImP manager for WRT			
2 & 3	Notes of meeti	ng of 25 <sup>th</sup> June 2013 and matters arising:			
	Notes v	vere agreed			
<ul> <li>Matters</li> </ul>		=			
		tation: David Sear has been unavailable; a local			
		s a possibility to give a presentation to the group			
		nentation despite the wider relevance to other	BS		
	catchments		В		
4	South Devon o	atchment partnership			
	RT described how some funds are likely to be available for				
		'catchment hosts' to help drive progress towards meeting Water			
	Framework Dire	ective targets. The AONB and WRT have agreed			
	Framework Dire to work as joint	ective targets. The AONB and WRT have agreed 'hosts' for the South Devon group of catchments.			
	Framework Dire to work as joint Concern was ex resources and	ective targets. The AONB and WRT have agreed			

RT asked the group to consider what more is needed to enable

	us to contribute to the achievement of Good Ecological	
	Status for the Avon i.e. what are the gaps?	ALL
5	<b>Trout genetics</b> WRT has used existing funds from the ARC project to study the genetics of trout populations in different parts of the river. Preliminary findings suggest that there may be two distinct populations – above and below Lydia Falls. It is hoped to repeat the work for salmon populations.	BS
	Venn Weir  SHRIMP has put the repairs to the fish pass out to tender. The EA own the pass but do not use it. The interest lies in its potential for scientific use in monitoring fish movements and in its historical significance. The main body of the weir will be repaired as part of SHRIMP – timing uncertain.  Curtisknowle Weir  A fish pass has been installed. Its effectiveness will be monitored both by AFA observations and by the number of fish upstream. The possible effect on smolt mortality is uncertain – see 7, below.  Brent Island Weir  The structure is being repaired (SHRIMP) in consultation with local community interest groups.  Loddiswell Weir  Further observation has suggested that this boulder weir is not an important barrier – no further action  Crackhill Weir	SCW
	An elver pass will be installed, in due course, by SHRImP	
6	Fish/River Monitoring Programme – WRT WRT Data Loggers – 11 loggers have been installed to monitor water quality, pH, conductivity. SCW will distribute a map illustrating the locations.	SCW
	WRT have conduct a second round of electro-fishing and will report the results by December. The EA continues to electro-fish and the two sets of results should be consolidated	SCW/ BS/EA
	WRT Nutrient Budget Model . The model has been modified as a result of stakeholder input and awaits reliable data before running 'scenarios'. This is a system which describes the probability of an impact of a variety of human activities on water quality. RF asked what would happen to the model after SHRImP; future use needs clarification. High phosphate concentrations in the river have been identified by the EA as a problem for the model to examine.	BS
7	Water Releases from Avon Dam  NO stated the Environment Agency's current position on best use of the fisheries bank is that it should be used to maintain the compensation flow at the higher rate specified in the license conditions rather make specific spate releases but that it would review this position in the light of any new information that becomes available. A technical meeting has been arranged with SWW, WRT and the EA on 18 <sup>th</sup> December to examine possible uses of the water and suggest some trials - possible uses includes attempting to reduce smolt mortality.	GP/KB/NO/BS/SCW

	SCW will provide feedback to the DAG and, specifically, will liaise with the AFA about the outcomes of the meeting.  GP advised that SWW will require instruction from the EA for releasing the water for the trials (similar to fisheries bank releases at other Dams). The EA undertook to prepare the appropriate paperwork.  There has been no fishery bank release to date. Uncertainty remains at SWW about the legal interpretation of the license covering release of water from the dam for ecological and stakeholder benefit downstream. GP stated that this uncertainty should not prevent the 'trial' of water releases in an attempt to reduce smolt mortality.  SCW reported that the Hydrology Study (produced by Hydrologic) concentrated on the hydrology of the catchment to assist with the understanding of how flows change. This	NO
	information will be required when considering the possible benefits of any water releases from the Avon Dam.  SCW would circulate a recent publication on the effect of low flows on smolt mortality.	SCW
8	Illegal Netting & Estuary Byelaws Illegal estuary netting continues to be a problem on the Avon, as elsewhere in the South Hams, and threatens to undermine any progress made by SHRImP in restoring fish populations to their full ecological potential. Salmon, Sea Trout and Bass are often caught in the nets which, ostensibly, are put out to catch Mullet. The ACA will continue to report any incidents to the MMO and DoC.	SW
	The ACA has been assured by the Duchy of Cornwall (DoC) that no licenses to net will be issued for the Avon, beyond a couple for sand eel fishing. IFCA and MMO have told the DoC that they would provide 'witness statements' to support any prosecutions the DoC might bring. The DoC has written to all PH-registered boats via the MMO and IFCA, banning netting on the Avon. In practical terms these actions are unlikely to be effective; SW had been contacted by Rodney Bastard (Yealm) detailing illegal netting activities over the last 30 years, under the noses of the responsible agencies.	
	The netting byelaws need urgent revision. All were urged to lobby for this.	All
SW	Next Meeting 6 months hence, TBA	SW