

DEVON AVON WATER QUALITY GROUP
Notes of meeting at Follaton House, Totnes
Tuesday 5th February 2013

Attendance:	Representing
Stuart Watts – Chair (SW)	Aune Conservation Association (ACA)
Peter Marsh (PM)	ACA
John Peters (JP)	ACA and South Hams Society
Glenis Pewsey (GP)	South West Water
John Roberts (JR)	Avon Fishing Association
Tracy Reeve (TR)	Environment Agency - Senior Environment Planning Officer
Robert Torr (RTor)	Environment Agency (EA) - Communications Officer
Bruce Stockley (BS)	Head of Fisheries WRT
Karensa Lawrie (KL)	WRT
Chris Klee (CK)	Formerly of SW Fisheries Advisory Committee
Apologies	
Neil Osborne (NO)	Environment Agency – Principal Environment Planning Officer, WR
Kelvin Broad (KB)	Environment Agency - Fisheries Technical Specialist
Robin Toogood (RT)	South Devon AONB
Roger Furniss (RF)	South West Rivers Association
Martin Ross (MR)	South West Water

Agenda Item	Description	Action
1	Welcome, introductions and apologies for absence.	
2 & 3	<p>Notes of meeting of 25th September and matters arising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes were agreed as read • Matters arising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Suggestion to request David Sear to give presentation to the group on gravel augmentation: subsumed into a talk to a wider audience. ○ WRT to try to obtain a copy of Peter Beale's PhD thesis from Exeter University. 	<p>BS</p> <p>KL</p>
4	<p>Shrimp Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ WRT walkovers have been completed on the Avon and there is a need to liaise with EA re gravel augmentation proposals. ○ Sourcing gravel may be an issue but a quarry in Cornwall can provide a gravel that mimics that found on Dartmoor. ○ JP queried whether EA have been in touch with the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology re gravel. RT responded that gravel rehabilitation was a well established procedure in the EA. ○ The EA is improving the gauging station at Loddiswell. ○ RTor – Venn Weir. It has been established that the EA has no further historical data from the old fish trap. 	BS/KL

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership and Landowner Engagement with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DAG ○ Natural England ○ EA ○ Woodland Trust ○ Landowners / AFA ○ Devon Wildlife Trust (Living landscapes) ○ Plymouth University. • Data Acquisition and Review Information supplied by:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For all rivers : EA and NE ○ For the Avon: SWW, Aune Conservation, Slapton Field Studies Council, Plymouth University ○ JP queried whether Exeter Uni should also be involved. • Monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PM queried whether South Hams DC has data available on E. coli levels low down the system? Perhaps Robin Toogood could respond. • Dartmoor Acid Feasibility Study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Deposition thought to be from anthropogenic activity primarily from Plymouth industrial sites (e.g. the old power station) in the past. ○ Optimistic estimate of recovery by 2020. ○ Areas with more resilient soils have already recovered. ○ WRT proposed a small pilot on the River Dart to buffer pH and address low pH spikes. ○ Aluminium was discussed and the correlation between aluminium, low pH levels and effects on fish. ○ Concern over the potential for fugitive emissions of aluminium used by the Water Industry. GP to report on procedures to prevent accidental spills. ○ RT to check on EA monitoring for Aluminium • Habitat Walkover Surveys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hendry and Cragg-Hine methodology to characterise each stretch of watercourse from the Dam to Loddiswell including all tributaries. ○ WRT have developed a template for reporting spawning and Reds – to be circulated. ○ Obstacles to fish migration have been identified and described (see 5, below). ○ Continuous Data loggers for pH and temperature to monitor fluctuations to be installed. Focussed in upper Avon for up to 1 year. ○ Environmental Health/Cefas may have further data on E. coli, temperature and salinity. ○ Nutrient modelling – Toby Krugger developing a model on land use/population and river inputs to model nutrients spatially. This will help to target measures more effectively. ○ Discussion around what drives crop choices. Current issue with bare fields and soil loss. ○ ACA would supply WRT with Hazelwood House (mid-Avon) contacts. • Monitoring and assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ MSc project underway looking at Bullhead populations • Actions – land management grants available for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stock exclusion ○ Controlled drinking ○ Soil testing ○ Nutrient management plans <p>The above working with Lizbe Pilbeam – CSF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Coppicing and planting – liaising with the Woodland Trust 	<p>RT</p> <p>BS</p> <p>GP</p> <p>RTor</p> <p>KL</p> <p>KL</p> <p>SW</p>
--	---	---

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Walkovers may lead to whole farm plan but still rely on persuasion and are not mandatory. • In Stream Works <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Looking primarily at barriers for salmonids, eels and elvers ○ Channel re-alignment ○ Potential to tag and track gravel. 	
5	<p>Obstacles to fish movement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barriers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Barriers have been mapped, some with detailed assessment. ○ There is a spreadsheet with a comprehensive list of barriers – it was requested that this be shared with the EA ○ Report due out in the next two weeks – to be circulated. ○ Venn Weir – seen as the major obstruction. KL to liaise with Kelvin Broad on actions. ○ Curtisknowle Weir – EA and DCC progressing matters after un-permitted actions at this site. ○ There was some debate as to whether fish migrate downstream from the Avon Dam. BS proposed analysis to determine genetic origins. ○ WRT funding must be spent by 2015. 	<p>KL KL/BS KL/KB BS</p>
6	<p>Water Releases from Avon Dam</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trial releases by SWW have been shown not to affect water quality • Lessons can be learnt from Burrator/Meavy model (James Wimpres – EA). • Protocol needs to be developed as to who inputs to a decision to make releases/when and how effects would be monitored • Talks to be instigated in mid-March between: EA (Neil Osborne), EA (Kelvin Broad), SWW, WRT, DAG Karensa to organise. 	<p>KL</p>
7	<p>Fish Monitoring and Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covered earlier in these notes in respect of comments from RTor on no further data on Venn Weir. Other available data have been provided by EA. • Additional electric fishing studies will be organised as part of SHRImp with a request for volunteers to help out. 	<p>KL</p>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estuary Byelaws <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SW – concerns that byelaws are not fit for purpose. Exe byelaws for example are more clear and concise. ○ Estuarine byelaw review will go through Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA). IFCA to be asked for progress report on Avon. Contact: office@devonandsevernifca.gov.uk ○ EA reviewing all own byelaws – led by Martin Williams. Rob Torr to clarify position on Avon • Illegal Netting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Concerns over illegal gill netting ○ Salmonids cannot be legally sold through licensed fishmongers unless they are tagged by licensed netmen. ○ RTor stated that the EA have taken a prosecution against a fishmonger selling un-tagged fish and urged members to report any suspected un-lawful fishing or fish for sale. The number is 0800 80 70 60 ○ Intelligence is always helpful especially car registration numbers etc... ○ Note – it is legal to net Sand Eel. 	<p>CK RTor</p>

9	<p>Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JP queried whether there is information on availability of fish in the estuary to migrate and how this is being built into the programme. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ BS – to date there has been more emphasis put on downstream smolt migration rather than upstream migration. ○ KL discussed the possibility of measuring flows and associating with fish movement in conjunction with a tagging study. ○ PM suggested that the Salmon trap at Venn Weir would give an indication of Salmon moving through if operated in November/December. Action for Rob Torr to establish legality of fish trap and any permits required for its operation. ○ The Navy might have some sonar information. • Question Time The BBC programme 'Question Time' will feature the South Hams AONB on 4th March and will be at the Kings Arms (Kingsbridge). Speakers will include representatives from the NFU and National Park Authority. • Waterframework Directive - Rob Torr gave an update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2012 results indicated GES being achieved in around 30% of waterbodies. Although this appears to show little improvement over the baseline of 2009, there have been significant elemental improvements for fish and phosphate. ○ Overall we are monitoring more parameters so there is no like-for-like comparison. ○ In 2015 there is likely to be a dual classification so we can compare in a meaningful way but also find out real status. ○ This is now the biggest water census we have ever had in England and Wales. ○ Planning for the Second Cycle – Working Together consultation has now ended. ○ Significant Water Management Issues consultation will run June to September. ○ DEFRA to report on pilots later this year. Funding has now ceased. ○ There will be no further rounds of Catchment Restoration Funding. 	RTor
10	<p>Next Meeting - Follaton House</p> <p>Likely in three months' time depending on issues to discuss. SW to arrange as appropriate.</p>	