

DEVON AVON WATER QUALITY GROUP
Notes of meeting at Follaton House, Totnes
Wednesday 30th May 2012

Attendance:	Representing
Stuart Watts – Chair (SW)	Aune Conservation Association (ACA)
Peter Marsh (PM)	ACA
Michael Cooper (MC)	Avon Fishing Association (AFA)
John Peters (JP)	ACA and South Devon AONB
Glenis Pewsey (GP)	South West Water
Neil Osborne (NO)	Environment Agency – Principal Environment Planning Officer, Water Resources
Andy Thomas (AT)	Wild Trout Trust
John Roberts (JR)	AFA
APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
Tracy Reeve (TR)	Environment Agency - Senior Environment Planning Officer
Roger Furniss (RF)	South West Rivers Association
Robin Toogood (RToo)	South Devon AONB Manager
Kelvin Broad (KB)	Environment Agency - Fisheries Technical Specialist
Robert Torr (RTor)	Environment Agency (EA) - Communications Officer
Martin Ross (MR)	South West Water Environment Manager
Dylan Bright	WRT

Agenda Item	Description	Action
1	<p>Welcome and apologies for absence</p> <p>SW noted that despite agreeing the date of this meeting in February, a large number of group members had been unable to attend. This situation was particularly disappointing since the group had been set up in response to the EA's original invitation for community participation and had involved considerable time and effort by voluntary organisations. More importantly, the quality of the group's outputs in improving the water quality of the river is impeded by absence and poor communication. This view was widely endorsed by those present.</p>	All
2 & 3	<p>Notes of meeting of 28th Feb. and matters arising: The appended overview of the proposed EA Catchment Planning Programme was felt to be unclear about the timing and duration of Water Framework Directive cycles (WFD). Similarly, the distinction between the existing Waterbody Information Pack (WIP) and planned Catchment Information Packs (CIP) needs clarification, as far as the Devon Avon is concerned; the CIP seems to be a reiteration of the WIP with little progress, to date, as a result of the first WFD cycle.</p> <p>MC suggested that one individual should take overall responsibility for EA activities for the Avon catchment in the next WFD cycle.</p> <p>The consensus remains that this group would do well to focus on the immediate remit in the Devon Avon WIP of improving habitat quality for fish.</p> <p>RF had e-mailed his comments about the last meeting: a) Given the paucity of data on fish species and numbers, he would like to see details of how fish monitoring would be improved by WRT and EA work</p>	All

	<p>programmes.</p> <p>b) Gravel augmentation: Prof David Sear (Soton Univ) has published comprehensively on the topic.</p> <p>c) Despite the old saying "The first floods of May take the smolts away", recent observations suggest salmon smolt migration may now be earlier. Sea Trout smolts often migrate in March.</p>	
4	<p>CRF bid update</p> <p>SW had heard from DB that the WRT bid for CRF funds was likely to be successful but might require amendment. However, discussion was limited because only the AFA had seen a copy of the final bid; a situation that was felt by all to be less than desirable if the DAG partnership was to be successful.</p>	
5	<p>Terms of Reference</p> <p>The Terms of Reference document in its present or earlier incarnations has been accepted by all parties except SWW where the corporate lawyers have yet to examine it.</p>	GP
6	<p>WFD classification of Avon Waterbody</p> <p>The results of the review, due to be published at the end of March 2012 are awaited. Will the river be split into two separate zones? How will the zones be designated? Where would any split occur?</p>	RTor/TR
7	<p>Fishery Water Bank releases from the dam</p> <p>No experimental releases to facilitate smolt movement had been made from the dam owing to heavy April rainfall. Discussions between SWW and EA about the timing and nature (pulse or steady flow) of any release continue.</p> <p>Normal Compensation Flow from the dam was calculated originally as the flow which exceeded the normal, unimpeded river flow at that point for 98% of the time and was set at $0.068\text{m}^3\text{sec}^{-1}$ (as per abstraction licence). When running at the normal compensation flow, the licence provides for generation of a 'water bank' at the rate of $0.027\text{m}^3\text{sec}^{-1}$ to benefit fisheries by the release of the banked water when it is most needed, the so-called 'freshet' releases. The manner of 'freshet' releases is subject only to the physical restrictions of SWW's pipework.</p>	NO/GP
8	<p>Obstacles to fish movement</p> <p>Ownership of Venn Weir remains in doubt but is commonly believed to lie with EA. Recent damage to the fish pass has been reported to EA by AFA; repairs are awaited.</p> <p>A comprehensive up-to-date survey of obstacles to fish movement is needed and should be incorporated in a successful WRT/CRF bid</p>	KB DB
9	<p>Historical water levels</p> <p>SW reviewed his examination of EA data on river flow at Loddiswell going back to 1990. The data varies very widely on a monthly basis as expected of a spate river but the overall trend towards reduced flow is clear, especially since 2007, partly explained by low rainfall. GP and NO cautioned against accepting the recent reduction of 37% (2007-2011) as typical. In SW's view, insufficient attention had been given to the implications for river ecology and water abstraction strategy by the EA.</p>	
10	<p>Conclusions and recommendations</p> <p>'Warm' words and agreed Terms of Reference, alone, do not make for an effective partnership for river improvement. Communication of information between members and attendance at meetings need to improve. A clear and prioritised strategy for action is required.</p> <p>The focus for the next meeting should be the Devon Avon work plan forming part of the WRT/CRFbid</p>	All