

## The Annual General Meeting of the Fowey Rivers Association was held on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2017 at Boconnoc

### Present

Bill Smith (Chairman)	Paul Jordan (Treasurer)	
Chris Bryant	Roger Colvin	Dave Dawson
Jewels Dawson	Jason Drew	Robin Duffy
Bill Eliot	Richard Grieve	Elizabeth Fortescue
Roger Furniss	Chris Janes	Roger Lashbrook
Matt L'Estrange	Ivan Lyne	Richard Morris
Neil Smith	John Tisdale	David White
Rob Williams	Geoff Wood	Jon Evans (Secretary)

### In attendance

David Chapman (WRT)	Bruce Stockley (WRT)
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### Apologies

Roger Brake	Chris Marwood	Chris Matthews
Neil Yeandle	Giles Rickard	

### 1. Minutes of the 2016 AGM

The minutes of the AGM held on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2016 were agreed.

### 2. Matters arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes

### 3. Chairman's report

The Chairman reported on notable events in the previous year

1. Hatchery. The FRA limited company had signed a contract with SWW to operate the hatchery that SWW had built by reengineering the old Colliford hatchery building. The hatchery manager, Richard Grieve, would be reporting later in the meeting.
2. St Neot habitat improvements. Westcountry Rivers Trust (WRT) had already completed two of the ten schemes planned for completion before 2020.
3. Treworrey. The Treworrey fishing had been purchased outright by the FRA with the financial support of Liskeard and Restormel clubs and Coode's Estates. He thanked Paul Jordan for managing the purchase and ensuring that the FRA now owned 47% of the sanctuary water in the upper Draynes valley, and leased a further 27%.
4. Counter. The most recent counter data showed that 2016 had been the worst salmon year (336 fish) since 1967 and the trend was continuing downwards. Improved fishing methods were essential to ensure salmon numbers were optimised. Sea trout are also down but this is of less concern on account of the cyclical nature of sea trout runs.

5. Limited company. Roger Furniss had agreed to be appointed as a director of the company. He was leading on hatchery matters working closely with Richard Grieve. The Chairman paid tribute to the immensely valuable work Roger had done for the SWRA since his appointment in 2004.
6. Netting. John Tisdale, who leads for SWRA on netting reported on the Cornwall IFCA. The revised byelaw, while ending most estuarial netting, had reintroduced an obsolete netting method, ebb netting, previously only practised at subsistence level on the Fal. The EA had objected to this. It was expected that reconciliation of this could take up to seven years which would only benefit commercial netmen. It had also removed the headrope restriction in coastal nets and told the netmen that their activities would not be regulated. The Devon IFCA by contrast had managed the process well, had no ebb netting proposal and had retained the 3 metre headrope restriction.
7. Water for Growth. WRT had obtained a £2.3m grant. Bruce Stockley and Dave Chapman would be talking about this later in the meeting.
8. He thanked Richard Grieve and the hatchery volunteer team for their sterling efforts, Elizabeth Fortescue for her generosity in again allowing us the use of Boconnoc for our AGM, Paul Jordan for keeping the finances so well under control, Jon Evans for his continued efforts and his co-directors on the Board for their support.

#### 4. **Treasurer's report**

The Treasurer reported on the company (FRAL) and the association (FRA). The accounts were dissociated from each other. The financial situation was set out in the paper circulated with the agenda.

The association funds had been reduced significantly by the expenditure on the purchase of Treworrey which meant the FRA now owned 46% of the Draynes. The end of year balance is £ 10,725.90.

The association managed a period of financial insecurity, not only on account of the Treworrey purchase timetable but more significantly, getting to grips with the SWW accounting system which was not attuned to the hatchery contract and the FRA cashflow. These had now been resolved and a sustainable position had been achieved. However, he drew attention to the reduction of FRA reserves which, unless there were major changes, would run out in the near future. The FRA was dependent on SWW for funding the hatchery and this money could not be used for other FRA projects. For these the association was dependent on the £5,000 p.a. from the Colliford public inquiry support and other income from angler donations and other sources yet to be found. Expenditure of the Colliford funds was subject to the agreement of SWW, the EA and FRA and the infrastructure costs of the FRA such as insurances, fees and subscriptions have to be obtained from elsewhere.

The 2016-17 accounts have been submitted to Companies House and HMRC.

The accounts to date and the abbreviated company accounts were noted.

The Treasurer was thanked for his report.

5. **Secretary's report**

The Secretary reported on other issues

1. The fry survey programme, temporarily halted for financial reasons during 2016, was being reinstated on a biennial basis from 2017.
2. The FRA voluntary catch restrictions were now adopted by the majority of clubs and other riparians. It was noted that unless anglers could take the occasional fish, they would stop fishing and an essential source of volunteers for river management would disappear. Roger Furniss said that the Angling Trust had obtained an agreement from DEFRA that there would not be a quid pro quo requirement for controls on exploitation between rods and nets.
3. The association had held a very effective programme of quarterly meetings and he thanked committee members for their help and guidance.

The Secretary was thanked for his report.

6. **Colliford Hatchery. Report from Richard Grieve**

OFWAT had agreed as part of PR14 that SWW could support the reopening of the Colliford Hatchery. SWW would manage the reconstruction and reengineering as well as supplying the major capital equipment. SWW had contracted management of the hatchery to FRA.

Richard reported that he had been appointed Hatchery Manager from autumn 2016. The hatchery building had been handed over slightly later than planned and the old Wainsford equipment, which had been stored both by Boconnoc and Pengover, was installed together with some new equipment purchased by SWW. Richard thanked both Boconnoc and Trevor Sobey for their storage help.

Broodstock collection had started in October predominantly with the help of anglers bringing in rod caught fish. Volunteer recruitment had improved as a result of being able to see something real happening. There was now a first class team working with him. The brood fish target of eight cock fish and eight hen fish had been reached. Some fish were carrying fungus, most came from mid river and half from one angler. 38,000 eggs had been laid down, using a factorial mating process to ensure genetic diversity. The swim up fry target had been achieved. Throughout the collection period, the trap had been operated at the St Neot Fowey junction but had caught mainly sea trout, some quite large.

Water temperature was a significant factor in hatcheries and the Colliford water being below 10°C had contributed to the success. The water is now warming up

but a purpose built chiller system had been installed for recycling water through the hatching troughs which helped to produce good quality fry. Swim up fry need to be encouraged to start feeding but all have now done so. The algal bloom in Colliford was significant this year and had not cleared during the cold winter as one would expect, but had caused minimal disruption in the Hatchery.

Stocking will be dependent on fry growth rates matched with tank capacity. The plan allows some early stocking in May before the holiday demand for water leads to larger releases into the St Neot which means high flows that are inimical to small fish. The main stocking will take place after the August bank holiday when the water demand reduces dramatically and there are better river conditions for fry release. The exact programme for releases will be determined as the fish grow over the summer when feeding rates increase as the water temperature rises.

He repeated his thanks to all the volunteers, broodstock collectors and others who had contributed to the success of the first years programme.

The Chairman thanked Richard for his presentation and both him and all the other people who had been so instrumental in the success of the programme.

7. **Election of officers.**

The officers had all agreed to stand for a further year and were re-elected en bloc.

8. **Committee**

The agenda had listed the committee members and it was agreed that they should all be elected en bloc.

9. **Website**

Richard, who also managed the website for the FRA, said that his review had shown a tailing off of traffic. He said that he believed that there needed to be a board or committee member specifically charged with updates and inputs.

BS

10. **Water for Growth (W4G)**

Bruce Stockley and Dave Chapman introduced the Water for Growth programme for which WRT had received a £1.8m grant, with £0.5m match funding, for work on the Fowey and the Camel.

Bruce initially introduced the concept of cumulative impact of weirs on running fish. At each weir, there is a percentage of fish that fail to pass the weir. In the 1920s when fish were abundant this was not significant in that all the spawning sites were likely to be filled. However, the number of fish now running the rivers

has massively reduced and the spawning sites may not all be filled.

He explained that for the next three years, the WRT will deliver improvements to the passage of migratory fish like salmon and sea trout on the rivers Fowey and Camel and their tributaries. The project is funded by the European Union Structural Development Fund and, in partnership with the Environment Agency, Natural England, South West Water, will aim to;

- remove or alter manmade weirs,
- improve in river and bankside habitat, informed by electrofishing data
- increase numbers juvenile salmon and sea trout alevins, parr and smolts
- clean the gravels needed for successful spawning

The project is directed at improving Cornwall's natural capital (rivers and their associated flora and fauna). This, in return, will encourage and facilitate responsible and sustainable exploitation of this natural capital in the form of game angling. The wealth of natural capital in Cornwall has become diminished by the historic development of weirs and other man made blockages which reduce the annual migration of salmon and sea trout. With stocks low, game angling, and the economic input it brings to local enterprises, has fallen.

WRT will assess and improve or remove barriers to upstream and downstream migration of salmon and sea trout. At the same time, the work will benefit native stocks of wild brown trout, eel, bullhead and brook lamprey that also move up and down the river course. Alongside two hectares of in-stream habitat works, there will be improvements to over 63 hectares of the Fowey and Camel catchments. It was also recognised that there is a need for resting places for potential spawners to use in low water.

With the increase in populations of fish, the rivers will be able to support a greater amount of responsible angling, accessed by a phone app, and the resulting economic benefit this will bring to local enterprises will cement the value of this natural capital within Cornwall.

During questions, it was emphasized that the production of reports would be additional to the funded work "on the ground" but that the European funds can be used to support the reintroduction of the electrofishing surveys.

Dave said that the project would not impact natural weirs and would only deal with manmade structures. The objective of weir removal was to enable adults to reach spawning areas, smolts to run to sea and kelts, particularly multiple spawning sea trout, to return to their oceanic feeding areas. All this is to be achieved without impacting current angling effort. Every weir has to be looked at on an individual basis as they are all unique and often change river habitat in a variety of ways; where pools are created natural river form and habitat is usually lost. Each weir will be assessed to determine the best options to improve fish passage for up and downstream migration for both trout and salmon; assessment

also needs to consider adjoining land use and angling activity. In some instances weir removal may offer the best overall solution, in other situations the installation of a technical fish pass may be preferred. The third option are 'easements' which are generally small scale in nature; pre-barrages to deepen pools and reduce jumping heights are one such easement option as are adjustments to weir crests or the addition of baffles to concentrate and deepen water flows across the structure.

Bruce emphasized that efforts will be made to maintain holding water and increase habitat diversity. Removal or management of tree stumps causing blockages and managing shading by coppicing will help, as will increasing gravel movement. The physical removal of gravels that had gravitated downstream and installation of gravel recruitment piles at the top of the catchment would also help, but is not currently planned as part of the project.

Maintenance of coppicing in subsequent years will be something for the clubs and riparians to manage because the project funding will finish in three years. Every job will have a two year defect period. Bruce reported that WRT will continue to work to raise funds for habitat works on the Fowey in future years.

Roger Furniss thanked Bruce and Dave for their presentation which had informed the meeting about important work during the next three years. He said that it was important to look at the cause of our problems and not presume solutions without evidence. To this end, it was necessary to develop a plan for the future activities of WRT and FRA.

11. **Riverfly training**

The Chairman said that WRT was planning a Riverfly Training programme and he encouraged everyone to get in touch with Giles Rickard if they were interested.

12. **Date of next AGM**

18<sup>th</sup> April 2018