

A meeting of the Fowey Rivers Association
was held on Wednesday 10th January 2018
. at Lostwithiel Social Club

Present

Dr Bill Smith (Chairman)

Roger Furniss (Glynn)

Paul Jordan (Treasurer)

John Tisdale (Newbridge)

David White (LDAC)

Rob Williams (LDAC)

Jon Evans (Secretary)

In attendance

Dave Chapman (WRT)

Giles Rickard (WRT)

Apologies

Matt L'Estrange (Lanhydrock)

Chris Janes (Riverbed management)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 11th October 2017

The minutes of the committee meeting held on 11th October 2017 were agreed.

2. Matters arising

1. IFCA. It was noted that the Cornwall byelaw had today been signed off by the Minister. This means no further estuary netting in Cornwall except for ebb netting and netting for sandeels. The Devon position was unknown.

It was agreed that Simon Toms should be thanked for his very significant contribution to this important development.

JE

John Tisdale agreed that he would continue to attend IFCA meetings when possible.

JT

3. Accounts to December 2017

The Treasurer introduced his report on the position to December 2017.

1. Current position. The hatchery payments are ring fenced and currently £9337 in credit because the latest SWW payment had been received. The dedicated hatchery account had been opened. The funds in SWW for FFRG currently stand at £3,041. Total funds available to FRA are £26,863 less commitments for the Fry survey and sanctuary payments, leaving £21,631.
2. Sanctuary. The sanctuary contracts need to be available by mid February.
3. It was noted that Bruce Stockley had agreed that W4G finding would be available for the 2018 fry survey. Dave C agreed to clarify with Bruce.

RW

DC

The accounts were noted and the Treasurer was thanked for his presentation.

4. Hatchery report

Roger Furniss reported that there were now 50,000 ova at the hatchery and the change in temperature meant that the first eying up would take longer than previously estimated. Mortality is low at 3%. The trap has been removed and will be renovated and stored. It was hoped that the water bank could be made available for future trapping.

RF

It was agreed that Richard and his team of volunteers should be thanked for their sterling efforts.

JE

The EA review on 12th October 2017 had been held and Simon Toms had recognised that the hatchery had achieved its objectives. He had expressed his support for the hatchery despite significant internal lack of EA support for hatcheries generally. The revised Stocking Plan was being drafted by Simon after comments by RF and JE. This would include fin clipping a proportion of the fry. This was acceptable to RG and the volunteers. Also awaited is the Stocking Certificate although it would not be needed until the summer.

The possibility of a smolt trap was still being investigated although the current SWW funding would not cover the running costs.

5. Net Limitation Order renewal.

A meeting to review the current NLO was held on 5th January by the EA to consult clubs and riparians. It was proposed that the remaining net on the Fowey would be bought out permanently to give a NLO of zero. This had to be implemented by 31st March and include suitable consultation with Stephen Tabb and SWW which was funding the buyout. The EA had also taken the opportunity to address the proposition of matching the net reduction with voluntary controls by the rods. He provided information to show the decline in both salmon and sea trout over the past 20 years and at all stages in the life cycle. He also showed the reduction in angler effort. There are opinions in DEFRA that the rods and nets should bear the same pain and if the rods do not introduce constraints, the EA may well impose byelaws.

He then detailed the specific voluntary controls he was hoping the FRA would adopt.

Salmon measures

- Voluntary catch and release of salmon to achieve a minimum of 90% annually (outside of the current mandatory period which is in place until 16th June)
- First salmon caught by an angler to be returned with an annual bag limit of one salmon to be retained per season per angler.
- Barbless, single hooks for bait fishing to be used all year
- Barbless single hooks on lures / spinners from 31 August (to enable sea trout

fishing)

- No treble hooks to be used in conjunction with any fly, bait, lure or spinner
- Worm fishing permitted to the end of August only (to enable sea trout bait fishing)
- Voluntary end to the salmon fishing season on the 30 November
- Measures to be reviewed annually
- Understanding that if the river moves to “at risk” in any year, there will be a need to adopt additional protection, either moving to 100% catch and release with a presumption of implementing mandatory protection.

As additional voluntary protection for sea trout we agreed:-

- Voluntary bag limits of 10 sea trout per season, maximum of 4 sea trout per week, with a maximum bag limit of 2 sea trout per day.
- Voluntary sea trout “slot size” to retain sea trout. This would require releasing all sea trout less than 40 cm and those greater than 60 cm. This effectively ensures that small sea trout are protected so that they can survive to spawn at least once and those mature, repeat spawning sea trout, which are poor to eat, can continue to contribute to spawning.

It was noted that any decision the FRA took on fishing constraints could only be an advisory recommendation. The FRA might recommend but the decision to enforce the recommendations was up to the clubs and riparians.

Paul, wearing his Secretary LDAC hat, then reported on the discussion held the day before at the LDAC committee. The committee had accepted most of the EA proposals but with the following variations.

1. The national consultation might result in the imposition of national byelaws irrespective of local agreements.
2. Unless the Fowey NLO of zero was agreed, LDAC would not adopt any EA recommendations.
3. Returning the first fish would be for the whole fishing season from 1st April. The pre 16th June byelaw would be considered immaterial.
4. No worming after 1st September was acceptable except for designated anglers fishing for the hatchery.
5. Prawn/shrimp baits may be used after 31st August
6. Mandatory use of circle hooks should be stopped
7. Barbed hooks should be acceptable for summer fishing between 17th June and 31st August
8. The LDAC rules should be implemented on all LDAC beats in all rivers

Paul pointed out that LDAC opinion was important because it was not only the most numerous club on the river but also undertook significant conservation work

1. Working parties managing coppicing and invasive weed removal
2. Hatchery support
3. FRA participation

Rob Williams pointed out that the sea trout window size meant the inclusion of 1.5 lb fish which are not normally regarded as a school peal. A reduction to a window

size of 35 cm to 55 or 60 cm would be better at protecting juvenile fish and multiple spawners.

It was agreed that the constraints promulgated by Simon Toms should be accepted as FRA recommendations for consideration by clubs and riparians. However, until the NLO was agreed and the clubs/syndicates/riparians had agreed to introduce the recommendations as club imperatives the EA should not be informed.

6. **AGM**

It was noted that the AGM had not yet been confirmed but it was hoped that it would be held at Boconnoc for 7.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 11th April. The keynote speaker would be Simon Toms.

It was agreed that the Secretary would confirm arrangements with Boconnoc, Rob would organise the pasties and Bill the refreshments.

JE
RW BS

Roger Furniss announced that he would be retiring from the Fowey at the AGM. It was agreed that Roger should be thanked for his exceptional service to the FRA and for his very wide knowledge both locally and nationally.

The Secretary also said that he would be retiring at the AGM. He undertook to prepare a briefing note for his successor.

JE

7. **WRT reports**

Giles presented the 2017 fry survey report. It was noted that some members had not had copies and the Secretary was asked to distribute it.

JE

There were no salmon reported in the Cardinham and on inspection it was discovered that there was a large trash dam preventing upstream migration of spawners. This was now cleared by the Forestry Commission and hopefully, this would lead to better results in 2018. It was agreed that the FRA should implement a programme of walkover surveys in all tributaries.

BS

There are high trout numbers in the tributaries and minor streams. The Cardinham was particularly good with the Warleggan not far behind.

An introduction to the report this time is the time sequence graphs demonstrating the numbers of fry per site. The level line over the last five years indicates a healthy river. The variation in numbers from year to year in one species is compensated for by another species filling the vacuum leading to a steady average number of fish per site.

It should be noted that the data demonstrated that fish do not seem to be penetrating as far up river as previously. Also it was likely that temperature would become a critical issue for salmon as Cornish rivers became warmer.

Seasonal variation was important and a dry spring was not helpful for salmon fry survival. It could be that smarter use of Colliford releases could be used to minimise this.

The report once again used the Defend, repair, attack framework. The individual sections indicated the following work needing to be undertaken by FRA

1. **Repair**. Draynes. Monitor low flow channel at Palmers Bridge.
2. **Repair**. Trenant. Restore Trenant stream around Park Lake.
3. **Attack**. St Neot. Continue riparian shade management to improve fry habitat. Consideration of using Colliford water bank to assist flows, and options gravels where suitable, consider as part of PR19 and subsequent programmes.
4. **Repair**. Middle Fowey. Walkover and data loggers
5. **Defend**. Warleggan. Walkover and habitat work under W4G
6. **Defend**. Cardinham. Riparian shade management and walkover
7. **Repair**. Lower Fowey. Walkover
8. **Defend**. Small tributaries. Walkovers and small habitat improvements

Dave reported on the progress regarding improving fish passage options under W4G

1. Parkway
2. Glynn House (Cardinham)
3. Treverbyn
4. Ashford (Kilham)

Assessment of these structures for fish passage should begin shortly

There would be an extensive programme of tree management for long term fisheries gain including the St Neot (SWW PR14 schemes)

Dave and Giles were thanked for their comprehensive reports.

8. **SWRA meetings**

The Chairman reported on the SWRA meeting held on 17th October.

There were few major items from the meeting.

1. There had been a good response to the EA questionnaire on Managing salmon fisheries in England. It was doubted that the EA would respond by January 2018. Simon Toms had been invited to a meeting of SWRA to aim to reduce the “faceless” image of the EA.
2. Members were encouraged to challenge canoeists where there was no agreement.
3. SWRA subscriptions had been reduced by 50%
4. SW Rivers reported a variable 2017 season.

9. **Next meetings**

AGM	11 th April 2018
Committee	11 th July 2018
Committee	10 th October 2018
Committee	9 th January 2019