

MINUTES RETA COMMITTEE MEETING, MONDAY 2nd AUGUST 2021

Apologies. Iain Stewart Hunter, David Rice and William Heathcoat Amory.

Minutes. of the Committee meetings held on 19th April 2021 were approved and signed.

Treasurer. There are 258 signed up members of RETA, the largest membership of any of the SW river associations.

Fish the Exe A Fish the Exe rod had reported significant sewage pollution. It is not clear if this is or has been reported to the EA and SWW

SWRA Rebecca Pow MP had just announced 50 new EA river inspector posts. It is thought that the “powers that be” might be getting the “vibes” that beavers may need more management than they first thought. There was clarification re the SWRA Council membership in that river associations have one vote but can field more than one attendee. Canoe access remains a very large concern

Exe Mitigation Group. It was agreed that Phil Turnbull’s (WRT) role with the Exe is essential. SWW continue to fund half of PT’s costs for four years. Availability of RETA funds for the rest was discussed.

Exmoor Rivers and Streams/Heart of Exmoor. A recent ENPA draft paper on Farming in Protected Landscapes was vague on opening up/enhancing rights of way and representations had been made. A Headwaters of the Exe project on reducing Vet Meds for livestock through more targeted application following microscopic faecal assessments is proving successful.

Robin Bailey Tuition Day. One Young Tuition Day is tentatively planned for early October.

Website. New website is up, but subject to some small enhancements.

AGM 2021 (incl. 2020 AGM) set for Tuesday 19/10/21 at the Hartnoll Hotel. The main presentation will be SEW and the launch of the fundraising The new SEW flier was discussed and small changes suggested for the leaflets to be ready for the AGM. The Committee noted thanks to David Rice who had run the thoroughly successful on-line auction during May this year.

EA/Defra The 2020 salmonid catch data was not yet publicly available but was reported to be up from 2019. Continuing efforts must be made to keep the catch and release programme voluntary. There is both in EA and Defra a view that mandatory C&R should prevail.

Exe Strategic Weirs. A full report had been circulated. On Trews there is still uncertainty as the weir is structurally unsound and further work re the baulk pass questionable. Both the EA and the owner, Exeter CC, are involved. Some funding from EA is apparently available. The Trews weir fish counter is in place but not being monitored. The EA had been pressed to fund it considering how important it is for West Country data collection. It was decided not to use RETA money to fund it. Mid Devon Council appears to be allowing the planning application for hydroelectric generation on Tiverton Weir to drift.

Hatchery. The SWRA report on the Colliford Hatchery had been circulated for information.

Coppice Work. Work will recommence in 2022 following the covid chaos. There was comment that the work done 7 to 10 years ago must not be lost. With climate change it will be necessary to consider the value of shade re water temperatures.

Gravel Washing. Gravel washing will continue on the Haddeo where some success had occurred and the EMG agreement required continued interest in the Haddeo. Other areas needing spawning gravels washed will be identified

Heathcoat Factory Leat Abstraction. Progress has been very slow.

Juvenile Survey Covid remains a constraint but all planned work will be completed.

Spawning Observation. The autumn of 2020 did not provide either the volunteers or the water conditions needed. An appeal for more volunteers will be made at the AGM

GIS. Necessary to now expand this system and not lose data. Although not a panacea for river management the data overlaid into the system is of immense future value.

Riverfly. The spring and summer work had been completed and the findings so far appeared to be an improvement on 2020.

Canoes and Access. The Country Landowners Association are drafting a Riparian Owners Briefing Note and will be looking at navigational issues on rivers.

Sawbills and Cormorants. It was decided to concentrate any future survey on weirs where predation is likely to be most common. This eases the survey work and may improve the data.

Committee dates for 2021 & 2022. Committee 25/10/21 and 10/1/22
2020 and 2021 AGM 19/10/21. 2022 AGM 18/3/22