

MINUTES RETA COMMITTEE MEETING, MONDAY 19th April 2021

Apologies. No apologies were submitted.

Minutes of the Committee (Zoom) meeting held on 25th January 2021 were approved

Matters arising There were no matters arising.

Treasurer Membership at 244, subscription income of £7,270 with 15 new members this year and 35 previous payers not paid.

Fish the Exe Nothing to report

SWRA report There is a meeting planned between Angling Trust and Canoe England but there is little grounds for optimism on an agreement. On hatchery issues RETA continues with its watching brief. The Environment Agency has yet to provide its full backing to the hatchery project. Roger Furniss retires as SWRA chairman next spring with William Entwisle as the only replacement candidate at present. It is planned to form a board composed mainly of those Council members who carry a SWRA brief for a certain topic eg beavers, however Council stays supreme.

Exe Mitigation Group South West Water has said it will increase its contribution. Habitat expenditure on the Haddeo has limited benefit and it might be preferable to devote funds to work elsewhere, however SWW will still want some funds spent on the Haddeo as it was that tributary that Wimbleball damaged. The EA had switched off the counter on Trews Weir and do not have funds to monitor it but FishTek turned it back on and WRT are investigating possible monitoring.

Exmoor Rivers and Streams/Headwaters of the Exe Richard McLaughlin stood down from ERaSG but has offered to continue to provide his hydro power knowledge when asked. Mark Thomasin-Foster has drafted responses for ERaSG and HofE for the 2021 ENPA's Partnership Plan Report. These reports draw heavily on the work done on the rivers by the associations.

Robin Bailey Tuition Day It is hoped to hold a junior day in September once Covid lockdowns allow. Two coaches have retired and replacements are being sought.

Website The revamped new website should be up in May. It has been slimmed down and brought up to date.

AGM 2020 and 2021 The AGM is Tuesday 19/10/21 at The Hartnoll Hotel Bolham. Some Committee Members are due to stand down in 2020 and 2021, all agreed to offer their names for re-election. The focus will be Strategic Exe Weirs presented by Phil Turnbull, Adrian Dowding and Godfrey Davis. Usually many auction lots were fishing and October is too late so the auction will be soon, on-line. The 2022 AGM will be in March.

Environment Agency/Defra Exe catch in 2020 was slightly increased but much was due to good river flows at the right time of year. Compulsory catch and release in Wales appears to have reduced fishing pressure and therefore a further comparative decline in salmon numbers, a tread mill difficult to break if salmon rod caught numbers were used to decree the salmon status of the river. A planning application for a digestate storage lagoon (near to streams feeding the Creedy) has been submitted. Roger Furniss will assess the application and draft the necessary objection.

Exe Strategic Weirs No news on the hydro application for Tiverton Weir. The Restoring Sustainable Abstraction programme from the EA is delayed because of Covid but perhaps is being downgraded, with serious consequences for the Exe system at Heathcoats, Oakford Bridge, Highleigh and particularly at Perry. The current very low spring flows mean that there are no means of smolts descending Perry weir other than the route via the leat ditch which has further water abstracted for the fish farm. On other weirs- St James (collapsing), Trews (EA & ECC discussing), Mill on the Exe (waiting for ECC to admit ownership), Bickleigh (scheme accepted), Bolham (design in-train, Viridor might donate), Bridgetown (funding available - work to be set in hand). Arcadia was mentioned as a possible funding source.

Hatchery. RETA stays interested in the Colliford hatchery project.

Coppice work. Because of Covid the planned work is two years behind target.

Gravel washing. 23 sites were washed in 2020 and 3 were seen to have redds. Areas other than the Haddeo would benefit from washing and but SWW will still want some work completed on the Haddeo.

Juvenile survey. Planned to identify sites for longer term work and more secure data collection along with links to Riverfly on GIS.

Spawning observation. Limited redd identification suggested good spawning on the Barle, variable elsewhere.

GIS. Mapping so far is not very user friendly.

Riverfly. The first sample day is planned to be mid May but depends on volunteers (covid).

Canoes and access. It was thought that HMG is not interested in river access although matters in Wales were of concern. Politics appear to be rather against fishing.

Sawbills and Cormorants Nothing has been done although a survey had been considered necessary.

Committee dates for 2021/22 were agreed as 2/8/21, 25/10/21 and 10/1/22