

Meeting: Ruswarp Hydro Meeting Notes

Venue: Ruswarp Village Hall

Date: Monday 10 September 2012, 2 - 3 30pm

Attendance;

Phil Young, Pat O'Brien (EA); Mike Ford, Caryn Loftus, Colin Mather (Esk Energy); Stewart Bates, Olly Foster, Simon Foster, Angus Oughtread (REAC); Michael Graham (NYMNPA).

Apologies; Stephen Till (REAC), Brian Shields (EA)

Papers circulated;

1. Notes of the last meeting 28 June 2012

Agenda items

1. Update on Construction and Commissioning of the Fish Pass and the Turbine

- 1.1 Esk Energy gave an update. The fish pass is installed and operating (2 August), the turbine was put in place on 4 September and the grid connection to the site has been installed (pole). There are two contracts with energy companies, one for import (Co-op) and one for export (confidentiality clause precludes disclosure but this is being reviewed).
- 1.2 It is planned to commission the turbine in mid October and the contractor is due to leave the site by the end of October. PY pointed out that EA need to be onsite when the contractors leave to check that all the monitoring equipment is intact and that the contractors need to liaise with the EA over withdrawal.
- 1.3 Landscaping and tree planting will take place in the autumn/winter.
- 1.4 It was explained that after this meeting the construction site could not be visited for health and safety reasons but that a better view could be obtained from the Ruswarp – Sleights road. REAC volunteered to take a boat across to the site for a better look
- 1.5 AO asked about removal of the considerable amount of debris against the weir. PY replied that Andrew Delaney (EA) has discussed this with the EA's Operations Delivery Team and they have programmed the work in for the end of September or early October when staff were free to do the work.
- 1.6 AO asked if a new board to gauge the river level was being installed. MF said a new one was going in so that it could be viewed from the road and would be better marked than the existing one with a safety level clearly showing when the turbine should not operate or Esk Energy would be in breach of the Abstraction Licence.

2. Progress on monitoring

- 2.1 PY reported that all the monitoring equipment is installed and has been tested. This now included two mobile monitors installed in the first week of September at the Glenesk Caravan Site and Whitby Harbour. As a result, after tagged fish are released at the viaduct they will now be monitored if they go out to sea. One monitor has been placed in the fish pass and again one at the top of the new larinier pass so any fish

ascending the weir should be tracked and this is a better array than previously achieved.

- 2.2 The first fish were caught and tagged on 21/22 August to test the array, however high salinity levels caused problems. Three salmon and three sea trout were tagged and of these two sea trout and one salmon were tracked. Hull International Fisheries Institute (HIFI) and EA staff (including vet) are on standby for when conditions are right and aim to get as much monitoring done as quickly as possible before the turbine is commissioned. Fish have to be tagged in daylight and preferably on a rising tide. The agreed targets to achieve are ideally an additional 16 Trout and 19 Salmon to be tracked with an absolute minimum baseline of one extra Sea Trout and 14 Salmon.
- 2.3 If the agreed number of fish had not been tracked by turbine commissioning then EA and Esk Energy would look to discuss periodic shutdowns to allow monitoring to take place. HIFI have the monitoring contract for the three year period.
- 2.4 AO asked about risk from noise to which PY said there was a risk. and that it had been noticed that fish were only entering the monitoring array in the evenings and weekends i.e. during construction downtime.
- 2.5 SB said there were apparently four seals in the vicinity and otters in Whitby Harbour which could impact on fish populations generally and especially if there was not enough water for the fish to ascend the weir.

Action; Phil Young to send a brief weekly update by email on the monitoring achieved.

Action; MG to continue to co-ordinate monthly updates in advance of the next meeting.

3. Potential Fish Counter

- 3.1 MF said that he would not have sufficient time to look at the fish counter in depth until the turbine installation work slackened off. There are complex choices to make about which fish counter would work best in the situation. However he had initiated discussions with several people in EA and would progress in due course.
- 3.2 PB talked in general about the wider river catchment management and work being done by the National Park Authority under the Pearl Mussel Project run by Simon Hirst which is looking to set up a pilot one year catchment-wide project. Data is needed from the EA for this and more would be helpful in order to better understand fish populations and annual migration patterns on the river.
- 3.3 The EA had a relatively new fish counter being decommissioned from another site and PB thought there was a good case for it being transferred to the Ruswarp fish pass. He offered to investigate this within the EA and liaise with Esk Energy. He suggested that the EA could install the counter and that HIFI could monitor as part of the collaborative project. However, this would need investigating with both organisations but if it was possible, the arrangement would mean additional fund raising by Esk Energy would not be needed and better data could be obtained.

Action; EA to investigate potential transfer of fish counter to the Ruswarp site and liaise with Esk Energy to determine suitability of the resistivity type of counter and operational arrangements if suitable.

- 3.4 In response to a question by OF, MF replied that the counter could be housed in one of the turbine kiosks therefore would not be damaged by debris passing down the fish pass and that only a detector strip is sited in the pass. SB pointed out that there was

no comparative data for the old pass which was acknowledged but the additional data would provide additional information on both fish populations, passage up the weir and use of the new pass which could then have multiple uses.

4. **Settle Report Update**

- 4.1 Referring to an email from Brian Shields (EA) who was unable to attend the meeting, PB related that the decline in fish passing up the weir at Settle could not be proven to be due to the turbine. More work was being done on the data and EA were starting a voluntary agreement (with the Settle Hydro Community Group) of periodic shutdowns over a two month period to see if any difference could be detected. Further information would be given at the next meeting if available.

5. **Any other Business**

- 5.1 MF said that Esk Energy received regular requests for further information and wondered if REAC could help by providing a communication for other angling groups. After a discussion about the clubs involved, AO proposed REAC would circulate the notes of these meetings to the secretaries of various angling clubs including; Glaisdale, Danby, Gisborough and the Esk Fisheries Association. Esk Energy offered to put the notes of these meetings on their website.

Action; REAC to circulate notes of the meeting to other ESK angling clubs on the ESK

Action; Esk Energy to post notes of the meeting on their website

- 5.2 SB raised awareness of an article published in the September 2012 issue of the Spectator on hydro-electric production in lowland rivers.
- 5.3 In response to a question about the carbon footprint of the project CM replied that he calculated 150T of carbon would be emitted which would be offset after approximately two years of operation.

6. **Date of next meeting**

Confirmed as 4 December, 1pm at the turbine site to continue at Ruswarp Village Hall (booked 2-4pm).

Action; Esk Energy to book hall and confirm site visit arrangements