

Week Eighteen

Monday was again the usual start in the office, catching up on emails and preparing for the week ahead.

On Tuesday I was joined by Stephen Murphy again to finish the remaining sites on the Goval burn. For the qualitative surveys we were carrying out to assess the impact of the Goval weir obstruction. We surveyed further upstream in the tributary and we found more of the same species trout, stickleback and lamprey, but no salmon in these higher sites. What were apparent were the further impediments to migration in this tributary. We had already recognised these during our habitat surveys and they could easily be preventing any further upstream migration. These minor obstructions could easily be tackled 'in house' with the assistance of the Board team.

On Wednesday I attended a pre proposal meeting and site visit at the Goval Burn to look at the potential plans for the installation of a Micro Hydro Scheme on the existing mill lade from the Goval Weir to the Pumping Station at Goval Farm. Given the volume of work carried out on this catchment over the past few weeks and the previous attendance at hydro conferences, the Trust was in a very good position to comment fully on the impacts of this proposed scheme. Our concerns lay with the depleted reach a stretch of 1.2km downstream of the Goval weir and the volume of water to be abstracted. Present at the meeting was a representative from SNH, the developer's agents Highland Eco Design, Nick Bedding from SEPA, Jim Kerr and Martin Webster from the Don DSFB, Bob Dey Chairman of the ADAA and myself. We spent about one hour assessing the site at several locations and asking questions then headed back to the SEPA offices in Torry to discuss the proposal. It became clear that the level of Environmental Impact Assessment was an issue along with the volume of flow abstracted at the site. It was decided that SEPA would clarify the requirements for this site and consult its own research team to measure the impact that the proposed flow regime may have prior to any further progress. At the meeting we also discussed the proposed site at Craigpot opposite the Castle Forbes Estate Beat. This site was to again use an existing mill lade and use an Archimedes screw turbine (similar to that at Newe, Strathdon) to generate the power. The impact of this hydro was discussed and site visits were to be arranged to see the location of the turbine and the tailrace. More info and images on this shortly.

On Thursday and Friday I was in attendance at a Signal Crayfish (SC) training course in Stirling. The course was held in the Aquaculture department at the university and was co hosted by RAFTS, SNH and the University of Stirling. The event was attended by Trust Biologists from the Annan, Dee, Deveron, Ness & Beaully and the Nith, along with SNH area officers, SEPA officials and Police Wildlife Liaison Officers. The course was designed to inform participants of the current status of SC in Scotland, the policy and legislation behind SC, current research, control methods and aid in the preparation of action plans for SC. The event held over two days was split into morning and afternoon sessions with practical session held in the afternoon focussing on the identification and methods for surveying. This topic was of great interest to me having previously worked with invasive species, but it was also very alarming given that there are several locations nearby the Don catchment with SC present and also the potential routes of transit being much more open than I originally interoperated. I will be writing a short report on this workshop for the directors and also formulating an action plan for the Don catchment. These will be posted shortly for your information.

Next week I'll be at the Hatchery with the Board team to assist in catching brood stock, I'll also be meeting with Caro Middlemas from Marine Scotland, Pitlochory, who is working on the impacts of ground water on Sea trout egg survival on a tributary of the Don.

Cheers Jamie