

River Ythan SLA Report November 2023 to January 2024

1. Introduction

The Don DFSB have been contracted to carry out fisheries protection, predator surveys, spawning surveys and habitat restoration activities across the river Ythan catchment throughout 2023/24 by the Ythan DSFB under a Service Level Agreement. Each activity is allocated a set number of man-days/patrols to accommodate the requirements of the annually agreed SLA. Activities are defined following consultation with the Ythan DSFB.

Any incidents relating to pollution and policing will be recorded and shared with the Clerk. Information from predator surveys will be collated and shared with the Clerk directly following the survey period. Information on spawning surveys will be collated and reported upon in a summary report following the end of the spawning period. Any seals reported above Logie Buchan Bridge will be reported to the Clerk as soon as possible.

All activities will be covered by the Don DSFB health and safety policies, as stated in the service level agreement.

2. Reporting

A log of all patrols and activities will be sent to the Clerk monthly.

Table 1. November SLA activity/ Piscivorous Bird Survey 24th of November 2023

	Number of Goosanders	Number of Cormorants	Number of Merganser
River Ythan Bird Count 24 th of November	13	8	0

Locations where birds were surveyed

Blairfowl 4 Goosanders and 1 Cormorant, Ardlethen 3 Goosanders, Esslemont 3 Goosanders, Meadows 1 Goosander. Newburgh Estuary 7 Cormorants and Ardlethen Pond 2 Goosanders.

December SLA Activity/Redd Counting

Redd counting through December has been very challenging due to extreme wet weather conditions and periods of high-water levels. On some of the redd counting sites, fresh cut redds were still being seen. Exciting news was to be found on the Bronie burn, where on November 2nd two sea trout redds were found. On the 12th of December 1 salmon redd was identified, all Redds were found in the new section where habitat restoration was created after the weir removal earlier in 2023. Redd counting will continue into January 2024.

Table 2. SLA Activity/ Habitat survey/Survey report writing

Date	Task	Location	Time
9.1.2024	Habitat Survey	Auchnagatt to Mill of Elrick Grid Ref NJ 93255/41650 to NJ 93645/40160	12pm to 4pm = 4 hours.
10.1.2024	Survey Report Writing	Auchnagatt Bridge to Mill of Elrick Grid Ref NJ 93255/41650 to NJ 93645/40160	9am to 1pm = 4 hours

The Ebrie burn restoration proposal draft document will be submitted to the Ythan board once completed.

Pollution Report

On the 9th of January a white fungus was identified in abundance clinging to vegetation instream on the Ebrie burn below the village of Auchnagatt. A very large area had been affected with what looked like sewage fungus. Pictures were taken and sent to SEPA Inspector Mark Gracey, of the Grampian and Speyside team for investigation. I will keep the Board updated on this incident when further information becomes available.



Fig 1, white fungus on vegetation below

Archimedean screw Hydro Mill of Elrick, Auchnagatt

On the 9th of January while carrying out survey work on the Ebrie burn on the section of stream below the village of Auchnagatt, I came across the intake for the Archimedean screw hydro at the Mill of Elrick. There were several concerns that came to my attention while examining this intake, please see pictures below. It was noted that the hydro was not operating despite there being adequate flow. (Further to this it has come to our attention that the hydro has not been operational for some time).

- Firstly, there did not seem to be any appropriate means of abstraction control, whereby the volume of flow into the hydro lade can be regulated in any way, or when the hydro is not in operation the lade cannot be shut off. The only means of control evident were crudely designed submerged wooden structure at both the intake and main Ebrie channel, see in Fig 5, 6. Clearly there needs to be better regulation of this abstraction at the point of intake.
- We believe that currently the depleted reach on the main Ebrie burn would be impacted significantly at times of low flow and high temperatures due to the uncontrolled abstraction.
- When the hydro is not abstracting the uncontrolled flows are still passing through the hydro lade and over the spillway approximately 1km below the abstraction point, see Fig 6. There are concerns over the ability of migratory fish to descend the through the spillway safely and without risk of a significant delay to their migration or worse still potential damage.

We would suggest following this matter up with SEPA to ascertain whether the hydro scheme is operating within its licence conditions. We have already reported this matter informally to SEPA Grampian team whilst discussing other issues, however, it would be best to have some formal communication directly from the Board on this matter.

Fig 2, upstream view of Hydro intake.



Fig 3, Downstream of Hydro intake.



Fig 4, Note Submerged Wooden plank in Ebrie channel restricting flow



Fig 5, Note submerged wooden plank at intake to Hydro.



Fig 6, Water Exiting Hydro lade over slip way.



Fig 7, Archimedeian screw not in use.



Jim Kerr
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Acting on behalf of the Ythan DSFB