

RIVER YTHAN TRUST INTERIM REPORT AUGUST 2017

Heritage Lottery Fund/ Scottish Natural Heritage - Scottish Invasive Species Initiative Project.

The object of this initiative is to develop a project to control invasive non-native plants throughout the north east of Scotland rivers for the period 2018 – 2020.

If the bid is successful rivers and fishery trusts will the delivery mechanism to organise/carry out/monitor the project.

The River Ythan Trust (RYT) does not have staff, and as such will be working with the Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Charitable Trust (DBIT) – DBIT as team leader.

The early months of 2017, February – April was very busy preparing the information for the bid, which covers all the RYT waterways Ythan and its tributaries, also the Water of Cruden, Laeca Burn, Slains Burn and small burns south of the Ythan estuary to the Trump Golf Course.

Although we had all survey data for the Ythan and its tributaries, it was not until early February when we received data on invasive non – native plants on the Water of Cruden, Slains Burn etc. from the North East Scotland Biological Records Centre (NESBReC) following their surveys in 2016.

This involved some of the following.

- Developing the data from the NESBReC into information we could use for the bid.
- Site priority documents and spread sheets
- Establishing the equipment and training costs.
- Establishing costs for the partial use of contractors.
- Establishing value in kind from volunteers.
- Establishing mileages and associated costs for both contractors and volunteers.
- Organising letters of support.

At today's date, 27/08/2017, the bid has been submitted (modified from our original proposal – unknown to us), no outcome has yet been decided upon.

Ythan Biodiversity Volunteers (YBV) Invasive Non – Native Plant Control Project 2017.

Our Secretary has been taking the lead role in acting as the Invasive Species Control Organiser for the YBV since late 2013, and continues to do so. (This situation arose since the RYT could not obtain funding for this work at that time.)

Aberdeenshire Council had advised in late 2016 that funding would be likely become more difficult and as such the YBV were looking for alternative sources of funding.

Very few lottery, government, trusts/charities organisations or companies are prepared to fund catchment wide invasive non – native plant control such as this – covering 25 miles of waterway, 50 miles of bank – after much searching it appeared that the **Scottish Landfill Communities Fund** might be an option, and although time was very tight (Control work must start in early May we applied to **SUEZ Communities Trust** (enabling body).

Unfortunately, this application failed since SUEZ insisted the YBV must hold a lease for all the land to be treated – clearly impossible involving 70 odd proprietors over 50 miles of riverbank.

In a second attempt to raise funding, we prepared an application on behalf of the YBV to the TESCO “Bags of Help” scheme, raising £2k - further donations from the Ythan Fishery Board and from the Aberdeenshire Formartine Area Committee enabled the YBV to fund a contractor to control Giant Hogweed in spring 2017. Control of Japanese Knotweed will be carried out by volunteers in September 2017.

Ythan Biodiversity Volunteers (YBV) Invasive Non – Native Plant Control Project 2018.

Further investigation into the opportunities of funding from the Scottish Landfill Communities Fund has identified another enabling body, **E B Scotland Ltd**, who are far less restrictive in their requirements than the **SUEZ Communities Trust** – we have prepared an application on behalf of the YBV, which will be submitted during the first week of September.

Man Made Obstacle – Scottiesley Weir, Bronie Burn.

We have been liaising with Scottish Environment Protection Agency regarding this obstacle – they have carried out a fish pass ability test on the weir also electrofishing exercises below and above the weir.

They were originally of the view that this was a low impact obstacle, but possibly a medium impact obstacle, if finally regarded as a medium obstacle, following further electro fishing exercises further upstream, they may consider funding the removal/ modifying the weir – we will have to await the conclusion of their study.

Pacific Pink Salmon.

Most will be aware that numbers of non-native Pink Salmon have appeared in various salmon rivers in Scotland – considerable numbers in the River Dee, a few recorded in the Don, and to date only one in the Ythan.

It is too early to say what effect the Pink Salmon may have on our native Atlantic Salmon and Sea Trout – the life cycle of Pink Salmon has a different life cycle – normally spawn earlier in the year (at the date of this report, Pink Salmon are already spawning on the Dee and Ness. It is currently unknown if their ova are viable, but studies are ongoing. Pink Salmon alevin, in their natural range, only remain in the river for a very short time, before descending to the sea, unlike our salmon and sea trout, the majority of which remain in the river for two years following hatching.

Alec Paterson. Secretary, River Ythan Trust. 27th August 2017.