



Dear Friends of the Yorkshire Esk Rivers Trust

This is the third newsletter setting out the activities of the Yorkshire Esk Rivers Trust (YERT) since its formation in July 2013, and importantly is a valued opportunity to detail the actions and follow up to the Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) event that was held at the Moors National Park Centre at Danby on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2014.

### **CaBA Activities**

Over 60 delegates attended the CaBA event at the Danby Moors Centre in March. The presentations made and the outputs from the workshop were very soon after published on the website- [www.yorkshireeskriverstrust.org](http://www.yorkshireeskriverstrust.org)

I can recommend just taking a few moments to read these if you have not already managed to do so.

It was really encouraging that we received, both at the event and subsequently, interest from so many people wanting to be involved in influencing the future of the Yorkshire Esk. Some expressed an interest in joining a CaBA Steering Group, others to participate and support any future volunteer days or alternatively being involved in monitoring activities on the river bank (Riverfly monitoring/ Adopt a stream).

Importantly also, based on the findings from the workshop, YERT and the North York Moors National Park Authority (NYMNP) were in a position to prepare a draft 3 year plan for the Yorkshire Esk covering a range of activities from addressing aspects of barriers to fish migration to habitat improvements, non-native plant eradication, water quality and fish monitoring, fisheries enforcement, re-stocking and a series of initiatives relating to public engagement.

So what actions have now been put into play?

### **1. Memorandum of Understanding between YERT and NYMNP**

Whilst an M of U was already in existence, this was prepared before the announcement of CaBA and as such had to be re-drafted to reflect how the new partnership between the two organisations as joint hosts for the Esk and Coastal Streams needed to be shaped for the future.

### **2. Terms of Reference for the CaBA Steering Group**

The direction that DEFRA are keen to see CaBA Partnerships take across all parts of the country is the formation of Steering Groups, to ensure that there is ongoing engagement with all stakeholders and interested parties in the future activities within each catchment area. With regard to the Esk and Coastal Streams, whilst a number of people attending the event on the 31<sup>st</sup> March expressed an interest in joining the Steering Group, both YERT and NYMNP recognised the need to firstly prepare a draft Terms of Reference for the Steering Group, so people joining the group knew in advance, exactly what their role would entail as well as the wider remit for the Steering Group.

### **3. CaBA Award- Appointment of a Catchment Partnership Officer**

DEFRA made a second award amounting to £18K to each CaBA Partnership across the country. These funds are for putting in place effective processes and procedures for catchment management but are not for funding specific 'on the ground projects'. YERT and NYMNPA have appointed Miss Alex Cripps to the position of Catchment Partnership Officer. This is a full-time position initially for 1 year, which will help to develop the steering group, coordinate projects and support funding initiatives as the partnership moves forward. The role will be steered by the Catchment Partnership Steering Group. Initial priorities for Alex include developing projects for "This Exploited Land", an HLF funded project that is taking place in the Esk valley and also working with land managers to prepare agreements for work on the ground. The role is jointly funded by the CaBA funding and the NYMNPA.

### **4. Steering Group Meeting**

The first Steering Group was held on the 13<sup>th</sup> of October at the Moors National Park Centre in Danby.

Members and their respective areas of interest are:

Mr Angus Oughtred - Chairman of the Steering Committee and YERT  
Miss Alex Cripps - Esk and Coastal Streams Catchment Partnership Officer  
Mr Jonathan Payne - Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer  
Mr Duncan Fyfe - Catchment Co-Ordinator Environment Agency  
Mr Peter Nightingale - Guisborough Angling Club  
Mr Andrew Walker - Catchment Strategy Manager, Yorkshire Water  
Dr Louise Bracken - Durham University Lecturer  
Mr Martin Hopper - Local Fisherman  
Mr Olly Foster - Land Management  
Mr Stephen Riddolls - Local Landowner  
Dr Tim Thom - Yorkshire Wildlife Trust  
Mr David Renwick- Director of Conservation, NYMNPA  
Mr Simon Hirst- River Esk Project Officer, NYMNPA

At this meeting, the Steering Group were taken through the Memorandum of Understanding, the draft Terms of Reference for the Steering Group and the draft 3 year plan. In addition to this, an update on current and future funding, in particular how the most recent DEFRA award monies were to be prioritised.

The meeting concluded by seeking to identify project work that the partnership could facilitate early in 2015 whilst at the same time looking to secure funding for larger scale projects as set out in the 3 year plan (barriers to fish migration/ larger scale habitat improvements/ water quality etc.). Surveys are currently being undertaken on the Murk Esk with a view to organising a number of volunteer days, which will focus on small-scale habitat improvements.

Two training events are also scheduled for early in 2015 where the partnership is seeking to train up volunteers in riverfly monitoring and also to provide the necessary skills to 'Adopt a stream'.

Both these ideas came from the workshop held on the 31<sup>st</sup> March - what knowledge and influence we could all have if every stream in the catchment was adopted by someone, and the health of the river measured through on going riverfly monitoring- that has to be our ambition!

The following documents are all on the website at [www.yorkshireeskriverstrust.org](http://www.yorkshireeskriverstrust.org)

- \* The presentations from the CaBA launch event 31st March 14
- \* Memorandum of Understanding YERT/ NYMNPA
- \* Terms of Reference for the CaBA Steering Group
- \* The outline role and responsibilities of the Catchment Partnership Officer
- \* The minutes of the CaBA Steering Group held on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2014
- \* The draft 3 Year Plan for the Yorkshire Esk

## **5. Fly Fishing for Young People**

YERT together with the Esk Fishery Association (EFA) and NYMNPA have run a very successful initiative this summer with a group of young anglers. The aims of this were to engage young people with the outdoors, to develop the new lifelong skill of fly fishing and other skills associated with communication, listening, patience and working with others. Following a 'taster day' which was held in June, the group have been meeting every two weeks throughout the summer, with the EFA generously facilitating access to four different stretches of water during this time.

The initiative has been partly funded by Sport England but the following people have given most generously of their time both in the organisation and the running of the events – Mr Keith Bristow (YERT and EFA), Mr Robert Parnaby (NYMNPA), Mr Dennis Fishpool (EFA), Mr Granville Hull (EFA) and Mr Wynn Jones (EFA). Their support, interest and enthusiasm throughout is greatly appreciated, thank you.

Plans are already being made to run a similar scheme in 2015.

## **News from the river**

### **Salmon and Sea Trout catches**

Like many rivers throughout the country, the Esk has suffered through lack of rain for most of the summer. Whilst this may have benefitted the lower beats, it has meant that no great numbers of fish have entered the system until late September/ October.

The numbers of salmon and sea trout netted off the coast this summer have been the highest on record for some considerable time. This has to be a concern, given the fragile recovery of the Yorkshire Esk as a salmon river. The Environment Agency next reviews the Netting License Order in December 2017 and there is known sensitivity relating to net fisheries that exploit predominantly mixed stocks of salmon and/ or sea trout which hopefully with the work being undertaken on genetics on net caught salmon/ sea trout will lead to an informed decision come the 2017 review.

Whilst it remains a legal requirement for every angler to submit their catch return to the Environment Agency at the conclusion of each fishing season, YERT urgently request anglers to also complete the catch return form that has been sent to all Angling Clubs. This can also be downloaded from [www.yorkshireeskrivertrust.org](http://www.yorkshireeskrivertrust.org) Please follow the guidance notes provided.

Only by receiving this data in a timely manner will YERT, going forward, be able to correlate catches to work undertaken on barriers and improvements to habitat and also the pre and post monitoring on migratory fish behaviour relating to the hydro installation at Ruswarp.

## **The Annual Restocking Programme**

In July 2014, c.90,000 salmon fry and c.25,000 sea trout fry were released into the head waters and tributaries of the Yorkshire Esk. These were from Esk brood stock that were electro-fished from the Esk and then reared at the Kielder Hatchery.

The sea trout fry stocked this year, were compensation for the 25 pairs of adult sea trout taken in November last year, to help re-stock Skelton beck (Tees catchment) after it was affected by a pollution event. The sea trout introduced to Skelton beck in 2013 have grown well, and this work will help Skelton beck recover, and we hope the beck will soon be back to good health.

This annual stocking programme represents a very significant annual investment by YERT of £7K. The electro-fishing for 2015 brood stock, will take place in late November 2014, but is very much weather dependant.

This time of year when the fish are about to spawn, is when sadly they can be at their most vulnerable. Whilst there are plans to provide additional surveillance in the critical areas of the river, all anglers are urged to be vigilant at this time and report anything potentially untoward on the Environment Agency hotline 0800-80-70-60.

## **Environment Agency Staff**

Anglers will no doubt be aware that Mr Andrew Delaney has retired from the agency having spent a great proportion of his working career on the Yorkshire Esk, for which we are all grateful. Andrew has been succeeded by Mr Shaun McGinty (Fisheries Technical Officer) who has already been active and present both on the river itself and along the coastal areas. It is really important that all anglers support and work together with Shaun in the months that lie ahead.

## **River Monitoring**

### **Adult Salmonids**

The Environment Agency have commenced electro-fishing below Ruswarp, this being the third year of a three year post installation programme to determine the influence the hydro scheme has on migratory fish behaviour. The 2013 monitoring work showed that fish were able to find the fish pass with the turbine in operation, although some fish were delayed in their passage for some time. Some of the tagged fish were also predated upon by seals but at this stage it is not known if the turbine was a causal factor in this. Further information is needed to make a full assessment. The 2014 programme has been delayed due to lack of water, but hopefully they will now be able to catch representative numbers of salmon and sea trout.

### **Juvenile Salmonids**

In addition to the activity at Ruswarp, monitoring of juvenile salmonids has also been increased on the upper stretches of the river and principle spawning tributaries. The Environment Agency are kindly carrying out 12 fisheries surveys throughout the Esk catchment at Baysdale Beck, Comondale Beck, Stonegate Beck, Glaisdale Beck, Murk Esk, Tower Beck and six sites on the main river Esk from Castleton to Grosmont. A further three sites have been surveyed on Great Fryup Beck, and three sites on Danby beck by Hull International Fisheries Institute.

These fish surveys will be repeated in 2015, 2016 and 2017, so that we will have four years of fish population data throughout the Esk catchment. Only by having this continuity in

juvenile fish data, will we be able to prioritise capital projects, assess their impacts on fish populations and understand any wider influences that may be occurring.

### **Durham University – Research Student**

A student from Durham University will be carrying out a study on the Esk in 2014/2015 to determine sources of sediment in the catchment (sediment fingerprinting) and water quality monitoring (to determine nutrient sources in catchment). This research work will help us target our river restoration work more effectively on the ground.

### **Riverfly monitoring**

We will be running a series of free riverfly monitoring workshops on Thursday the 12<sup>th</sup> and Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 2015 at the Moors National Park Centre in Danby. Riverflies and other groups of river invertebrates are very useful indicator organisms to check the health of the river environment.

For further details of the Riverfly Partnership work and activities, please see their website <http://www.riverflies.org/rp-riverfly-monitoring-initiative>

Please contact Alex Cripps by email [a.cripps@northyorkmoors.org.uk](mailto:a.cripps@northyorkmoors.org.uk) or phone 01439 772700, to register your interest for these free riverfly monitoring workshops.

All these river monitoring activities will help us to assess the health of the Esk catchment, and will help us to target our efforts more effectively when carrying out catchment restoration work!

Thank You



Angus Oughtred  
Chairman Yorkshire Esk Rivers Trust