

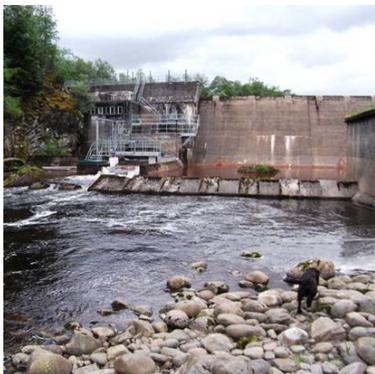
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Official re-classification of Spey Dam as a “barrier”

Official re-classification of Spey Dam as a “barrier” to fish passage offers the prospect of much improved access for spawning salmon to the potentially important juvenile habitat situated in the Spey, above the dam, for first time in 70 years.

The Spey Fishery Board has welcomed the recent re-classification by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) of Spey Dam as a “barrier to fish passage” as this designation places an obligation on the agency to ensure a solution is found to the long-standing problems caused by the obstacle to salmon migration. Spey Dam was completed soon after the Second World War and the Board believes that since then the dam has severely curtailed access by salmon to the extensive spawning above.



Roger Knight, SFB Director, said: “For many years we have been concerned about the negative impact of Spey Dam and the water regime associated with it. These concerns have been amplified by the step-change in juvenile populations as a result of the Dam; there is an abundance of juvenile salmon immediately below the dam, in stark contrast to the scarcity of juvenile salmon above it. In fact, in 2014, no salmon fry at all were found above the dam. These issues arise from the performance of the fish pass in the dam and the water flows emanating from it, compromising the ability of adult salmon to migrate up-river and the ability of salmon smolts to

descend on their way to sea. Juvenile salmon have also passed through the screens at the off-take, from where water is diverted west to Fort William, with some dying as a result of being pinned against the mesh. In addition, fish are barred from accessing the historically important River Markie tributary.”

Roger Knight added: “We are very pleased that SEPA has now formally recognised the problems associated with the dam and, in the latest River Basin Management Plan for Scotland, classified both the structure and the area above the dam as ‘poor’. As a consequence, by 2027 there must be significant improvements to the status quo to ensure that Spey Dam and the surrounding habitat comply with the provisions of the relevant European legislation under the Water Framework Directive. In essence this means that measures must now be put in place to enable greatly improved fish passage. In time this should lead to a major boost to juvenile salmon numbers in the upper Spey.”



Spey Dam is owned and operated by Rio Tinto Alcan. The dam facilitates the diversion of water from the Spey catchment to Lochs Crunachden and Kinloch Laggan and eventually to the aluminium smelter at Fort William. This diversion regime was permitted by Acts of Parliament in 1921, 1930 and 1940 in the aftermath of the First World War and the advent of air power in warfare that necessitated Great Britain becoming self sufficient in the production of aluminium, utilising Scotland’s hydro power and imported Bauxite. Spey Dam became fully operational after the Second World War.

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BRIEFING - May 2016

Salmon Teach Kids a Lesson

The 'Salmon Goes To School' project has been underway on the Spey for 16 years and throughout that time nearly all the schools within Speyside have taken part. The project provides pupils with an insight into the ecology of salmon and other fish species and the importance of fishing to the local community through a range of hands-on practical projects.

The Primary schools which participated this year were Aberlour, Craigellachie and Mosstodloch. Pupils at each school received an illustrated talk by Liz Henderson, who is the Spey Fishery Board's Project Officer for the Spey Catchment Initiative. They then took charge of a classroom hatchery with around 250 salmon eggs, assisted by Steve Burns, Assistant Biologist from the Spey Foundation. Good husbandry is essential for the success of the project and in each school the pupils had to look after the eggs, ensuring that the water temperature remained cold and that any dead ones were quickly removed. Each school successfully hatched their valuable offspring and studied their development from salmon egg to alevin and then to fry. At this point the tiny fry were ready to be released back into their natural environment.

Liz Henderson said, "The teachers were very impressed with the programme and thought that as it was an excellent learning tool for their Curriculum for Excellence." She added, "The children loved looking after the salmon eggs and were very enthusiastic throughout the whole experience."

The project offers a great opportunity to teach the youngsters about what goes on in their rivers and also helps people understand the Spey Foundation and the Spey Fishery Board's role in protecting and managing the resource of the River Spey. The Spey Fishery Board are very grateful to support for this project from Walkers Shortbread.



Above Left: Aberlour Primary School with their fry and releasing them into the burn. **Top Right:** Craigellachie Primary School ready to release their fry and **Below Right:** Mosstodloch Primary School proudly holding their fry just before releasing them. (Photos courtesy of Liz Henderson)

Smolt Trap Season 2016

The Tommore Burn trap was installed on the 4th March by Jimmy Woods, primarily to test that it was working okay, but it was left in operational mode over the weekend. By the following Monday morning, and somewhat surprisingly it contained 43 fin-clipped pre-smolts and one fin-clipped 1+ parr.



Steve Brand, Ghillie and fishers from Ballindalloch visited the Tommore Burn Smolt Trap.

The Avon traps were also deployed at Ballindalloch in March. Each year is different, with snow melt featuring more in Speyside this year compared to 2015 and the smolt catches to date have been behind those recorded during the two previous years. However, the smolt run continues until the end of May and regular updates can be found on the Spey Fishery Board website at www.speyfisheryboard.com/category/speyblog/.

Delagyle Side Channel Re-connection

Through the Pearls in Peril Life+ project our proposals for the re-connection of two side channels have been accepted by SNH; one channel is at Delagyle, the other at Aviemore. Both channels will provide pearl mussel habitat as well as spawning opportunities for salmon. Consultants have been appointed and are currently surveying with an options report due shortly.



Watch Out for Fin-clipped Grilse

Since 2012 the Tommore Burn has been stocked by the Spey Fishery Board as mitigation for the impassable culvert under the Glenlivet Road. From 2013 onwards the salmon parr stocked in the burn have had their adipose fin removed for identification purposes.

In 2015 the first of these fish were recorded when 352 fin-clipped smolts were captured in the Tommore Burn trap. This is likely to be a minimum estimate of the number of fin-clipped fish as some would have left the burn the previous year as autumn parr. A year on, the first fin-clipped grilse are expected in 2016. Anglers are asked to assist with the monitoring of this project by looking out for fin-clipped grilse.

The photo below shows a fin-clipped grilse from the Lochy. This one was fairly obvious as the fin had been neatly removed but this was not the case with all the clipped fish; some only had the top of the fin cropped.

Close examination of the adipose fin on grilse this year and grilse plus salmon from next year on is recommended. If a fin-clipped grilse is caught anglers, are asked to photograph it and either report to the beat ghillie or to the Spey Fishery Board directly.



6.5 lb fin clipped grilse (Courtesy of John Veitch).

Left: SFB Director, Roger Knight explains the project for the Delagyle Side Channel to Lisa Forsyth from SEPA.

2016 UK Rivers Restoration Prize

The Allt Lorgy has won the most Innovative Project category for the 2016 UK Rivers prize. It was also one of only four finalists for the overall prize, which was subsequently awarded to the Eden, Derwent and Kent Partnership.

This was a huge achievement for the Spey Catchment Initiative, its partners and the North of Scotland in general. It has also been a good opportunity to showcase the good work which is being carried out on the River Spey to a UK-wide audience. Liz Henderson, SCI Project Officer and Duncan Ferguson, SFB Operations Manager, attended the UK Rivers Restoration Conference at the end of April, where they were awarded the Innovative Project prize by Alasdair Driver, Director of the Environment Agency.



Liz Henderson, Duncan Ferguson and Hamish Moir - Design Consultant for the project from Cbec Eco Engineering with their prize. (Photo courtesy of Liz Henderson)

Spey Catchment Management Plan Review

The Review of the 2003 Spey catchment Management Plan is now complete and was published at the end of April. Much has been achieved in the last 13 years and there has been progress against 96% of the original actions during that time. Many of the aspirations from 2003 are now core business, with organisations working together to deliver multiple benefits for the water environment. The review is available in hard copy and can be downloaded from our website at <http://www.speyfisheryboard.com/spey-catchment-initiative-publications>.

Under the guidance of the Steering Group, the Spey Catchment Initiative Project Officer is now leading on the development of a new plan which will be launched in September. Fisheries Management is one of the eight strategic themes which includes updated, revised and new objectives for actions within the Spey catchment over the course of the next 5 to 10 years.



Exhibition at Aberlour

We are very pleased, for the second year running, that we have been given an opportunity to exhibit information about the work of the Spey Fishery Board and the Spey Foundation at the Speyside Visitor Centre in Aberlour.



The Visitor Centre, formerly Aberlour railway station, was taken over by the Aberlour Community Association in 2015 and is open every day from 10:00 am until 5:00 pm.

Last year there were circa 6000 visitors from 38 different countries in addition to all the home nations and it is hoped that the visitor centre will attract similar numbers this year.

Dates for the Diary

Spey Fishery Board Meetings

To be held at 10:00 am at the Craigellachie Hotel, Victoria Street, Craigellachie, AB38 9SR on the following dates:

Friday 13th May, Friday 12th August and Friday 18th November 2016.

Members of the public are invited to attend as observers, but are requested to give notice to the Board's Administrator, Sally Gross, by telephone on 01340-810841, or by email at admin@speyfisheryboard.com