**Report on AGM meeting of Rescobie Loch Development Association**

**24.11.2016**

*AV was invited to attend the AGM of the RLDA, as a guest speaker. Minutes from the secretary, David Conran-Smith, to follow.*

The main agenda item was a report from the Fishing Association. Ron Fordyce noted that it had been a poor season with weed growth and a late algal bloom causing reduced use and lower catches than usual. A loss of nearly £8k was made on the year. The cutting and removal of weed in the boathouse bay, to facilitate fishing had costs £4,800 and there had also been a downturn in day tickets because of poor weather in the early season. He noted that new SNH rulings about removal and disposal of reed from the bankside after initial drainage to allow insects to return to the water were causing difficulties. There was a short discussion about whether this could be used as a soil amendment, but there was also concern that after drying out, it might need to go to landfill. A proposal to use hessian netting to suppress weed growth on the floor of the Loch, had been made by SNH and this was discussed. Ron also noted that straw bales continue to be placed in the Loch, with SNH permission.

There was also a discussion about the need to clean out ditches in the vicinity of Fonah Bog, and the need to ensure any digging work on the Fonah side of the road had SNH/SWT approval.

It was agreed among the riparian owners that the fee charged to the fishing association would not be increased in the coming year, particularly in view of the poor financial returns the fishing association had noted.

New members of the association, who have bought West Mains of Turn, were welcomed. It was noted that the farmland associated with this holding had mainly been sold off.

AV was invited to speak on JHI work in the catchment. He made three main points.

1. Water quality of the Lunan Water and Rescobie Loch with respect to soluble P concentrations had improved over the last 20 years to the extent that the river is now at Good Ecological Status with respect to soluble P. The increased occurrence of weed growth in the Loch is potentially related to this, as cyanobacteria are less favoured by lower P/N ratios.
2. A new project (Sediment and Water Management in the Lunan Water) to promote uptake of sediment retention measures in the catchment, is shortly to be funded by Scottish Government. Carol Littlewood of Littlewood Landcare will act as facilitator for this project. Two potential sites, one on Drew Wilson’s land and one in Fonah Bog, had recently been identified and level surveys carried out. Grant money would potentially be available for carrying out the work required, once an outline design had been completed. However, there may be potential for these two sites to be installed through other funding routes, so they can act as pilots/demonstration sites for the new SG funded project.
3. JHI work in the catchment has focused recently on the potential for water level management in the Lunan Water to introducing an additional, flexible tilting weir, on the outlet area of Blagavies Loch, at Milldens. AV noted that their preliminary work has suggested that the levels at moderately high flows, could be reduced by around 30cm. The proposed work might also be able to contribute to mitigating low flows, to the benefit of downstream irrigators and ecology.

***Comments with respect to the “Fishing for Farmers” PES project idea as part of the JHI PESLES project.***

AV noted that with the new riparian owners at West Mains of Turin having sold off their farmland, the majority of riparian owners are now not also holders of farmland . This means that the Terms of reference for this concept would best be broadened to include the management of the weed growth, and especially the cuttings currently disposed to bankside. This was the subject of a previous project proposal to NERC (unsuccessful), but as can be seen from the above notes, is very much a live issue, and causing significant expense to the fishing association. If riparian farmers could be persuaded to take this as a soil amendment, this would obviate the need to potentially dispose to landfill at £70/tonne.

**Andy Vinten**

**25.11.16**