

**Report from Dr John Shillcock, Vice-Chair Gouthwaite Board of Management and President of Nidderdale Angling Club on silt release into River Nidd 4<sup>th</sup> June 2021.**

Dr Shillcock began his report at the meeting of Bewerley Parish Council on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021, by providing background information.

Gouthwaite reservoir is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and, as such, any changes to its management need to be notified to Natural England.

It is a compensation reservoir, owned by Yorkshire Water, together with the surrounding land. The Gouthwaite Board of Management's role is to set the rules for discharges into the River Nidd. In order to do that, advice is taken from the Environment Agency and Yorkshire Water hydrologists.

Yorkshire Water does not own the sporting rights to the water; Nidderdale Angling Club own all the fishing rights from the reservoir down to below Summerbridge.

Under UK Reservoir Legislation, Yorkshire Water has a statutory duty to put into place measures to protect the infrastructure of the dam from catastrophic flow of water and it is currently delivering a 2-part project (i) to reinforce the spillway of the dam, completed in 2019 and (ii) to install a siphon from the reservoir to the river via the embankment. This second part of the project is needed because discharge from the reservoir currently passes through 2 small valves. The contractor delivering the project is Mott MacDonald Bentley and the work was started in May 2021.

A floating pontoon with an excavator, surrounded by a boom with a pvc curtain, was to be used to excavate a channel for the new siphon. The excavation started on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2021. On 5<sup>th</sup> June, Dr Shillcock received a call from the Secretary of the Nidderdale Angling Club about the state of the river (the usually clear waters had turned thick with brown substances) and they met at Wath bridge and walked upriver to the dam. 1 outlet had been shut off but the other was running full bore nearest to the excavation site. Dr Shillcock and the Secretary were denied access to the site by a Yorkshire Water representative but had already contacted the Environment Agency. On arrival, the EA on arrival declared the incident a category 1 pollution and Mott Macdonald were ordered to stop work immediately. Although excavations were stopped, the flow of water continued.

Dr Shillcock and Nidderdale Angling Club were very concerned about the potential damage to the river and its ecology, and the effect it could have on commercial, social and sporting interests and notified people and organisations likely to be affected of the incident, offering to act as a point of contact. The Club had previously put a huge amount of work into improving the river and maintaining the diversity of its wildlife.

Over the next 3 days, Yorkshire Water advised they were investigating what had happened, but no further information was provided. The Environment Agency advised that Yorkshire Water had used professional divers to locate where the silt was coming from and had undertaken a LIDAR survey. Nidderdale Angling Club suggested that a temporary pipeline be installed to take water from higher up the reservoir where the water was clear to act as a temporary siphon, and this was done. (A second one was added later). Yorkshire Water made these changes and within 5 days the water was running more clearly, and fish were rising again.

Concerns about the silt settling and affecting the ecology of the river were allayed as the silt was found to be very fine grained. It would appear so far that very little damage has been done, although the effects reached as far as Nun Monkton.

The latest information from Yorkshire Water is assurances that once all reports are received from the Environment Agency etc., with a clear way forward and plans for mitigating future recurrences, a meeting will be called for stakeholders before work recommences. Once the siphon in the reservoir is in place, a further pipe will be added over the dam, with a third part being added over the spillway; a pumping station may be needed to prime it.

Dr Shillcock advised that Mott MacDonald will have applied for planning permission to undertake the project but no objection had been raised by the planning authority at the time. Bewerley Parish Councillors hoped that all permissions were sought, along with the planning application and that the forthcoming Environment Agency reports are thorough. They noted that communications from Yorkshire Water and Mott MacDonald had been very poor.

Dr Shillcock concluded by offering to give local councils with a vested interest in the river the contact details for Yorkshire Water and the coming meeting. The Chair of the Council, Cllr Graham Spooner, thanked Dr Shillcock for attending the Parish Council meeting.