

THE WILD TROUT TRUST

**RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY OF
THE KITTOCH WATER AT THE MUSEUM OF
SCOTTISH COUNTRY LIFE SITE
AT EAST KILBRIDE**

Undertaken in the company of John McGlen, Estate Manager

On Tuesday the 15th May 2001 by Ron Holloway. MIFM., (R H Associates)

RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

ON THE KITTOCH WATER

AT

WESTER KITTOCHSIDE – EAST KILBRIDE

BACKGROUND:

The present site of 120 acres of farmland was bequeathed to Scottish National Heritage (SNH) by the landowner, Mrs Read, whose family had farmed the land for many generations. The farm had historically been worked in a traditional manner using no artificial fertilisers or agricultural chemicals. On the site, a new Museum complex is being built to house a large collection of historic Scottish Country Life and Farming artefacts. The farm will be managed by John McGlen for educational purposes in a traditional manner using solely organic methods and techniques in raising dairy cattle and sheep.

There is a major watercourse running through the property called the Kittoch Water whose catchment includes the industrial town of East Kilbride. There are also two springfed tributaries to this water which rise and flow entirely within the property boundaries. The Kittoch Water which is a tributary of the River Clyde has a steep gradient and runs through a well defined rock gorge. The channel observed is base rock, boulder, and cobble with pocket gravel. The morphology of the channel has not altered very much for centuries. Riparian vegetation is excellent with many mature indigenous trees giving suitable canopy cover and has further growth of indigenous young trees inbetween. Riparian plant life also appears to be healthy and diverse. Hearsay observations report that there may be water quality problems as in

high storm water run-off flows, untreated sewage is visible in the water and at these times this is underlined by strong sewage odour. It appears that during these high level surface run-off flows from the town of East Kilbride the river overtops sewage settling ponds and therefore untreated sewage is visible downstream. There is also a large commercial private lorry park upstream which discharges untreated washings from lorries. Water quality appears to be a major problem, however at the time of survey a brood of day old mallard ducks were observed but, unfortunately for these ducklings, no active insect life was observed.

There are two small tributaries, the Catgill Burn and the Policies Burn, both of which are springfed and run for the whole year. These burns are not fenced and never have been, however the envisaged stock intensity proposed for the stocking of cattle and sheep should not cause any overgrazing or trampling problems to these streams as the flock numbers are planned to be kept very low. The quality of the habitats around these burns that flow through mainly open fields have not been severely impacted upon by livestock over the years because stocking levels have historically been kept extremely low. In fact, fencing of the burns is not necessary or required by the management. The area between the convergence of the two burns and the meeting with the Kittoch Water has possibilities for trout spawning. The main problems appear to be in the Kittoch Water and these may emanate from the upstream catchment as water quality appears to be the major over-riding problem.

THE OBJECTIVES:

The Museum complex which is nearing completion will be open to the public shortly and will house the historic artefacts which will include many educational exhibits pertaining to past Scottish Country Life. The farm will be managed in a traditional manner, based on agricultural practices which prevailed in Scotland in circa

1940's/1950's. A small herd of pedigree Ayrshire cattle (12) and a small flock of indigenous sheep, will be run on the permanent historic grazing.

The natural Kittoch Water and its tributary burns are required to be restored to a clean and healthy natural self sustaining state, where necessary, using brown trout as the main aquatic habitat quality indicator species. Establishing a fishery is not necessarily a pre-requisite but the Kittoch Water may be used as such when restoration and nature permit. Whatever habitat restoration, protection or enhancement is undertaken will be integrated into the educational programmes which is an integral part of the whole concept and remit of the site.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Initiate research to ascertain the historic quality of the ecology and species diversity of the Kittoch Water and its catchment.
2. Commission a qualified surveyor to undertake a full biological assessment and water chemistry analysis (1 and 2 to be undertaken by same professional).
3. Results from the above assessments will identify the limiting factors which are controlling quality of ecology and species diversity of the Kittoch Water and catchment.
4. A broad spectrum partnership be established between the site owners (SNH), the Museum of Scottish Country Life (MSCL), Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), the Wild Trout Trust (WTT), Trout & Salmon Association(Scotland) and the East Kilbride Town Council, plus any other relevant group or agency which is deemed necessary to develop and implement a suitable programme in order to restore the natural quality of the waters and the riparian habitat. From this partnership a project co-ordinator and facilitator should be appointed.

5. From this partnership an ongoing catchment management plan to be established for the Kittoch Water and its catchment which will address the problems identified by the pre-project assessments.
6. Education is an integral element in the proposed restoration of this site and will have a major input to the partnership.
7. The project funding requirements will become apparent and quantifiable on receipt of the biological survey reports and recommendations.

COMMENTS:

The site has excellent restoration opportunities as it is an oasis surrounded by increasing urbanisation. The rugged natural beauty of the watercourse, once protected, and the relevant problems solved or mitigated, will then offer the local community and visitors to the Museum, an opportunity to enjoy a beautiful natural river which has been restored to a healthy, self sustaining state, all of which lies within a peaceful setting, yet in the heart of a highly urbanised town. The educational opportunities that the site offers are excellent, not only during the restoration work itself, but as an ongoing opportunity to raise the awareness of the local community and all visitors to the museum site of the fact that all our natural watercourses are fragile gems that have, at times, been severely abused but with sensitive protection and restoration can be returned once more to a healthy and beautiful environment which can be appreciated by all.
