

GOUTHWAITE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

Incorporated by Act of Parliament - Bradford Corporation Waterworks Act 1890 for the management of Gouthwaite Compensation Reservoir, River Nidd

MINUTES of 2024 AGM

Held on
Thursday April 11th 2024 at 2.30pm
Council Chamber, Pateley Bridge

1. **Welcome.**

The Chair welcomed Board Members.

2. **Attendance:**

Chris Hawkesworth - Chair	Glasshouses Mill
John Shillcock - Vice Chair	Low Laithe Twine Mill Weir
Miranda Foster	YW, JB Consulting
Newman Booth	YW, York Water Company
Jason Ball	YW
David Lindsay	EA
Karan Main	Mill Farm, Kirk Hammerton
Dave Mann	Nidderdale Cycles, Low Laithe
John Goodliffe	NAC
Dave Gotto	NYC
Andrew Murday	NYC

Observers:

Peter Chambers	Nidd Catchment Angling Group
Alan Paterson	Nidd Catchment Angling Group
Sarah Turnbull	Clerk, NPP
Roger Wensley	NPP

Apologies:

Viscount Mountgarret	Mountgarret Estates
Stan Lumley	NYC

Abbreviations:

AONB	Area of Outstanding Beauty
Cumecs	Cubic meters per second
EA	Environment Agency
GB	Gouthwaite Board
KFC	Knaresborough Flood Committee
LTA	Long Term Average
MI/d	Megalitres per day

NAC
NPP
NYCC
PB
YW

Nidderdale Angling Club
Nidderdale Partnership Plus
North Yorkshire Council
Pateley Bridge
Yorkshire Water

The voting system was explained and confirmed.

3. 2023 Minutes

The minutes were approved.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Chairman's Report

The Chair stated there was nothing to report this year, as everything had operated smoothly.

6. Yorkshire Water Report 2023-4

A: Syphon Installation:

Newman Booth, YW Reservoir Safety Officer reported on the progress of the syphon installation. YW were installing the large syphon, not for flood control but to meet industry drawdown standards. A drawdown by the new syphon would only be necessary if the integrity of the dam structure was threatened and there was a need to lower the water level as rapidly as possible. The syphon would be able to discharge a maximum volume of 14 cumecs, or 14 tons of water per second, approximately double the capacity of existing arrangements.

The downstream leg of the syphon had been installed, but on the upstream side, because water level controls were in place, installation had been more complex and had taken longer. However, it had now been completed, apart from a short connecting section. According to the programme, installation would be completed by 24 June. Then, once the syphon was commissioned, and subject to the annual testing regime, in consultation with the EA, and with regard to downstream users, the reservoir would revert to pre-agreed historic discharge levels.

Asked if the syphon would be tested at its full volume of 14 cumecs, which could affect those downstream with interests in the river, NB stated that such discharges had to be agreed with the EA first. He would take an action point from the meeting to consult with colleagues as to how/when to notify interested parties.

Action NB

NB explained that if the syphon was discharging, both the existing outlets at the bottom of the dam would be shut first. Fish spawning season would be avoided, and it was best to coincide with high flows, because such a discharge would reduce overflows. Commissioning would take place slowly, to avoid emptying the reservoir, and would be carefully monitored.

The length of time for such a discharge depended on the time of year. Sometimes it was better in increments, to avoid a surge down the river. In any case, a complete commissioning plan would be produced, and YW would ensure all were notified.

Action NB

JS and PC asked if a test had already been made: The reservoir level had apparently dropped suddenly and substantially in mid-March. NB replied that this had occurred when there had been a drawdown due to the two valves at the base of the dam having been brought back into use.

Asked how, in view of the status of the reservoir as an SSSI, YW could avoid the testing of the syphon sucking fish out of the reservoir into the river, NB replied that, in contrast to the existing outlets, the new syphon was halfway up the dam, and a screen was in place to prevent this happening. If a problem was observed, the 0345 (1 24 24 24, for completeness) number listed on reservoir notices should be used, so that calls could be properly logged. Yearly plans for all reservoirs were on the YW website.

Scour Testing

NB stated that during this process, scour valves were operated fully to avoid the build-up of siltation, which might prevent the valves from working or allow significant amounts of silt to escape if not routinely operated. Such testing involved only the lower outlets, not the new syphon which was higher up the dam. Scour testing took place twice a year, avoiding fish spawning periods. However, when commissioning the new syphon, it would need to be determined whether this would be best done on the same day or on separate days. This would be decided during the risk assessments for the permits. In any event, in a potential maximum flooding event, the amount of water overflowing (over 900 cumecs) would be far more than when testing the syphon.

B: Reservoir Management Report

JB reported that 2023 was a wet year, with 123% of LTA. January - June were relatively dry, but July - December was exceptionally wet, with 153% of LTA. From January - April 2023, releases from the reservoir followed the operational rules. These were suspended from April, and releases increased to achieve the necessary drawdown for works to recommence on the reservoir safety scheme. After the target level was achieved, releases were maintained at 40MI/d until late June, despite reservoir levels being in the 22.8MI/d release band, due to

low river levels and to support the fish farm. However, heavy rainfall in July, and from mid-September onwards necessitated increased compensation releases.

The YW Report was accepted by the Board.

7. Environment Agency report:

Rainfall and River Flow:

DL reported that the year to present had been extremely wet. Rainfall since July had been one of the wettest periods on record, with October - February being the second wettest in the Met Office UK's 150 year record.

Over the year to March 2024, there was nearly 40% more rainfall than usual, and river flows on the Nidd remained above average, apart from the dry period in late spring, for more than a year.

Reservoir level and Compensation Releases:

Operation of the reservoir followed required compensation rates closely until mid-April, when the siphon installation necessitated drawdown beyond the requirements of the compensation rules.

In addition, during some periods of high reservoir levels in late autumn and winter, the full compensation flows were not released. This was because downstream releases were limited by the capacity of upper draw offs, the lower draw offs not being opened due to the potential for silt release during construction activities identified as high risk. The EA considered this explanation to be reasonable, and understands that the operations followed YW's silt mitigation plan.

AP asked why there had been a significant drop in the reservoir's level in March 2024. NB replied that this had occurred when there had been a drawdown due to the two valves at the base of the dam having been brought back into use. Because of the danger of a silt spill, only the upper draw offs were previously being used, and the reservoir level had to be lowered by 50% volume for measurement to take place. Since then, the reservoir had been allowed to rise to normal levels. However, in the next few weeks, a further drawdown would be needed to install the connecting pipe previously mentioned. Much depended on rainfall: it was very difficult to control releases in such wet weather, but YW had proved able to manage such works without a repeat of the silt spill from a few years ago.

CH commented that these were safety works which had to be accepted.

The EA report was adopted by the Board.

8. Accounts for 2023

RW reported that all the levies were paid. The only expenditure was the clerk's remuneration. There was a small surplus for the year of £113, the same as last year. The total amount in the two accounts (Current Account plus Savings Account) was £4,754.

JS explained that Nidderdale Plus provided administrative and also website services for the Board. He pointed out that some of the information on the website was out of date, and suggested putting news, e.g. about the syphon on the website.

RW said that, as per the 2023 minutes, he had looked into moving the funds. The best rate currently available on fixed rate accounts was 5.25%, compared to the rate on our Savings Account of currently 1.5%, so GB could potentially earn about £150 more interest per year. However, given the generally difficult experience of changing accounts with Barclay's, and the uncertainty over the future of the Board, he asked for the Board's views.

CH said that he shared RW's opinion of the difficulty, but that a change should be attempted. He asked the meeting's authority to proceed as deemed fit regarding changing the accounts.

Action RW

The 2023-4 Accounts were accepted by the Board.

9. **Levy 2023-4**

RW proposed that the levy be maintained at £6.50. This was unanimously approved by the Board.

10. **Future of the Board**

HBC votes & Knaresborough

CH reported that NYC had now taken over the votes previously held by Harrogate Borough Council (now defunct). Currently, NYC's three representatives held NYC's votes (24) plus those of HBC (16). The total of 40 votes meant that NYC would wield excessive influence if the Board needed to vote on something. He also felt that the public downstream should have greater representation on the Board, and had suggested that the HBC votes should be transferred to Knaresborough, which as 'Tentergate' was previously represented on the Board.

He hoped that the Council which had been established at Knaresborough would consider this proposal favourably. If the votes returned to the Town Council, there was no reason why the Nidd Catchment Angling Group could not be chosen to represent them.

AM agreed with the Knaresborough proposal. He said that the water was used by many other people apart from mill owners, in different ways. They needed to

be taken into account, and Knaresborough Town Council existed to represent such people.

Discussion about the Gouthwaite Board

AM questioned YW and the EA as to whether the Board was helpful or obstructive.

MF replied that it was helpful e.g. as a buffer between YW and the public, such as at the time of the Knaresborough flood committee.

DL said that the rules agreed by the Board and YW had been helpful in that they provided for a stepped change rather than a flat rate of release, as was in existence elsewhere. This gave flexibility for releases and was less rigid and more natural than at other similar reservoirs.

NB commented that YW was now looking at arrangements which allow for different types of flow, similar to those operated by the Gouthwaite Board, for use in other areas with rivers which are industrially defunct.

DG stated that the Board was a useful way for individual members to talk to corporate bodies.

MF said that regarding the environment, the management of the river had proved flexible enough to deal in a timely way with rapid changes in the rates of flow, following the spirit of the rules, which would be impossible to achieve elsewhere, with more rigid arrangements.

JS noted that the aim of such arrangements was to keep the flow as close as possible to what happens naturally. The Board was able to take into account many different types of use, including wildlife. Also, there was a need to look after people's safety e.g. anglers and swimmers.

CH asked that it be minuted that the Board had carefully considered its future and wished to continue.

Weirs

CH said that there was a question as to what to do if a weir was no longer in existence. As an example, Scotton weir had apparently been demolished, and the mill was now a private house. What should happen to the votes associated with this weir?

JS said that the weirs were built to create a head of water. If a weir was removed, there was no head, and there were no votes. However, an owner may demolish the weir but subsequently wish to make use of their head of water, e.g. for a hydro.

CH said that votes could be expunged, but if anyone wanted to rebuild a weir, the votes would need to be reinstated. He explained the basis of votes as being 1 vote per foot of "head" of water. Checking was needed to see if votes were enshrined in the Act. However, there was a risk that all votes would end up in the hands of public representatives. The Board was there to protect the interests of those who had a need for the water. However, this was difficult to define: did it include fishing clubs, swimming groups, boaters?

JS said that the Act was designed to protect those people who ‘took and used’ the water i.e. the riparian owners. The NAC and swimmers *use* the water, but do they *take* it?

Conclusion

1. The Board will write to the owner of Scotton weir, with the current year’s invoice, enquiring as to the status of the weir and informing the owner of the options available. If the owner confirms the weir is totally demolished, then if the owner wishes, the votes will be expunged and the levy will cease.

Action RW

2. The Board will offer Knaresborough Town Council the votes formerly belonging to Harrogate Borough Council.

Action RW

11. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

CH confirmed that he would not be retiring this year, and was unanimously elected Chair for 2024-5

Following JS’ retirement as Vice-Chair, DG was unanimously elected Vice Chair for 2024-5.

12. AOB

No other business was raised.

13. The meeting closed at 4.15 pm. The next AGM will be in April 2025, date and time TBA