

# Scoping Report Summary for the River Spey (and tributaries) Eco-system project

## 1. BACKGROUND

The River Spey is world famous for its salmon and trout fishing, whisky production, scenic beauty and as the second longest and fastest-flowing river in Scotland. However, the wild fish populations have plummeted in recent years and changing weather patterns, most notably warmer temperatures and reduced rainfall, combined with significant water abstraction, have seen extremely low water levels and warmer water temperatures in the main river and its tributaries leading to increased concern over the ability of the river to sustain fish healthy populations going forwards.

Recognising the need to restore the eco-system, the Spey Catchment Initiative (SCI) has championed a number of projects since its inception in 2010. Although successful, there is widespread recognition that more can be and needs to be done to achieve the level of restoration needed before it's too late.

In early 2022, the Spey Eco-system Partnership was formed, bringing together the Highlands and Islands Environment Foundation (HIEF), Spey Soda, the Spey Fishery Board and the SCI with a view to establishing how additional projects could be identified and supported to boost the restoration work throughout the Spey catchment currently under way. Ali McKnight of Agroecosystems Ltd has been asked to assess the catchment area to identify what is required to restore it to health, cross-reference these needs with existing restoration work and thus identify 'gaps' where community-led projects would be able to create an impact and add value.

## 2. COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The River Spey (including its main tributaries) is dear to many who live and work along its length and its decline over the years is a huge concern. Whilst some of the challenges facing it are worldwide, e.g. the effects of global warming, there are still many ways to help mitigate some of the impact locally, thus helping to return the river to a position of relative health, ready to support other regeneration initiatives (such as restocking the river with salmon eggs or fry where migration upstream to spawn is artificially impaired). The Spey Eco-system Partnership has been formed to seek out and support these opportunities for community-led initiatives throughout the entire catchment to enable them to boost the larger-scale projects currently delivered by the Spey Catchment Initiative.

## 3. PROCESS

Agroecosystems aims to assess these needs in a desk-based exercise but also by contacting interested parties to engage and learn what local initiatives are already in existence locally, what new opportunities for action communities feel exist / what they would wish to see happen at their local level and how these are prioritised.

**A first step to this is an Online Survey which we would be grateful if you could complete ASAP.**

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/5WDJ9BZ>

## 4. KEY INTERESTED PARTIES

- Community Councils
- Village Communities
- Distilling Interests
- Farming Community (landowners and tenants)
- Fishing Community (Estates, ghillies and fishers)
- Water sports and Tourism Providers
- Secondary, Primary and Nursery Schools
- Youth Groups
- Walking Groups
- Relevant local businesses

*Thank you!*

