

Laxdale River report - 22.02.2012, Removal of banking, unrestricted access to river by cattle and possible damage to active redds.

In response to notification of activities by a Fideach Angling Club representative, local crofter and SEPA the trust was asked to conduct a walk over assessment of the lower section of the Laxdale River. Notification of activities was in relation to the removal of a section of fencing that permitted unrestricted cattle access to a significant section of the river course. In addition to this OHFT was also informed that a section of banking had been removed by heavy plant equipment and that substrate had been removed from the river bed, possibly in the site of redds known to be used by spawning Salmon.

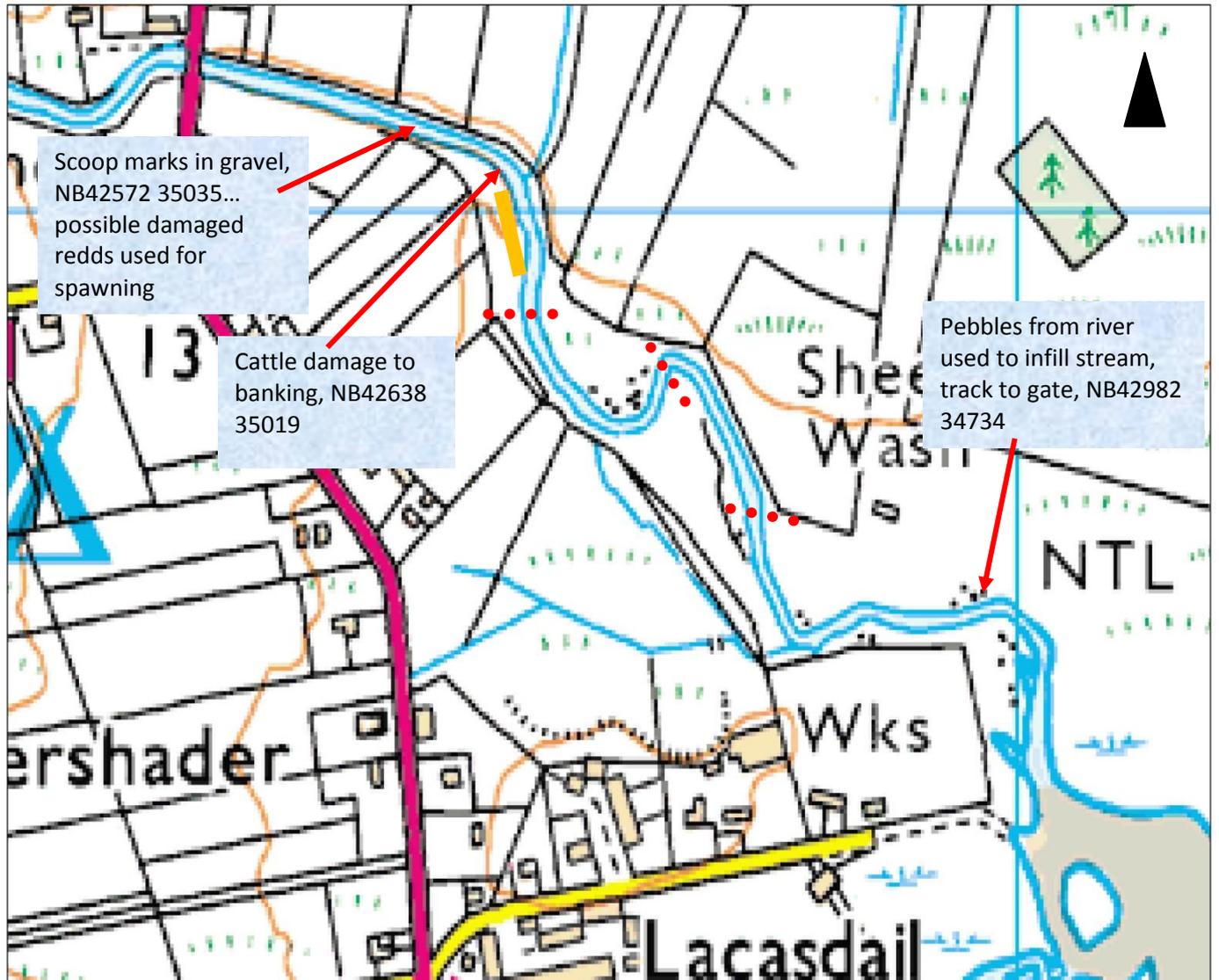
During the walk over assessment it was noted that the river course had been crossed at several points by a caterpillar type vehicle with indications that some of these crossings were recent. Removal of banking was confirmed and it was also apparent that unimpeded cattle access to the river was also likely to cause further degradation along some sections. Gravel beds in river adjacent to area of bank removal appeared to have scoop marks that may be an indication that material had been excavated from the water course. It was felt by OHFT that signs of gravel removal were too large and too regular as to be caused by spawning Salmonid activity. Further removal of river substrate was positively identified down stream of the section in question and had been used to culvert a smaller tributary stream.

Concerns are raised that important redds containing ova may have been disrupted and that increased sediment laden run off may now be entering the river during periods of heavy precipitation. See figures 1 and 2 for map of area and photographic evidence. Distribution of this report was made to the clerk of W.I.D.S.F.B.



Figure 1. (a) and (b) recently disturbed redds, (c) removed bank, (d) removed section of fence and cattle on banking, (e) removed bank from opposite bank showing substrate entering river, (f) and (g) caterpillar tracks entering and leaving river course, (h) river pebbles used to culvert tributary stream.

Figure 2. Map of area showing location of apparent excavated river substrate, bank erosion from cattle, river crossings and infill of stream consisting of river bed material.



Uprooted gorse and loose material

Tracks crossing river course NB42654 34960, 42766 34884 & 42818 34766