

SITA Project 6007

Improving the Conservation Status of Freshwater Pearl Mussel Targeting the Clun SAC and Upstream Waters

Project Report

April 2012 to June 2012



Finalising site work

This quarter, work has focussed on finalising fencing works at Jay Barns Farm and undertaking preparatory work for the capital works programmed for autumn and winter.



Controlled ford and livestock watering at Jay Barns

Assessment of recent works

The fencing works have been successful with good natural regeneration at all sites. Despite winter floods and highest ever recorded rainfall for April to June, the fencing has coped very well.



Broadward Clun SAC: Regenerating buffer strip – May 2012



Jay Barns: Regenerating buffer strip – May 2012

Community Engagement

The project continues to support the Land, Life and Livelihoods (LLL) community initiative. The project supports LLL by liaising with agencies and helping with grant applications.

With help from the SITA project, the LLL initiative is now benefiting from funding from: Defra's pilot catchment project, the Teme Catchment Sensitive Farming initiative and LEADER. With this funding, LLL have undertaken a number of rivers/resource protection events known as Farmers Dens, including Clover Workshop, Helping farmers with Catchment Sensitive Farming applications.

Working with Volunteers

During the previous quarter, volunteers from Severn Trees Trust planted trees along the riverbank at The Old Garden, Beckjay. However, Himalayan balsam is widespread on the lower reaches of the River Clun and in sections was in danger of subsuming recently planted trees. The project recruited two volunteers to tackle this non-native plant before seed set (and other competing plants) to allow successful tree establishment. Tree planting has been highly successful with only one failure noted.



Tackling non-native Himalayan balsam and competing weeds around the base of recently planted trees at Beckjay

The next round of tree planting is lined up for autumn and winter. A recent appeal for volunteers yielded 12 individuals and 3 organisations pledging support.

Community Water Monitoring

The project has recruited 10 volunteers to undertake flow monitoring, invertebrate monitoring and sediment fingerprinting. The Environment Agency has provided the project with a flow monitor and will be training volunteers in its use. The Environment Agency will also be training volunteers in invertebrate sampling and identification. The Sediment fingerprinting exercise will use the same volunteers but will be coordinated by an environmental professional resident in Newcastle. Data will be fed back to the SITA project for recording and dissemination (Ultimately, data will be fed back to a "Community Observatory" proposed by the LLL group).



Flow monitor provided by Environment Agency

Newcastle school are now undertaking monitoring of the Folly Brook, this work is part of a cross-curriculum project supported with equipment and staff provided by the Environment Agency.



Children from Newcastle School kick sampling in the Folly Brook

Awareness Raising

The project has worked to highlight the issues affecting the freshwater pearl mussel. The project was recently contacted to write semi-academic article detailing FWPM conservation work in the Clun Catchment for Herefordshire Wildlife Trusts "Flycatcher" Magazine (Included).

The project has also featured on a BBC Television regional news article (Midlands Today) with project officer and contractors interviewed regarding the FWPM.



BBC News Filming at the Clun SAC

The project has featured in regional and local newspapers (Press clippings included).

The project has undertaken three community consultation events, in support of a Clun Plan. Events were held at Lydbury North (River Kemp and River Unk), Bucknell (Lower Clun and River Redlake) and Clun

(Middle and upper Clun). Speakers from Statutory agencies, Trusts, community groups, parish councils and Farmers contributed to these events attracting 73 participants.



Community Consultation event at Clun Memorial Hall June 2012

Wastewater Leaflet

A draft of the Wastewater awareness leaflet (Get to Know Your Septic Tank) has been produced and we now have quotes from printers. This will have the design finalised and go to print within the next few weeks (draft included).

Partnership Working

The project continues to work closely with Natural England, The Environment Agency, Catchment Sensitive Farming Initiative, Severn Rivers Trust and Community groups.

New structures are in place to deliver at a catchment scale and to maximise resources. This includes, the Clun Field Officers Group (reporting and coordinate on the ground work), Clun Delivery Group (technical, strategy and policy), and the Clun Catchment Partnership hosted by the Shropshire Hills AONB. The SITA project is represented on all groups.

Upcoming Site Management Work

Riparian buffers

Two sites in the Upper Clun (Brindrynog and Cefncalonog) are likely to go forward for riparian buffer strip establishment. Both sites have uncontrolled access by cattle and sheep and the riverbanks are in poor condition. A felling licence has been issued for Cefncalonog to allow tree management works to go forward.

Contractors have been contacted by the project and lined up for work starting late summer.



Eroding and poached riverbank at Cefnalconog (proposed SITA site Autumn 2012)

Re-wetting/ditch and drain blocking

The project has identified most of the farms in the Upper Catchment as having potential for a large-scale upland re-wetting project. The project has meeting set up a farmer meeting early July to discuss upland re-wetting at a demonstration site. However, even taking this SITA funded option improves eligibility for HLS; farmers are reluctant to undertake rewetting, as current management payments through HLS schemes do not provide adequate compensation. Natural England are looking at this.

Sediment Traps

This element might be brought forward in the light of issues associated with upland rewetting - a Farm in the Upper Clun has expressed interest in a sediment trap to control sediment runoff through the farmyard.

Solar Livestock Pump

The AONB and Environment Agency have collaborated to develop a solar pump. Development has taken longer than expected, however a prototype funded by the Environment Agency has now been installed by Dulas at Purslow Farm on the River Kemp (Tributary of the Clun). As soon as satisfactory trials are completed, a solar pump will be installed at Upper Duffryn Farm in the upper Clun.



Prototype Solar pump