

Clun Catchment Partnership

Minutes of Meeting Tuesday 3 July 2012, Clun Memorial Hall

Present:

Adam Shipp	Environment Agency
Rebecca Price	Environment Agency
Julie Cowley	Environment Agency
Mervin Mullard	Farmer, Mainstone
John Croxton	Farmer, Clunbury
Gareth Parry	Shropshire Council, Biodiversity
Nick Smith	Forestry Commission
Joy Greenall	Land, Life & Livelihoods
Joy Howells	Land, Life & Livelihoods
Prof. Robert Harris	Local resident (& contractor to Defra on catchment management)
Jeff Edwards	Natural England
Emma Buckingham	Severn Rivers Trust
Phil Holden	Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership
Cath Landles	Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership
Mike Kelly	Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership
Fiona Gomersall	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
Leo Smith	Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group
David Mann	Observer with interest in habitat management on River Severn

1. Welcome and Apologies

Phil Holden as Chair for this meeting welcomed those present and thanked people for coming. Apologies had been received from Chris Hogarth (Natural England), Rev. Nick Read (Land, Life & Livelihoods/ Bulmer Foundation), Gill Meehan (Natural England), Cllr Nigel Hartin (Shropshire Council), Tony Bostock (Severn Rivers Trust), Gemma Chapman (Shropshire Council, Flood Management), Sarah Faulkner (National Farmers Union).

2. Notes of last meeting 22 February 2012 and matters arising

Joy Greenall noted an error on page 6, item 4, Colin Davies, not Price - to be corrected. Page 2, item (a), Mike Kelly reported work had been completed through the AONB SITA project on five sites - Beckjay, New House Farm, Upper House Farm and Broadward Hall all on the Clun, and Jay Barns Farm on the River Redlake.

3. Clun Catchment Management Plan

Phil hoped that completing and implementing the Plan would be a key focus for this group. Mike had been working on fact gathering and drafting for around two years, and he explained the reasons why the plan is needed and background. Phil talked through the recent public events held at Lydbury North, Bucknell and Clun. While these were consultation in support of the Plan, they had been presented more generally, as a discussion around 'Caring for Rivers in the Clun Catchment'. The aim was to raise awareness of the Clun Catchment and the issues affecting it and to gather people's views. At each meeting, after a main presentation from Mike and a series of short perspectives from others, a workshop had been held looking at what people valued about the river, how they would like it to be, and what needed to be done to achieve that. Phil outlined a summary of the results, saying that the findings showed a lot of support for the general directions of the Plan. 49 people of the 81 people who attended in total had left contact details to be kept informed of further activity. More detailed reports on the community meetings are available on request. Comments were invited.

Adam Shipp supported the focus being on all aspects (residents, sewage works, etc), not just farmers. Rob Harris drew attention to EA's current consultation on River Basin Plans, and that no-one from the Clun or Teme is on the panel. Rob felt that we need to feed the valuable information from our work into EA's consultation process (deadline December 2012). Rob will forward details of River Basin Plans consultation – **ACTION**. Adam will find out more about how to get involved and how the consultation will be promoted - **ACTION**.

Leo suggested sending the results from our public meetings to EA's consultation organisers and encourage them to build into their strategy.

The proposed structure for the Management Plan was outlined. It was hoped to put the full draft plan out to a public consultation in autumn 2012. The state of the Freshwater Pearl Mussel is the key driver, but wider catchment issues also need to be covered. There are 13 villages and one town (total of 7,857 people) in the Clun Catchment. Mike said there were example plans to learn from - all the Freshwater Pearl Mussel sites in Ireland have catchment management plans, many other UK catchments have plans also, the Spey catchment was cited as an example.

Mervin said there is little monitoring of invertebrates done on the river. Adam Shipp said EA do monitor invertebrates and records show good, healthy populations but they could be better.

John Croxton stressed that the Clun ESA, established in 1985, is about to end and what will follow is vital. It was agreed that there are more opportunities now to get measures to benefit the river into Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreements, and that this was important. John said the ESA had been good for the Clun Valley and it would be a pity if it all goes to waste with the new schemes. Help and good advice for farmers in this area is vital. Julie Cowley said that EA and NE were working with Mike to look at gaps to ensure catchment issues are incorporated into new agri-environment schemes. Mike added that HLS is pretty good at the moment for addressing catchment issues on farm, but that the upland area payments aren't sufficient to incentivise some of the changes needed. Mervin said that some farmers are saying they won't get into HLS, and that ELS isn't worth going for. This could be catastrophic for the area. Adam said that EA are also working with NE advisors on agri-environment schemes. Mervin made the point that his ground is outside the Catchment Sensitive Farming area but his land drains into the Unk, then Clun. Adam said he should be included in the area in the future. John Croxton made a plea to NE about the need for HLS schemes to be flexible, so that farmers are able to change plans. The plans are for ten years but farmers can't forecast that far ahead, flexibility is needed after three years.

Rob Harris said that land management and land use need to be the key focus and priority of the plan, and outlined early on in the structure. Leo felt that in the Actions defined, the plan needs to distinguish things we can do now, things we need to change but can't do straight away, and things we need to know more about before we know what to do. Phil circulated a very positive recent press article about the public consultation events. He added that the public events and the formation of the Clun Catchment Partnership have gathered a good deal of momentum, and hoped that this could be continued to see through completion of the Plan. Mike passed round a copy of the current draft Plan, saying this was work in progress and other things will need to be added. Adam added that the officer delivery group which meets is working on some of the actions already. **ACTION** – Mike to circulate draft catchment plan in suitable format for comments electronically. Deadline for comments by all – 31 August 2012.

4. Updates:

a) AONB Freshwater Pearl Mussel project (SITA, NE, Defra funded) - Mike Kelly

This three year project was targeted at practical works not achievable through agri-environment schemes. To date, work has been completed on five sites in the Upper and Lower Clun areas. 5.8km of riverbank have been improved, all using local contractors. The coppiced timber was sold on and the proceeds reinvested into the project to enable more work to be done. The sites are looking good with regeneration and the work has achieved excellent results. Volunteers from the Severn Tree Trust have been helping with tree planting, and a Church Stretton footpaths group have been helping with strimming maintenance. Mike has received a good response from volunteers, and more planting is planned for Nov/Dec. A volunteer water monitoring programme is also under way, 12 volunteers are involved and EA has donated a flow monitor. Invertebrate monitoring is also planned and the EA has provided an officer to carry out the training. 50 students from Bangor University visited the SAC, resulting in excellent discussions. Mike also had an article published in 'Flycatcher' (Herefordshire Nature Trust's publication); he appeared on the BBC Midlands Today programme and had a site visit with Philip Dunne MP. Upcoming – Work on two SITA sites and more with NE funding, farmer meetings, look at upland re-wetting, feasibility study for highways work, recruit an assistant to help Mike, distribute septic tank leaflet to householders throughout the catchment.

b) River Clun Restoration Strategy (Atkins consultants, NE funded) - Jeff Edwards

The Strategy was completed in the spring, moving into implementation stage, funding awarded to AONB to help deliver actions. Two public meetings had been held – one drop-in event in Clun (open to all) and a farmer meeting in Leintwardine. Leo said that the Atkins report stated there was 25 years to save the pearl mussel at the Clun SAC, while other estimates were shorter. Jeff said the key driver is European legislation around SAC condition. Mike said that Ian Killeen is hoping to do a further survey of Pearl Mussel numbers this week, so a more accurate picture can be gained. It was agreed however that the remaining population was vulnerable to one-off events, and the situation was critical, and this was the message which was needed. Mike reported that the other two Pearl Mussel SACs in England had recently suffered drastic declines from one-off incidents.

Joy Greenall asked about translocation of pearl mussels, and said that not everyone agreed with Atkins that the Upper Clun was unsuitable. Jeff said re-introduction is still something NE is working on with EA and AONB, but no site is identified as yet. The issues identified by Atkins of low water flows were more important than a black and white judgement. The possibility of re-wetting in the uplands to improve water flows was mentioned. Mike reiterated that current agri-environment area payments are not likely to be sufficient to make this happen.

John Croxton suggested that more surveying needs to be done on the middle Clun too. This was agreed, and EA are doing some work on this.

c) Land, Life & Livelihoods LEADER project and other activity – Joy Greenall & Joy Howells

The Land, Life & Livelihoods initiative had received LEADER funding for activities over the next 2½ years looking at different aspects of farming, wildlife and community in a linked way. The river had become very central, and the wish was to take forward a community catchment initiative. The group has also got additional Natural England

funding and were in discussion with the Environment Agency. Joy Howells circulated and explained the group's Action Plan summary and welcomed comments by Aug/Sept. There is an ambitious idea to create a pilot socio-economic agri-environment scheme, but it is not clear how this might work. The LLL steering group will meet in July to discuss progress, and further farmer and community events will be held in the autumn. LLL has good contacts with farmers in the Upper Clun and will be encouraging farmers not to come out of schemes.

d) Severn Rivers Trust Teme Catchment Pilot Project (DEFRA funded) Emma Buckingham

The pilot project is under way. It will draw on the good work in the Clun catchment and learn from the partnership. A full day meeting to progress the plan is being held on 26 July. Funding has also been secured from the Catchment Restoration Fund for work on the Rea.

e) Other organisations

Forestry Commission – Nick Smith - The Woodland Creation Grant Scheme has changed. This is the result of three organisations coming together to address the Water Framework Directive (FC, EA, NE). Grants now range from £2,800 - £4,800/hectare. Woodlands for Water is the new name and Clun is a target area. Priorities for planting include riparian woodlands and areas which address diffuse pollution and flood risk.

Shropshire Wildlife Trust – Fiona Gomersall – There are four SWT Nature Reserves in the Clun Catchment, three are in HLS (ditch blocking, etc). The Trust also work with Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group on surveying, identifying new Wildlife Sites, and liaising with Mike Kelly on catchment issue and opportunities.

Environment Agency – Julie Cowley & Adam Shipp – EA are doing ongoing work with potential Freshwater Pearl Mussel translocation sites. Also water chemistry analysis, including metaldehyde and carbonate, data from which will be shared with LLL and Mike Kelly. 'Rivers in the Classroom' is up and running with Newcastle Primary School. They have funded bridge and fencing work at Whitcott Keysett, and a fish pass feasibility study at Clunton and Whitcott Keysett. Looking to set up a demonstration farm in Clun Catchment, hopefully at John Croxton's, which will tie in with Purslow Show.

Gareth Parry, Shropshire Council – As a result of a recent meeting with planners, the sensitivity of the SAC has been flagged up re future development. The Habitats Regulations Assessment requires a precautionary approach. Further information was needed on the potential impacts of development on nutrient levels.

Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group, Leo Smith – Leo circulated a four page summary and reported that work will continue in 2012. Potential Wildlife Sites have been identified with SWT. Meeting held with NE regarding new HLS agreements and flagged up important wetland sites for birds, plants and butterflies.

5. AOB - None

6. Date of the next meeting - 10am, Tuesday 9 October 2012 at Clun Memorial Hall.