

Clun Catchment Partnership Meeting
Tuesday 29th January 2013
Clun Memorial Hall 10am-12.40pm

Attendees:

Adam Shipp	Environment Agency
Mervin Mullard	Farmer, Mainstone
John Croxton	Farmer, Purslow
Joy Greenall	Land, Life & Livelihoods
Prof. Robert Harris	Local resident (& contractor to Defra on catchment management)
Lucy Roberts	Natural England
Emma Buckingham	Severn Rivers Trust
Phil Holden	Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Manager
Mike Kelly	Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, River Valleys Officer
Ewa Prokop	Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, Catchment Project Assistant
Fiona Gomersall	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
Leo Smith	Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group
Nick Smith	Forestry Commission

1. Welcome and Apologies:

Julie Cowley	Environment Agency
Rebecca Rogers	Environment Agency
Joy Howells	Land, Life & Livelihoods
Fran Lancaster	Shropshire Council, Biodiversity
Rebecca Rogers	Environment Agency

2. Notes of last meeting 9 October 2013 and matters arising

Minutes of the last meeting were accepted.

Fran Lancaster is to replace Dan Wrench from the Council's Biodiversity Team.

Phil confirmed he had submitted comments on the Severn River Basin District Catchment Management Plan from the AONB Partnership rather than this group; the on line response proved quite awkward to complete. **Action: Adam to find out how many responded.**

Action: Jeff to circulate brief on Species Recovery Project Funding still being undertaken.

Phil highlighted that no further progress had been made on the Clun Catchment Plan due to AONB Partnership commitments being implemented with NE funding. Jeff raised the need to identify how different agencies are working to implement the Clun action plan.

3. Updates

a. Teme Pilot project - Severn Rivers Trust (Defra funded)

Emma reported that the Teme Pilot Project had been signed off and sent to DEFRA with a draft action plan and letter expressing how the pilot had gone; no response has been received. Pilots may roll out nationally; no confirmation as yet. Existing pilots to continue; meeting has been arranged for Spring. At this stage Teme Catchment Plan will go out for public consultation; Emma to step down as lead for SRT, Mike Morris is taking over. Involved also in workshops nationally from which comments will be gathered.

The Teme SSSI Restoration Plan is tackling geomorphological aspects of the Teme (it does not include the Clun); consultation is to take place at Great Witley.

Work is being undertaken at Whitcott Keysett; fencing and coppicing is to be undertaken following installation of bridge; assessment of the weir in relation to fish passage is being considered, this will be passed on to the EA for consideration.

Catchment restoration project at River Rea will be using Turbidity Sondes. SRT is to work out how to relate this to flow data.

Tree planting with the Woodland Trust at River Rea and Avon has been undertaken.

There was debate over whether there is loss of Single Farm Payment where planting and fencing is undertaken along rivers. Some stated that provision of stock access secured SFP even if outside of a EWGS; implications are significant; there seems to be local interpretation of the rules. Nick commented that a more integrated computer system is to come for agencies in order to check on cross compliance. Bob commented that it would be a good time to influence DEFRA of why flexibility should be considered, alongside case studies. **Action: Adam to discuss with RPA representative at next Clun Field Officers Group or find out position beforehand and report back to group.**

b. AONB Freshwater Pearl Mussel project (SITA/ NE/ Defra funded)

Mike reported that ten landowner agreements were in place for completion by end of March; one more remaining regarding tree management. Buffers cover a significant lineage of 13km.

Installation of four sediment traps is being explored, both on-line and off-line.

Tree planting undertaken with volunteers at two sites, including volunteer help from EA representatives; further four sites scheduled.

Research being undertaken with Council's Flood Team on how highways act as conduits for sediment; the Upper Clun and Lower Clun will be video-surveyed; Mike and Ewa to supplement information by surveying location of gully pots at and over the Herefordshire border. Adam enquired as to whether dye testing would be undertaken; EA must be informed.

Wetland opportunity mapping is being looked at in the Upper Clun and along the Kemp; the aim is to create, enhance and extend areas to increase filtration etc.

Flowtracker training has been undertaken with some volunteers.

Invertebrate monitoring was started in 2012; full season to be accomplished this year; meeting to take place [on 17th April].

Meeting with NFU (Sarah Faulkner, Carol Griffiths) has been held including discussion of tackling Himalayan Balsam; another meeting is to be arranged with Adam. John is interested in finding out how to tackle Himalayan Balsam if the riverside is fenced off. Adam has found HB on the Clun, Unk and Redlake; he has approached key landowner sources and is to meet with Clun Parish Council on 7th February to organise a day to undertake clearance through the Parish with a view to extending this approach to other Parishes. Jeff said that he had considered HB as a target area for NE funding in terms of pinpointing exact locations of HB. Bob suggested that local beekeepers be informed of works. Fiona reported that the Small-flowered balsam had been found at Middle Spoad; Leo felt this should be controlled too. **Action: Mike to circulate Himalayan balsam control leaflet to members of the Partnership.**

River workshop for landowners, land agents and contractors is to be held on February 13th , providing a chance for attendees to meet funders and raise issues.

Clun Delivery Group meeting is to be held to discuss strategic issues; the Clun Field Officers Group is to meet in February; model now passed onto River Rea. **Action: Mike to circulate summary of the role of each group and attendees to the Partnership.**

c. Land, Life & Livelihoods LEADER project and other activity

Joy reported that LEADER, CSF and DEFRA funding have all helped Land, Life and Livelihoods to undertake projects which benefit catchment management.

Water Harvest Festival was held and felt successful **Action: Joy to send out photographic report of event.**

History and Landscape weekend is to be held in March covering at least Newcastle, Mainstone and Betws areas.

'Farmers' Den' was held pre-Christmas on topic of Entry Level Stewardship and Organic ELS. Two further sessions intend to be held on CSF and HLS. Lucy commented that NE were not in a position to be able to discuss HLS funding due to future changes.

Soil samples had been collected by volunteers for ADAS from grass, arable, riverbank and road areas as part of sediment surveys.

Assessment of septic tanks was being undertaken.

Gully pots were being assessed with funding from EA. Another project undertaken by another organisation was looking at how phosphates from septic tanks break down.

A repeat survey of farmers, to identify their concerns, is to be undertaken; this information will be fed back to the agencies. Lucy said that comments on changes required to the schemes would best be made sooner rather than later and suggested that environmental management issues be fed back. John said that the questionnaire should include something on ESAs. **Action: Joy to feed back responses to relevant organisations.**

d. Environment Agency

Adam reported in addition to topics already covered:

Funding for consultants had been given for work at Whitcott Keysett.

Materials for amendment of Clunton Weir had been purchased; work is to be undertaken next year.

Ian Killeen is to do another pearl mussel survey

Twelve months sondes data is now available from Clungunford. **Action: Adam to circulate link to live data.**

A 'Fluvial table' has been purchased from the USA; this allows judgements to be made of how obstructions such as bridges influence different patches of river; it had been used to assess the impact upstream of the removal of a weir at Buckton.

Discussions are being undertaken with John Croxton on the installation of 3.3km of riverside fencing, the surveying of trees for felling and the planting of trees with the Woodland Trust. The site will be used as a demonstration farm and promoted as part of the Purslow Show. John commented that algal growth had formed on the solar panel pump; Mike thought that a UV filter should have formed part of the equipment; Adam was aware that some partners wanted some pumps.

The Unk had been walked and various landowners signposted to CSF, ELS and HLS.

Severn Trent had successfully been taken to court on breaches in ammonia levels; this demonstrates that EA is targeting all sources of pollution.

Atkins is devising a Nutrient Management Plan for the Clun, where Nitrogen, Phosphorous and sediment levels are being computer modelled using SAGIS?

e. Natural England

Jeff reported in addition to topics already covered that two contracts are currently being implemented: a hydrological survey of proposed translocation sites on the Folly Brook and Upper Clun due to be completed by the end of March; a River Restoration Strategy is being devised by Jacobs, focussed on the SAC and translocation sites, following fieldwork that covers geomorphological surveys and the identification of practical solutions.

Lucy reported that the Nutrient Management Plan will require additional work to clarify the base levels for water in the absence of pollution.

Currently there are 62 landholdings that are to go into HLS/ELS to replace ESA; these have been seen by contractors working on behalf of NE. After 1st May, NE will no longer be in a position to advise on the type of scheme that might be available.

CSF claims are coming to an end by the end of February; some will be allowed extensions into March. After this there will not be as much money available under the scheme though the same areas will be targeted; the tight application period is 1st March-30th April 2013; the 'movement of gateways' will be an option for next year.

Leo asked what is to happen between the end of the ESA and new HLS-equivalent; could there be some interim payments to prevent the demise of good work already undertaken?. Bob said that case studies would be helpful. **Action: Suggested that organisations write a letter to MPs and Defra outlining concerns; Phil would refer to this group in a response.**

f. Shropshire Council

No-one was present to update

g. Shropshire Wildlife Trust

Fiona reported that the Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group had been surveying existing wildlife sites and 'would-be' sites and this information had proved useful to NE in consideration of HLS sites; 40 requests for information had been made.

Management plans are being written for a number of sites including land near the Anchor Conservation management had been undertaken at Bettws Pool.

5 new wildlife sites had been adopted last year; Mike commented that the suite of sites represented a significant area of the upper catchment.

h. Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group

Leo reported that an AGM had been held for the Upper Clun Wildlife Community Group; Bob had given a good presentation on the WFD. The survey results accomplished had been extensive; Fiona's efforts were particularly noted. A 4-page summary of the results will be sent to 170 people on the mailing list. **Action: Leo to send copy to group.**

Leo highlighted that 40 members were on email and that there was therefore facility to publicise future opportunities such as Himalayan Balsam work.

A website for community wildlife groups had been established. [www.shropscwgs.org.uk]

Joy initiated some discussion about the value of seeking Nature Improvement Area status. Phil reminded all that no money was associated with these areas but this might be considered in future; Jeff said that NIAs are not necessarily better than AONB/SAC at delivering a landscape-scale approach.

A report on the dipper will be finished shortly and funding will be sought from the AONB Partnership, CSF, EA and NE for future projects. A major population loss had been experienced on the lower reaches of the Clun and other watercourses in the whole AONB. Mike commented that loss of tree cover rather than the absence of nest sites may have contributed to the problem.

i. Forestry Commission

Nick reported that the Independent Panel for Forestry Review would be reporting back shortly.

Ash dieback had arrived in Shropshire; 2 outbreaks had been on nursery stock. 16% of the West Midlands comprises ash woodlands, likely to be greater in Shropshire and Herefordshire. Mike commented that 5% of riparian woodland comprised ash and that alongside alder, ash was important in mitigating climate change and contributing to the ecosystem. Joy said that she'd come across some recent research as to the benefits of shrubs as part of buffer zones; she would try to source it. Nick warned that there had been a quick spread of the disease in other European countries with coppice being affected within 1-2 years and older trees within 5 years; spores are contained in leaf litter. No 'containment' was being proposed but new ash planting had been banned. **Action: Nick to send webpage link to all.**

Nick highlighted that Brian Barker's work for the AONB Partnership had been appreciated and that perhaps at the end of his contract in March, Heartwoods might be able to provide the same service.

Felling licences from Mike Kelly had been processed smoothly.

CSF teams were promoting EWGS grants; current EWGS is to come to an end this year. Management plans will be required in future.

4. Clun Catchment Management Plan

As mentioned above, there had been no progress and this would come back to a future meeting.

5. Any other business

Phil issued summary sheets outlining the Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan Review and invited comments.

6. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is to take place on Thursday 16th May at 10am at Hightown Hall Clun (Please note change of venue - directions attached).