

**Minutes of the Clun Catchment Partnership Meeting**  
**Tuesday 29th April 2014**  
**Clun Memorial Hall 10am-12.30pm**

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**Attendees:**

Joy Greenall	Land, Life & Livelihoods and Farmer
Rob Harris	DEFRA/Community Member
Emma Buckingham	Severn Rivers Trust
Lucy Roberts	Natural England
Ken Downward	CSFI (Natural England)
Mervin Mullard	Farmer/ NFU
Mike Kelly	Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership
Phil Holden	Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership
Adam Shipp	Environment Agency
David Edwards	Shropshire Council
Thomas O'Hanlon	Severn Trent Water

**1. Apologies**

Fiona Gomersall	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
Liz Etheridge	Environment Agency

**2. Notes of last meeting 4<sup>th</sup> December 2014 and matters arising**

Still awaiting evidence that some phosphate might not be detrimental to freshwater (pearl mussel) habitat. Comment that some phosphate may be beneficial for salmonids. Discussion concluded that the weight of scientific evidence had shown the pearl mussels require ultra-oligotrophic rivers and that elevated P levels would be detrimental. As no evidence has been provided to the contrary, this item will not be carried over.

**3. Short Presentation**

Mike gave a PowerPoint presentation of recent SITA and NE funded activity in the Catchment.

**4. Updates**

**a) Shropshire Council**

David Edwards - Flood and Water Manager outlined the new Local Flood Risk Management Strategy for Shropshire.

The Strategy has been developed in partnership with Staffordshire Council and will have 3 parts:

- A Group Strategy for both Shropshire and Staffordshire
- Individual Strategy for Shropshire
- A Strategic Environmental Assessment

The strategy will promote sustainable drainage - the general rule is that any development that has drainage implications will require prior approval by Shropshire Council (the SUDS approval body). This will include agricultural and permitted development. There will be a phased approach focussing on larger developments in the first 3 years.

Shropshire Council will produce a SUDS handbook to assist developers.

This Strategy is currently out for consultation until the end of June.

***Action: Mike will respond on behalf of the AONB Partnership. However, Clun Catchment Partnership members are also encouraged to respond.***

**b) Environment Agency**

Adam reported that EA's Freshwater Pearl Mussel Project had come to an end. The extreme winter flooding had prevented some site works proceeding and had also necessitated refocussing staff to protect communities in the region.

Adam has undertaken a series of river walks and is feeding into Natural England's Clun Pearl Mussel Strategy. An Action Plan will be developed which can be used to support project funding bids. **Action: Adam to circulate.**

Options are being explored between contractors and agencies at Jay Bridge regarding the road closure.

Filming with Woodland Trust at Purslow demonstrating the value of trees re Flooding/Riparian habitat.

Liz Etheridge has been working with Woodland Trust to plant trees on the Clun SAC.

Funding to support Liz Etheridge's role in the Clun has ended. Liz will be moving back to the EA Fisheries Team, but will still be involved with the Clun where possible.

### **c) Natural England**

Lucy commented that the Nutrient management Plan (NMP) is still in draft and that NFU and CLA have been inputting into this. The Plan concludes that considerable change is needed in catchment, but not thought impossible. The Plan does not set out what needs to be done to achieve this and a separate Action Plan will be required to implement the NMP.

A public meeting to discuss the NMP is arranged for 19<sup>th</sup> May at Newcastle.

Gavin Measures (NE) is working on a River Clun Conservation Plan (as reported by Adam) exploring options such as captive breeding, translocation and recovery sites.

Gavin is seeking advice from Defra regarding pearl mussel extinction and site designations.

NE still awaiting details of NELMS - there will be an opportunity to comment via the Local Nature Partnership.

### **d) Severn Rivers Trust**

Emma reported that work at Whitcott Keysett is still ongoing - work involves solar livestock watering system and revetment to stabilise riverbanks following weir removal.

SRT will be undertaking ecosystem opportunity mapping in the Severn Uplands (inc Clun).

SRT will be undertaking a walkover survey of the Corve to assess diffuse pollution risk and invasive species. Adam and Mike have both worked previously in on the Corve and have offered support.

### **e) AONB Freshwater Pearl Mussel project (SITA/ NE/ Defra funded)**

Winter has been a difficult time for getting work done on the ground, however most work managed to get done - a report of last season's work is available on the AONB website <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/looking-after/projects/rivers/>. Fencing and coppicing work is currently completed at 6 sites in the Catchment. Any outstanding work will be completed at the earliest opportunity.

NE funded work on the SAC completed except the major debris dam removal – formal permission to remove from NE obtained but question of otter habitat needs resolving. A consultant ecologist is being contracted to investigate.

SITA project now in last phase – focussing on capital works programme to be completed by end of July.

A submission to WREN Biodiversity Action Fund is currently under consideration; Outcome should be known June. Requires £27,000 Third Party Contribution.

Working on NERC funding bid with University of Worcester to investigate alder dieback and natural resistance.

### **f) Land, Life & Livelihoods**

Joy consulting upland farmers - so many positive things they wish to do. Meeting with NE and SRT - desire to achieve a Pontbren type scheme delivering ecosystem services and food production. ¼ to 1/3 of farmers supportive of similar scheme for Clun Forest. ¾ of farmers would like to be involved in developing scheme.

Mervin commented that we should concentrate on delivering mutual benefits (farmers and conservation).

## **g) Bob Harris**

Bob commented on the recent public meeting and talk reporting the findings EA funded work.

- Problems associated with septic tanks appear to be few.
- Sediment fingerprinting (Samples from arable, grassland, riverbanks and highways) c.60% of sediment derived from riverbank and highways in upper catchment.

A new permissive path is now open to the River Clun via Middle Spoad.

Purchased a Phosphate testing kit to evaluate septic tank clusters.

EA LIDAR survey for the upper Clun undertaken – **Action: Bob to confirm who will access to this data**

## **h) Catchment Sensitive Farming**

Ken busy with Whole Farm Plans and soil husbandry visits - reported that weather has been a problem.

Most Farmer interest in buildings to house livestock and for systems to store water - also concrete and drains to manage farm waste.

Farm Tracks are a problem, they are poorly maintained (runoff pathways and sediment sources). CSFI can only fund new tracks (See AONB update). Mike commented that the WREN bid includes grants to restore damaged farm tracks.

## **5. A Clun Nature Improvement Area (NIA)?**

Open discussion – A catchment-wide solution will be required to address the challenges of returning the Clun to favourable condition. It has been proposed that a Clun NIA may be a possible way forward – Papers were circulated.

Comments made that landowners might perceive NIA as restrictive, but a NIA might be financially advantageous as it could provide a basis for funding support (Pontbren/ecosystem services type of project).

The geographic area was discussed and the Clun and NW Hereford NCA area was suggested as a possibility (though this is broader than the Clun catchment) see <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5932924754984960>.

**Action: Mike - It was agreed to draft a proposal and discuss this further**

## **6. Partnership and its links with other steering groups**

Comments invited about the number of groups in the catchment. The consensus is that although there are a number of groups working in the Clun, this just reflects the level of activity. A review of the groups indicated that there was no duplication and the Clun Catchment Partnership is valued as it is the only group working to involve interests beyond the river and pearl mussel, and is the only forum where community members and farmers are represented.

## **7. AOB**

Agreed - that the Partnership email distribution list is reviewed and updated.

A summary of the meeting notes could be published in the Clun Chronicle.

## **8. Date of next meeting**

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> July - the next meeting is courtesy of Mr Croxton at Purslow Farm.

**Meet at the Farm for 10:00** to view recent riparian works undertaken by Environment Agency, The Woodland Trust and Purslow Farm as part of HLS agreement. This will be followed by a short meeting at a local hostelry (TBC).