

Clun Catchment Partnership Meeting
Wednesday 4th December 2013
Clun Memorial Hall 10am-12.30pm

Attendees:

Joy Greenall	Land, Life & Livelihoods
Rob Harris	DEFRA
Emma Buckingham	Severn Rivers Trust
Lucy Roberts	Natural England
Liz Etheridge	Environment Agency
Mike Kelly	Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, River Valleys Officer
Ewa Prokop	Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, Catchment Project Assistant
Adam Shipp	Environment Agency
Alison Slade	Planning Ecology Officer
Thomas O'Hanlon	Severn Trent Water

1. Apologies & Introductions

Nick Smith	Forestry Commission – who is no longer able to attend
Fiona Gomersall	Shropshire Wildlife Trust

Two new members, Alison Slade (Planning Ecologist for Shropshire Council) and Thomas O'Hanlon (Catchment Management Advisor for Severn Trent Water) welcomed to the Partnership

2. Notes of last meeting 25th September 2013 and matters arising

Mike reported that the Himalayan Balsam Survey had been uploaded to the AONB website.

Adam requested that the conflict between requirements of mussels and other fauna on which Mervin and Carol were to report back, be carried forward to the next meeting.

Liz had circulated the scoring system for assessing potential pearl mussel sites to all.

Action: Ewa to send terms of reference to Thomas and Alison

3. Updates

a) Environment Agency

Adam has undertaken a wet weather survey of the Clun SAC and noted issues such as road drainage around the Shelderton area; four hotspots had been identified. Measures under HLS were being considered.

Adam had attended the Purslow Show; the recent improvement works along the river had been highlighted.

A meeting had been held with highway contractors for Herefordshire Council regarding erosion issues along the SAC and the need to protect Jay Lane without the need for emergency measures that could negatively affect the SAC.

An audit of sewage works has been undertaken; no issues had been identified.

Work had been undertaken on the Waterbody Action Plan regarding costed measures.

Liz has been investigating nine rescue sites for mussels. Some contractor work has been planned on two sites on the Clun including at Coxall Farm and downstream of Clunton. The scoring system continues to be improved by Liz.

Liz circulated some information on gravity-fed troughs. The minimal flow prevents the build-up of algae; a slight height distance is necessary between source and sink. Low summer water levels may be an issue; emergency drinking bays could be installed as a back-up. Checks need to be made as to whether abstraction licences are necessary; there were some varying views as to whether these would be necessary. Mike suggested that a filter to help stop liver fluke would be

advantageous. Flood defence consents may be necessary as the installation requires the digging of a trench into the riverbank.

Rob asked whether the installation of windmill pumps to source underground water supplies could be a solution to water provision. Emma reported that a moveable system for drawing water from rivers is being trialled at the Severn Rivers Trust.

Action: Adam to check regarding need for permissions for gravity-fed troughs

b) Natural England

56 HLS agreements had been signed during 2013 of 155 due for renewal. There is hope that the remainder will enter into ELS. NE is able to offer agreements for those coming out of ESA during 2014; staff are looking at which holdings may be eligible (likely to be 22).

No free advice is available to those coming out of ESA; targets will however be highlighted to farmers. It is expected that some will hold out for the new schemes.

There is concern that some current low-input ESA sites may be under risk; here EIA regulations may come into play. There has been recent evidence that some sites have been ploughed.

Liming may be being advised; the appropriateness of this must be considered in relation to FWPM. Ken Downward is aware.

The CSF grant for 2014 is half that of 2013, therefore areas outside the target areas are unlikely to be funded. Some additional Natura 2000 sites funding is available to holdings that are invited to apply; 50% funding is likely especially in relation to the reduction of sediment. Ken has requested site suggestions from other officers.

National CSF staff, the Land Management Director for Southern England and the Area Manager for West Midlands undertook a visit to the SAC and other locations to look at needs for the area on 3rd December.

The Nutrient Management Plan is being reviewed and will be ready during February 2014. There may be a possibility to still make comments.

Action: Those still interested in making comments on the NMP are requested to do so asap

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

Fencing and coppicing work is currently being undertaken at 6 sites in the Clun Catchment.

Sediment traps were being considered at a number of sites in the Clun Catchment.

Mike reported that there is an aim to block ditches on a SWT reserve at Turbary, using heather bales or hazel faggots; volunteers will undertake the work.

Rob raised that there may be possibility of using Forestry Commission sites as demonstration sites in relation to their delivery of ecosystem services; he had been involved with a project in Norfolk and believed that resources in the FC to do similar works exist.

Mike is looking at more funding streams including BIFFA Flagship Award, SITA and WREN; all being landfill tax credit schemes. 11.5% match funding is required; Adam suggested asking Stuart Gamble for support.

Action: Mike to ask Nick Smith about potential projects on FC sites. Mike to ask Stuart for match-funding.

d) Severn Rivers Trust

Emma reported that a Teme Partnership meeting had been held in November.

SRT had been awarded funding to work with all Wildlife Trusts across the catchment.

Three projects need to be identified with the funding available; one could be directed to the Clun. Some discussion had been had between the AONB and SRT about using funding to develop the Clun Catchment Management Plan (with hierarchy of actions and deliverers) and identifying ecosystem service provision in the catchment through mapping, as had been undertaken in the West Country.

The latter could compliment discussions that had been held with the NFU. Lucy suggested waiting until the NMP had been completed.

There was some discussion that perhaps this could be done for the whole of the Clun catchment and then more intensively for the LLL area. Alison suggested that perhaps some of the GIS layers available at the Council could be useful. Mike suggested that the existing Wetland Opportunity Mapping work could be incorporated. All felt that the economic benefit to farmers needed to be shown as part of the project.

It was suggested that some follow-up questionnaires with farmers could be undertaken following riverside works to highlight the benefits farmers had gained in being involved with projects; this information could inform DEFRA on the success of mitigation for diffuse pollution from agriculture.

Action: Emma to send link for 'Water WCRT' to all. There was consensus to progress with management plan and mapping works through SRT resourcing.

e) Land, Life & Livelihoods

Joy reported that LEADER was complete and need not be referenced in future meetings.

A CSF event on grassland management had been held. Demonstrations on sward slitters had been given.

Joy highlighted that there were often mixed messages given to farmers regarding 'productivity'; landholdings could be taken as productive in terms of silage or productive in terms of wildlife benefits or in terms of animal health for example.

A Farm Advisory Service telephone helpline had been promoted.

A Farmer's Den will be held in relation to Soil Assessment.

The results of a survey undertaken with farmers by LLL are currently being compiled; it appears that time and resource needs are the key issues preventing farmers from doing more to benefit the catchment.

f) Shropshire Council

Alison reported that a moratorium on development had been in place in the Clun catchment. Guidance notes had now been written for developers and planners. Essentially any development that would increase waste water that could not be treated by sewage works would be unlikely to be approved. A matrix on how to assess applications has been developed. Work is currently underway on reviewing site allocations for development across the county, including the Clun area; this will be completed by the end of March.

Action: Alison to send round link to guidance notes.

4. The Clun Catchment Partnership

Mike raised discussion on the purpose of the Clun Partnership and its future direction. He felt that the partnership was effective at connecting with farming and communities but that there was a general feeling that there were 'too many meetings' in relation to the rivers. Lucy suggested that six-monthly meetings of the partnership may suffice. Rob suggested having some meetings with a topic for discussion, with support of speakers; Mike suggested opening this out to others.

There was some feeling that 'actions' were associated with other meetings such as the Field Officers meetings.

Lucy said that the NMP would require regular meetings; some consideration could possibly be given to merging group roles once the NMP had been finalised.

5. Water for Life and Livelihoods EA Consultation

There was some discussion regarding the EA Water for Life & Livelihoods Challenges and Choices AONB response. Some of the issues raised included: adding of sediment as a key challenge in the local context; emphasising that highways contribute significantly to changes in flow in the catchment; the effectiveness of 'district level' scale of approach in addressing catchment issues; the addition of a need to survey native crayfish; the need to highlight the downside of changes in the ESA; the need to address Himalayan Balsam; the need to add the role of rivers as part of

tourism as a key issue in the catchment; the need to emphasise the Clun's international significance for the FWPM and the influence of conditions from outside the SAC; the need to add political effects of infraction; the need to add a desire to access river under private ownership; the need to highlight Clun as a model for best practice including volunteer input; the need to reference the Teme Management Plan; the need to reflect the different partnerships in existence.

Mike is to incorporate points raised into the response and invited further comments after the meeting.

Action: Mike to send in AONB response to EA by the deadline.

6. Clun Catchment Plan

It was felt that there are lots of plans for the Clun; however they are mainly focussed at the river. Mike commented; the Clun Catchment Plan is a document that looks at the Clun in a holistic way and is as much about the land as it is the river. It is a plan that lists actions, timescales and responsibilities.

It was suggested that this plan could be represented graphically (maps?) rather than textually.

Action: Mike to investigate alternatives - See point 3d also

7. AOB Mike said that his role is likely to change following an AONB staffing review.

8. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is to take place on Wednesday 9th April 2014, 10am, Clun Memorial Hall.