

Clun Catchment Partnership Meeting
Friday 7th June 2013
Clun Memorial Hall 10am-12.30pm

Attendees:

Adam Shipp	Environment Agency
Mervin Mullard	Farmer, Mainstone
John Croxton	Farmer, Purslow
Joy Greenall	Land, Life & Livelihoods
Leo Smith	Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group
Lucy Roberts	Natural England
Ken Downward	Natural England
Jeff Edwards	Natural England
Lynne Farquhar	Natural England
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

1. Apologies & Introductions

Emma Buckingham	Severn Rivers Trust
Tony Bostock	Severn Rivers Trust
Mike Morris	Severn Rivers Trust
Fiona Gomersall	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
Nick Smith	Forestry Commission
Rob Harris	DEFRA
Sarah Faulkner	NFU
Neasa Revens	Severn Trent (apologies sent after meeting)

Lynne said that her role was in relation to SSSIs and in this context particularly about the finalising of the Teme SSSI plan and arising relations with landowners. She was looking to engage more with the Partnership including the Severn Rivers Trust especially as Jeff's role had become more national.

2. Notes of last meeting 29th January 2013 and matters arising

Minutes of the last meeting were accepted.

Discussion was reignited regarding issue of the 'fenced land parcels' and 'in-field management features' issue. All accepted that presently RPA decisions are based on local interpretation. Mike had had discussion with an inspector who was attending a farm regarding 'Permanently Ineligible Features'; he had managed to persuade him of the argument that the area was accessible to livestock. Mike reported that the Director of the Rivers Trust had contacted DEFRA regarding the matter; comments had also been sent to DEFRA via Rob Harris. Water Harvest Festival summary sheets were circulated.

LLL are putting together feedback from farmers' questionnaires but more consulting is having to be done.

Rob, with input from Lucy, had managed to send information to the MP regarding transition funding. Lucy said that those ESAs ending in April 2014 would be offered funding for a FEP but that there was no go ahead to discuss future agreements. New schemes may be available in 2015 when there would be a single start date for all grants. ELS entrants must be signed up by 1st September 2013. **Action: Phil to write to Defra on behalf of the AONB Partnership, and referring to concerns of this group**

Action: Anyone not at the meeting but wanting a copy of the Water Harvest Festival sheets please contact Ewa with full address.

3. Updates

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

No one from SRT present. Update provided:

- There is a Teme Pilot catchment meeting on 1st July of the Partnership in Ludlow
- The Draft Management Plan is currently under consultation through the Teme Catchment website
- At the meeting there will be discussion on the Action Plan (currently in draft).
- SRT has applied for some funding to allow the SRT to coordinate partnership bid writing later in the year to other funders e.g. HLF/RDP/Esmee Fairburn etc.

Lynne added that DEFRA had made some commitment that they wanted to continue with the catchment-based approach nationwide; up to 60 at the 'Teme Scale' size of catchment. Phil confirmed for Jeff that the Clun Partnership was feeding sufficiently into Teme catchment discussions; Lynne said that many Clun examples featured in the plan.

Action: If anyone wishes to attend the meeting or engage with the Teme partnership, they should contact mike@severnriverstrust.com

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

Mike reported that the AONB had completed work on 11 sites, amounting to 14km of riverbank. This had involved the creation of buffer strips, provision of alternative watering and undertaking of tree-planting. A sediment trap had been created on one farm. A gateway which had been channelling sediment-laden water had also been moved. Local contractors had been used to keep money in the local economy. Mike offered a print out of the SITA report, detailing the work.

Two studies, funded by NE, had been undertaken. One had been on highways sediment and its impact on the Clun, including ideas on how to mitigate this. Mike stated that 400km of road represented a change in the hydrology of the catchment; there are many ditches and gullypots designed to move water rapidly to 100s of outfalls to the Clun. This must have contributed to the state of the SAC. Opportunities under CSF/HLS can act as buffers between the highway and the river, as well as on the highways themselves. The other study had involved Wetland Opportunity Mapping; a GIS exercise that dovetailed historical maps, flood maps, HLS etc, and was about increasing the water holding capacity of the land. The potential to establish such areas lies with CSF and HLS; there is opportunity to target the schemes accordingly; field officers should be able to make use of the information. Lucy pointed out that the Clun needs to be a target for any new scheme. John felt that lots of ditches were not being maintained and that much sediment was accumulating at the outfalls. Mike said that gully pots had been a reactive system; that no record exists of where the gully pots discharge to. Adam felt more information would lie with the landowners. Phil said that the report had been about getting a feel for the conduit of sediment at a catchment scale. Jeff said that the report gave highways agencies opportunity to discuss opportunities with landowners and help reduce the flashiness of rivers. Adam pointed out that fields even a mile away from the river could have an influence over the river's sediment. Leo said that he felt it was important to keep the wetland that we have rather than extend the wetland areas. Mike reported that he will continue riverside works on new sites. Currently there is a focus on creating a control strategy for Himalayan Balsam. Some funding was available to engage contractors to control Himalayan Balsam. John pointed out that fenced off areas would now pose a problem as grazing stock would no longer be able to graze out Himalayan Balsam; Mike said this was one of the reasons why he felt wider buffer strips were more appropriate.

Ewa said that work had been undertaken with volunteers to tree plant a number of sites and that a meeting had been held with volunteer invertebrate surveyors and surveys were progressing.

Action: Mike to ensure NE reports appear on the AONB website.

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

Joy reported that one of the last outputs of the LEADER project will relate to local history gathering. The two CSF dens had been well supported; encouragement had been given to having Water Plans written. Some farmers had not realised what impact their farm could have on the catchment and Joy suggested that perhaps more publicity is needed. A speaker on Farm Succession had also been the focus of a meeting; information sheets are to be drawn up. The Pontbren Farmers talk had been interesting, covering the economics of farming and the establishment of a research

project; David Jenkins would return to speak on the subject. LLL had approached local households (approximately 160 targetted near watercourses) about septic tanks. 66% had agreed to discuss the subject; 52% had septic tanks more than 30 years old; 37% had soakaways within 25m of a watercourse. Most owners seemed good at looking after their tanks but were not aware how they worked. 3 tanks had obvious problems. A recommendation of the study is more monitoring of water above and below houses with septic tanks. A report had been sent to the EA.

Joy said that more EA and CSF projects would be welcome. She felt there was potential to look at collaborative agreements between neighbouring farmers under CSF and that there could be more flexibility on small scale planting.

d. Environment Agency

Adam reported that EA had secured £145K of funding for the coming year. This would focus on water quality data and on translocation sites. Work would focus on the Unk, Clunton and Purslow. 3km of fencing, 5000 trees and numerous revetments had gone in at Purslow Farm; this will be publicised as part of the Purslow Show. The Unk has some issues with nutrient status and so some sites have been signposted to HLS. An aim has been to get fish moving higher up the river; removal or bypassing of weirs was being coordinated by the Severn Rivers Trust. Mussels had been reported on the Bynebrook in the 1980s and the Teme at Bromfield in the 1970s. The Unk presently has an issue with sediment levels in the gravels; there had been some reports of former mussels in the Unk. Jeff added that the net was being spread wider due to the hydrological survey of previously proposed sites. Adam explained that Waterbody Action Plans were aimed at devising mechanisms for remediating problems and prioritising funding by the EA; these plans would go out to consultation soon.

Action: Adam to circulate Waterbody Action Plans over July.

e. Natural England

Ken reported that the window for CSF had now closed and that he was processing applications. One further year remained for CSF; thereafter things are uncertain. There remains some funding for farm advice so that if funding becomes available in the future, farms can apply with this background knowledge in hand. Target areas included the Unk, Redlake, Kemp and Middle Clun. Options available are Whole Farm Plans, Nutrient Management Plans and Water Plans. The last deals with mitigating run-off and sediment. Operational steering groups are necessary in the target areas; Ken felt that this was sufficiently covered by the Partnership. A question was posed as to what background information was available to the field surveyors and whether there was potential to influence them with information already collated in the catchment; Ken said this could be explored; Jeff suggested a training course and that it was important to feed the information they'd gathered back to the Partnership. Ken said that there was only funding for 12 Water Plans. Joy reported that she had had experience of 3 different consultants under CSF; there had been a limit on their time and 3 different reports had been produced.

Lucy had received 42 HLS agreements by the 1st May; by the end of July there will be 54 agreements. 20 are being looked at for next year. Harley Goodwin and Caroline Dahn are to focus on the Clun area. There have been discussions with Shropshire Council regarding the Nutrient Management Plan (NMP); levels of phosphate in the water had been agreed with planning and development. More advice was being drawn up. The NMP will act as a trigger in the Council's allocation policy, though the Council will also look at land management issues. Sediment fingerprinting will be possible in the catchment this year on account of a joint NE/EA project.

Jeff reported that hydrological studies had been undertaken of the Folly Brook and Upper Clun. Adequacy of summer flows arose as an issue, therefore translocation sites lower down the Clun would now only be possible. The report had highlighted that the SAC had the advantage of ground water flow in the gravels. Catchment character of the upper Clun had now been recorded and compared to other reference sites in the UK; ideally this should be done for the remaining Clun and tributaries. The Onny may be looked at too. The River Restoration Strategy had been completed for all watercourses in the catchment other than the Redlake; a reach by reach assessment of

practical works required had been drawn up. Jeff raised the fact that a lot of this information was now on GIS and that as many people as possible should make use of it; all agreed that further thought is needed on how this can be done but that the provision of reports on the AONB website was a step in the right direction. Lynne suggested that BARSII may be an option. Adam suggested Cloudmap whereby tags can be placed on maps with information placed behind them.

Action: Ken to explore feasibility of running training sessions or providing summary information for Water Plan surveyors. All to consider ideas for sharing information from reports.

f. Shropshire Council

No-one was present to update.

g. Shropshire Wildlife Trust

Fiona absent. Update sent:

- Fiona is continuing with surveys and site condition assessments in the Upper Clun. SWT will be looking at some areas actually on the Clun.
- Carl Pickup, Reserves Manager has met with Mike Kelly regarding Mason's Bank Nature Reserve to look at ditch blocking.

h. Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group

Leo reported that bird surveys had been undertaken; a dipper report had been produced, funded by the EA.

i. Forestry Commission

Nick not present to update.

4. Future Funding

Mike reported that Funding of £65K had been secured from NE for 2013-14. SITA funds were still available until August 2014, though a limited pot of funds was left. Mike would be looking at future funding pots this year. Adam stated that £145K had been secured at the EA. Lucy said that funding for sediment finger-printing had been secured. Jeff said that 2015 -16 funding was more difficult to address.

5. Clun Catchment Management Plan

Phil reported that most time had been spent on practical works and that the Plan would need to remain on the back-burner. All agreed that it made sense to complete the Nutrient Management Plan in any case first. There had been many plans, though many with a river focus rather than a catchment focus. Adam felt that there is a need to at least summarise the projects in the absence of an overarching framework. Leo commented that each organisation was dealing with a bit of a jigsaw and that we needed a 'whole picture'. Jeff said that the meeting acted as a management plan in itself though a more accessible, concise plan seemed sensible.

Phil said that the new draft AONB Management Plan was to be published for consultation shortly and that the Clun Catchment would feature. There was the possibility in future of having an independent website; Jeff suggested an aspiration for a joint application for funding.

6. Any other business

Jeff asked that thanks be passed onto the NFU for informing landowners of the Jacobs Survey.

7. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is to take place on Wednesday 25th September at 10am at Clun Memorial Hall.