

EAST SUFFOLK CATCHMENT PARTNERSHIP MEETING

14.00 to 16.00 Thursday 10 December 2020

Via Zoom Meetings

Participants:

Will Akast	Catchment Manager	Environment Agency
Anna Beames	CEO	Suffolk FWAG
Paul Bradford	Water Resources Adviser	Sustainable Water Solutions
Jane Burch	Trustee	Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust
Andrew Davies	Chair/Trustee	Essex Suffolk Rivers Trust
Tim Darby	Group Manager	ESWAG
Jo Hayward	Catchment Officer	Natural England
Penny Hemphill	Water for Wildlife Officer	Suffolk Wildlife Trust
Gill Taylor	Operations Director	Groundwork East
Brendan Joyce	Director	Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust
Chris McArthur	Vice Chair/Trustee	Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust
Alice Wickman	Blyth Catchment Officer	Suffolk Wildlife Trust
Kirsty Wilmot	Project Support Officer	Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust
Simon Hooton	Trustee	Museum of East Anglian Life

AGENDA

1. Welcome, introduction and apologies received. BJ
2. Minutes and matters arising from the meeting on 24 July 2020 (attached). ALL
3. Update from ESRT as Catchment Host. BJ/ESRT
4. News and updates from partners. ALL
5. Projects/achievements undertaken/planned by partners relevant to the ESCP. ALL
6. Consideration/approval of new vision statement for the ESCP (attached). BJ/ALL
7. Priorities and issues for the Catchment (to inform the new Anglian RBMP). KW/ALL
8. Developing more collaborative projects and funding bid within the CP. BJ/ALL
9. Relationship between ESCP and other groups and initiatives. BJ/ALL
10. Presentation by Robin Price, CEO, Water Resources East at 15.30. RP
11. Q&A. ALL
12. Summary and action points. BJ/ALL
13. AOB. ALL
14. Date of next meeting.

MINUTES

1. Welcome, introduction and apologies received.

BJ

Apologies were received from Simon Amstutz (SC&H and DV AONBs Manager), Pete Cosgrove (Stour Project Officer, SC&H AONB), Giles Bloomfield (Catchment Engineer, WMA/IDB), Richard Gilbert (Countryside Manager, National Trust), Ian Skinner (Catchment Advisor, Essex and Suffolk Water), Bruce Kerr (Landowner and farmer, Kerr Farms), Susan McKirdy (Catchment Team Leader, Essex and Suffolk Water).

2. Minutes and matters arising from the meeting on 24 July 2020 (attached). ALL

All were happy with the minutes and there were no new matters arising. The actions from the last minutes included inviting Anglia Water to this meeting, which was done. Jane Burch suggested we may not need a representative now that we have Water Resources East attending. Brendan Joyce to check and follow up. Will Akast will recirculate the WEIF criteria.

3. Update from ESRT as Catchment Host.

BJ/ESRT

ESRT's bid to the Green Recovery Fund, which was weighted heavily on ESCP work, was unsuccessful. Norfolk Rivers Trust and Norfolk Wildlife Trust had success, as did Suffolk Wildlife Trust for a West Suffolk triangle project. There were not many other successful applicants in the area and a lot went to big conservation organisations. Over half the GRF budget went to the projects over £1m; only 68 grants were given out from 370 applications.

ESRT staff have done work on the ESCP section of the ESRT website. We welcome feedback on this as it is still a work in progress.

ESRT are funding a tree planting project on the River Alde at Badingham, which will commence in February. Penny Hemphill is doing this work for us on a freelance basis.

ESRT have become the official hosts for the Combined Essex Catchment Partnership, taking over this work from previous hosts Essex Wildlife Trust. There could be crossover and synergies here, and hopefully economies of scale. We are taking on a new post into the trust, and a key part of that person's remit will be working on the catchment partnerships. This will allow us to devote more time and resources to our hosting work, although exact resources allocated will be down to funding. Brendan Joyce asked for thoughts and questions.

Tim Darby asked what was in the successful bids for GRF that we can find out about. Brendan has already identified a big tree planting theme and will find out more before we apply again.

4. News and updates from partners.

5. Projects/achievements undertaken/planned by partners relevant to the ESCP- ALL

Tim Darby gave an overview of the drought situation his farmer members are facing. Autumn rainfall takes us only just to 100% of the long-term average. River base flows are returning to near normal and we are seeing some flashy flows and deluges from storms, which is a result of climate change. The ability to capture the water and make use of it in the longer term is critical, and we are seeing good projects like Felixstowe Hydrocycle emerging to address this. Tim expressed his concern about riparian tree planting, which when planned must include maintenance and clearing of the debris resulting from planting too close to rivers.

In response to this Anna Beames highlighted an organisation recycling plastic tree guards, and will circulate the details. Will Akast confirmed that the EA are also sourcing non-plastic alternatives, which Penny Hemphill has found are out of stock. Whilst plastic must be used in the meantime, Alice Wickman highlighted the Tubex recycling scheme for plastic guards.

Tim reported that the failure to maintain fluvial flows (due to impacts of fallen trees and leaf litter) has led to silting up and effects on habitats on his members' land. After planting maintenance is crucial. Will Akast stated it is landowners' responsibility to maintain their land, as EA have permissive powers rather than a duty to maintain. Flood risk management money can only be spent when it causes risk to people and property. The fisheries team need to keep some woody materials in the channels for fish habitat, and always seek to do this without causing too many flow issues.

Anna Beames has a number of large new estates in SFWAG's membership and is working with them to balance the need for the production of exceptional food and the needs of the environment. She is looking primarily at private money to start investing in nature-based solutions to fund a more sophisticated agricultural system, rather than fitting their work to grants in a reactive way. SFWAG's focus is on mapping the risks and vulnerabilities with their major new landowners, to inform management plans. Soil is at the epicentre of this.

Simon Hooton introduced the Museum of East Anglian Life to the group for the first time, which is a museum in Stowmarket set in 75 acres of countryside, including a river valley. Their educational remit includes getting people to understand and see the river environment, which they are keen to talk to partners about. This runs alongside plans for practical improvement works on their land, which will include getting more trees back into the valley.

Paul Bradford gave an update on the projects Sustainable Water Solutions are involved with, the main one being [Felixstowe Hydrocycle](#), which has recently laid a 12km pipeline to recycle drainage water from Kingsfleet to where farmers inland need it. The site needs to be pressure tested and there are eel friendly screens being put in down near the estuary. This project removes pressure on existing water resources and secures our local food supply.

A second element is the Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR) work which will use the aquifer to store water; a technique that is being developed since the trial at the Broxsted Estate. Permits are being sought for another trial and water quality testing is being done to make sure they don't contaminate the aquifer. Recent sampling shows that water quality in the Kingsfleet river (the MAR source of supply) is better than native groundwater. Nutrient levels are particularly low and legacy pesticides are at background levels expected for the area. If this is successful it is a way to use the aquifer to store winter water for summer irrigation use. Running alongside this is a significant saltmarsh restoration project on the Deben estuary.

A third project is the heat maps SWS have done with ESWAG and the EA, looking at long term resource availability in East Suffolk. Modelling has been done of where groundwater resources will be in the next 5-10 years, finding a problem of low flows due to existing groundwater abstractions. To meet the WFD targets we need strategic solutions to provide alternative supplies, which is where the Hydrocycle project comes in.

Tim Darby commented on the rationale behind the heat mapping work, which was initiated by ESWAG with a view to informing those abstractors who have time limited licences being renewed in 2026. Future planning and relationship building work is crucial to planning for future agricultural, industry and water company abstraction needs, which will have volume variance. We now need to take the learning and prioritise follow-up work.

Gill Taylor outlined Groundwork's projects which major on community engagement. Work includes flooding awareness work in Lowestoft and water saving work with Anglian Water in Ipswich, which will run until March 2021. In partnership with the River Waveney Trust they are also starting another Yellow Fish programme around Beccles and Bungay, funded by ESW's Branch Out fund and the EA. This has a particular focus around septic tanks. For the first time Anglian Water and Essex and Suffolk Water are working with them on the same project.

Alice Wickman gave an update on SWT's River Blyth project, which is now in its 2nd year with funding by WEG. They have completed 3 in-channel woody debris installations (in Wenhaston and Bramfield), and 2 cycles of balsam basing with volunteers in the summer. Riverside tree planting will be done for a 2nd winter at 4 or 5 sites which are already lined up, including one which is a riparian woodland strip aiming to slow the flow. The project runs until September 2021, to include one more summer of invasive species clearance. Unfortunately, some additional woody debris projects haven't been able to go ahead this year.

Penny Hemphill gave an update on SWT's work on the Gipping catchment for the last 2 years. Total tree planting work has covered around 12km of river, which has been very popular and a great way to use volunteers and have team days with the EA and others. The limiting factor is finding willing landowners, which Penny is keen to join up with partners to talk about together. Sites are easy to identify with a site walk, but it is hard getting contacts and funding. She has been successful with work on the Little Ouse last year and recently with the Water Life Recovery East Group, who have had funding to eradicate mink in the region. There is a real possibility that eradication on some small rivers will happen in Suffolk and Norfolk.

Jo Hayward from Natural England gave an update on their ELMS work (which is to be renamed ELM, with tiers to be renamed 'components'). They have completed a test and trials project and submitted a report to Defra. In February they will start the next round of applications for Countryside Stewardship. The target for an ELM launch is 2024, with pilots to start from 2021. She anticipates Defra seeking submissions for all new components within the scheme from farmers from all the old tiers, with exit options available for entry into ELM.

Will Akast gave a brief request to all partners to refer any landowners considering main river works to the EA to ensure there are no further cases of hydromorphological harm from unconsented works. Protected species are being killed and offences committed, with 2 significant cases currently in Suffolk, 1 involving the police. In Essex Matt Butcher and Nicola Shearer are contacts; Suffolk referrals are to Will. The EA wants to provide their free advice.

Jane Burch gave an update with her regional flood and coastal committee hat on, informing partners that more emphasis is going into natural flood management solutions. She requested that partners link up with her on projects around this as monies could be forthcoming. Environmental enhancements delivered on traditional flood approaches are also being funded.

This prompted a discussion about beavers as a natural flood management intervention, and their suitability in our landscape which is characterised by low flows and agriculture. There is lots to learn and we will all watch this space and learn from existing schemes, eg. Spain's Hall, Cornwall and Exeter. Simon Reeves from the Nature Conservancy is promoting this and talking to landowners, so there is lots of interest, and it could be one of ESCP's targets.

Kirsty Wilmot thanked all partners for their updates and requested any articles people may have for the ESCP Winter Newsletter, which will be produced in January. Content from the meeting can also be used and she will contact partners in due course. The AONB were unable to attend but she will source an update on Stour work being done by Peter Cosgrove.

6. Consideration/approval of new vision statement for the ESCP (attached) BJ/ALL

Brendan Joyce thanked all the partners for their work and involvement in producing this statement which was approved by all. Gill Taylor requested a minor tweak of the vision summary which highlights "the wellbeing of people", but could also include a reference to the stewardship element around rivers, which requires active public engagement. Brendan will see if this is possible, and as all partners are happy with it, the next step is to take this further and develop an action plan. This will require input from the partners on their priorities.

7. Priorities and issues for the Catchment (to inform the new Anglian RBMP). KW/ALL

Kirsty Wilmot introduced the Catchment Pages data request we have received from the EA, and which needs to be completed by February 15th. All catchment partnerships need to complete summary data which will be included in the new River Basin Management Plans.

Using an example catchment page from the guidance, Kirsty outlined the requirements, including the elements we will need partners' input on: the achievements in the last delivery cycle and the priorities for the 3rd upcoming cycle (2022-2027). Using data on challenges (populated by CaBA / the EA), we must outline between 3 and 6 'on the ground' priorities which we are confident we can deliver, and the same number we are less confident about.

Kirsty has started populating the spreadsheet and been looking at evidence from EA data around the consistently poor water bodies in East Suffolk, however would like input from partners, including any further evidence around current and future challenges to be addressed.

Will Akast briefly explained the rationale behind the work, which is beneficial for us as it gives us more visibility when the RBMP goes out for consultation. It is also useful to have our priorities clear to inform future Defra funding, as anything included will have added weight, whether it be a broad priority area (e.g. soils, low flows) or a specific priority for an individual waterbody. Although EA has withdrawn support for priority catchments work, we can still include these bigger issues in our priorities. It is also a good opportunity to highlight projects we want to deliver as this will help Will and his colleague Naomi Boyle when allocating future WEIF money. This shouldn't be a huge piece of work, but it needs to capture how we plan to work together.

Kirsty will email out the template spreadsheet, which includes the pre-populated data from the EA, and seek email comments back in the next few weeks. In early January a small working group with partners who volunteered will convene (Will, Jane, Tim, Chris, and Anna).

8. Developing more collaborative projects and funding bid within the CP. BJ/ALL

Brendan Joyce proposed this as a way forward to try again with the Greener Recovery Fund, suggesting that a partnership approach will increase our chances of success.

Anna Beames proposed a flagship project, so we have something ready for future bids that reflects us and the trust. We also need to define how we work in partnership.

Simon Hooton shared his experience working with the Broadlands CP, which included workshops which shared and firmed up projects, voted upon them and developed 5-6 projects they all liked. Some may sit on the shelf until the right funding is there, but 2-3 good ones can be worked up by 2-3 people, all facilitated on zoom.

Kirsty Wilmot mentioned the work that was done by ESCP partners in 2019 at Minsmere where we brainstormed project and priorities, voted upon them, and developed a handful of projects in follow-up meetings. We need additional resource at ESRT to take this forward, but Kirsty will circulate the work that was done to revisit it and build upon it.

9. Relationship between ESCP and other groups and initiatives. BJ/ALL

This item was deferred to the next meeting to make time for Item 10.

10. Presentation by Robin Price, CEO, Water Resources East at 15.30. RP

Robin outlined the history of the formation of Water Resources East, which was originally an Anglian Water initiative on water resource planning. It is now constituted as a Company Limited by Guarantee with 4 staff members, funded by a diverse board of 15 organisations. This is supported by a large membership of partners, who form a consultation group and are

encouraged to collaborate. Their business plan was published in June, including a 7-point strategy that majors on storage, water transfer, abstraction pressures and desalination.

WRE's role is to understand future demand for water in the region, and how it is driven by economic and environmental ambition, climate change impacts and agricultural output. They're developing a set of supply options and working out how to work together to deliver these. The results will be written into a plan by 2023, which will inform work up to 2050.

The main relevant work for us is the Water for Tomorrow project. This £4m euro (secured) Interreg project bid was done by Barry Bendall from national Rivers Trust and WRE's Steve Moncaster. Starting in January, it is piloting in 5 areas, including the Broadlands, Cameo and East Suffolk catchments, and 2 in France. Work will be around modelling challenges and identifying climate change impacts and where systems failures are, and then piloting collaborative processes to address these. The initial focus is on the Broads, however Robin wishes to keep a regular dialogue with us and have us involved in shaping this project.

Robin will circulate the slides and the membership application form for joining WRE.

11. Q&A.

ALL

Brendan Joyce asked about the implications for the ESCP in terms of work and resources. Resourcing plans are being looked at as there is money to be spent. Detail needs to follow in the new year, followed by spring workshops to decide what will be done where, and what the resources available are for local actors delivering them.

Tim Darby asked about project administration costs and whether these will be under 15%. There will be some administrative burden but WRE will be open about the spending plans.

Anna Beames asked about the aggregation of small projects, and whether a bidding platform could emerge to link buyers and sellers of environmental goods together. At the moment evidence sometimes obscures the bigger problems by giving money to little projects, whilst the real causes of them are overlooked. Bringing buyers and sellers together to fund the bigger solutions, like fixing soil, is a better approach. This conversation will continue.

12. Summary and action points.

BJ/ALL

Brendan Joyce to check on a suitable Anglian Water representative to attend.

Will Akast to recirculate the WEIF criteria.

Brendan Joyce to find out more about successful GRF bids to inform our 2nd application.

Anna Beames to circulate details of how to recycle tree guards.

All to contribute newsletter articles where possible before January, to be compiled by Kirsty, who will also source content on the Stour work being done by Peter Cosgrove.

Kirsty Wilmot to circulate Catchment Pages template and all to provide comments on achievements and priorities, by email initially. Feedback is needed by the end of the year.

Brendan Joyce to convene a virtual working group in early January to complete the Catchment Pages work (Will, Jane, Tim, Chris and Anna are to be involved).

Kirsty Wilmot to circulate the 2019 Minsmere meeting outputs to inform priorities planning.

13. AOB (None)

ALL

14. Date of next meeting.

Tim cannot do 12th or 24th February. Brendan will choose a date in mid to late February and circulate it. The suggestion to do shorter meetings every 2-3 months was favoured.