

East Suffolk Catchment Partnership Steering Group Meeting

Tuesday 16th July 2020, Castle Hill Community Centre, Ipswich.

Attendees: Jane Herbert (Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust; Chair), June Davenport (Groundwork East), Melissa Abbott (Muntons/ESRT), Will Akast (Environment Agency), Anna Beames (Suffolk FWAG), Naomi Boyle (Environment Agency), John Patrick (SWS), Jane Burch (ESRT), Tim Darby (ESWAG), Bethany Eaton (Suffolk FWAG), Jo Hayward (Natural England), Gary Hodgetts (Anglian Water), Edwin Van Ek (Woodland Trust), Ian Skinner (E&SW), Pete Roberts (IDB (WLMA), Penny Hemphill (SWT), Alice Wickman (SWT).

The attendees discussed their current projects.

Suffolk Wildlife Trust:

Have had a Water Environment Grant for a 2-year project on the River Blyth catchment to:

- Slow flow
- Enhance habitats in channel
- Develop new projects
- Reduce loss of sediment
- Engage new volunteer river wardens
- Engage landowners and give advice

EA funding has been given for River Gipping work, to do:

- Tree planting
- Landowner engagement
- March deadline for project so quick turnaround

On the Little Ouse they are:

- Planting new areas
- Need landowners already engaged
- Consent - third party needed

SCC:

- Are doing Natural Flood Management work upstream of Debenham
- 6 sites have been surveyed which will be reduced to only 1 for final funding
- £50k to spend (WEG) on various catchments entering the Deben
- Summer/Autumn work
- Need funding for the others

FWAG:

- They are promoting a type of water sensitive farming, like NRT.
- Soil protection is key, using cover crops
- Engaging farmers around the types of crops grown
- Selling the idea to farmers is their current work.
- Working around the Alde, Ore and Fromus rivers

Strategic thinking behind this:

- We can't replicate Norfolk projects in East Suffolk landscape / area as it's too different.

- Changing farming practices instead of mitigation to avoid pollution is key
- We need a knowledge led approach to natural capital
- Stewardship funding could be used differently
- We need a “Green Umbrella” instead of bare ground, not just cover crops
- Management issues around diffuse pollution and soil loss are key

“Capital works” lock in the issue or don’t change behaviour, just offer plasters not solutions

Other ideas discussed (for future work?) were:

- Tree packs for farmers (from the Woodland Trust) - 3 pick-up points
- Using tree wardens to survey trees
- Working with others (Small Woods Association, Forestry Commission, SWT etc) to deliver the right advice to landowners
- Giving planting plans and designs to demonstrate best practice
- Use of by-products to help fund woodland management
- Protecting ancient trees
- Agroforestry as an option for ELMS
- Farmers using their own woodlands to assist with soil management

Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust:

Currently finishing TOPSOIL funded projects in the Sandlings and Layer Brook in Essex. For 2020 some possible new projects are being developed:

- Deben Catchment Project, looking at landowner engagement to reduce pollution in the catchment and undertake small scale river restoration work.
- Urban Rivers Project (Haverhill) looking at pollution prevention on the Stour river, engaging communities, schools and businesses on river health and pollution prevention.

Environment Agency:

The Defra Water Environment Improvement Fund (WEIF) for delivering river habitat and water quality improvements to help our rivers and catchments meet their Water Framework Directive (WFD) objectives is allocated by the Environment Agency’s Environment Programme team. For projects to receive funding they need to be included on our medium-term plan, so project ideas need to be sufficiently developed to be included on this. Project ideas can be submitted at any time to Will Akast and Naomi Boyle. . We are expecting WEIF funding to continue in future years and occasionally extra WEIF underspend becomes available in-year, so it is a good idea to have project ideas worked up to be able to bid for this funding as and when it becomes available at short notice.

The kinds of projects WEIF funding can be used for includes

- Climate change adaptation for rivers
- Small scale tree planting and river restoration projects
- Fish barrier removal or adaptation to enable fish passage
- Reducing loss of soil

We need to ensure that any project idea submitted is clear in its objectives. For example, is a project primarily a Natural Flood Management project to reduce flood risk to people and property or a project designed to deliver environmental benefits? A project cannot be a

Natural Flood Management project if there are no properties or communities at risk of flooding.

Anglia Water:

Working around Alton Water Reservoir they are:

- Working in catchments to reduce pesticides entering the water
- Promoting healthy soil and doing soil testing
- Doing trials on using cover crops to reduce wind erosion
- Trying to encourage farmers to look at resilience rather than short term gains – working with ‘champion farmers’ to spread the message
- Putting more sensors on the River Gipping, looking at historical data too; Muntons are willing to help where they can.
- A new 5-year management plan for 2020-2025 is now in place.

Felixstowe Project Pilot: Hydro cycle

- A limited company (SWS) of 5 farmers has now been formed, working with UEA, SCC, EA.
- 50% is grant money, 50% needs to come from farmers
- They are now at delivery stage installing a pipeline at the sea wall during September and October 2019, which will be ready to pump water in by March 2020.
- This will focus on MAR, water quality and aquifer recharge.

ELMS proposal (by SWS):

- Working with ESWAG
- Using heat maps to develop a 20-year plans for water availability, which will be mapped to Water Framework Directive issues.
- Working with WRE to increase monitoring
- Discussion of heat as an environmental challenge and how to frame this positively – looking at opportunities rather than risks and engaging businesses and local residents.

General discussion of ESCP work going forward

Funding was discussed in the context of CaBA - tackling supply chains.

Responding to consultations and having a coordinated response from ESCP was discussed. We need to work together more with the LEP, and an SCC representative should be invited regularly.

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy considers soil and water availability and climate change impacts. We also need to think about resilient landscapes, and how to protect, restore and create them.

ESCP development work

Short term aims discussed, which were around landowner engagement and projects:

1. Contacting landowners to find ‘willing champions’ - there are 2500 farmers in East Suffolk. We need to share their knowledge and find demonstration projects to showcase.
2. Communication to farmers needs to include guidance which is written for them and they trust. This should communicate the benefits to them (of river restoration, tree planting, woodland filtration etc), and give baselines data which is proportionate (e.g. river restoration needs no data).

3. Funded projects – we need to refine project development and begin new projects; looking a 1-2 big flagship ones which will raise our profile. We need to work at a higher level now.

4. Develop a website: 3-4 clear points about who we are and what we aim to achieve. We can develop a list of projects and map the hot spots which would be good project sites.

Before the next meeting a template for project ideas will be circulated which can be populated by participants in advance of the meeting. This will start to flesh out some of the projects which were suggested in the March meeting and allow members to the partnership to put forward new ones.

Next Meeting: 19th September 2020, Council Offices

Actions:

JH (ESRT) will look at mapping for the partnership

JH (ESRT) will circulate a template for project ideas in advance of the meeting.

Everyone will populate it with ideas from their organisations.

Everyone will try to bring some potential landowners on board with projects they have done which can be showcased on encourage more landowners to undertake similar projects.