

EAST SUFFOLK CATCHMENT PARTNERSHIP MEETING
10.00 -11.15 Thursday 24 July 2020, via Zoom Meeting

Participants:

Brendan Joyce	Director	Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust
Kirsty Wilmot	Project Support Officer	Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust
Jane Burch	Trustee	Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust
Will Akast	Catchment Manager	Environment Agency
Giles Bloomfield	Catchment Engineer	WLMA
Tim Darby	Group Manager	ESWAG
Anna Beames	CEO	Suffolk FWAG
Peter Cosgrove	Stour Project Officer	AONB
Ian Skinner	Catchment Advisor	Essex and Suffolk Water
Anna Martin	Operations Director	Groundwork East
Richard Gilbert	Countryside Manager	National Trust
Edwin Van Ek	Outreach Advisor	Woodland Trust
Paul Bradford	Consultant	Sustainable Water Solutions

AGENDA

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| 1. Welcome and Introduction | BJ/ESRT |
| 2. Outline of current position with ESCP, future aspirations and vision | BJ/ESRT |
| 3. Update from EA | WA/EA |
| 4. Update from Partners (sorry, strictly 2 mins each please as there are 12 of us!) | ALL |
| 5. Future role and membership of the Steering Group and sub groups | BJ/ESRT |
| 6. Questions/Issues to raise (15 minutes) | ALL |
| 7. Summary/ Actions/ Future Topics and Meetings | BJ/ALL |

MINUTES

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| 1. Welcome and Introduction | BJ/ESRT |
| 2. Outline of current position with ESCP, future aspirations and vision | BJ/ESRT |

Brendan Joyce (BJ) opened the meeting by explaining his new role within ESRT and outlining his understanding of how the partnership has developed and where it is currently. There was a recognition of the frustrations of past meetings, and an intention to improve the partnership, starting with a new plan for the catchment. BJ was surprised there is no written plan yet, although the catchment maps are still online and there are other documents. ESRT are currently trying to bring forward some new projects, although we have no resources to deliver these at present. BJ explained changes to the ESCP host budget which we have applied to EA for this year. Subject to EA approval, There will be some provision for survey work and pump priming projects, and to develop a new catchment plan. However more active partnership is needed. BJ asked for comments at this stage (which are summarised under point 6), before asking the EA to clarify their expectations of the ESCP.

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| 3. Update from EA | WA/EA |
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Will Akast confirmed that CaBA is still the approach EA and DEFRA favour and that host funding for following this approach is still forthcoming. It is good seed funding albeit small. What was the WEIF (Water Environment Improvement Fund) is now the Water Environment *Investment* Fund. This funding follows projects rather than concepts and ideas, and his role is to work up project ideas to enough detail so we can bid for money. **Anna Beames** queried the focus on the quantity of water, asking what the EA view is on funding water (and soil) quality work.

Will Akast clarified the additional foci on water dependent habitats, the biodiversity and climate crises, and WFD work in partnerships. Wider countryside work is needed via lots of smaller projects, such as removing redundant structures in rivers, riparian tree planting, improving fish passages and working with landowners to get them into ELMS. Responding to surface water flooding with natural solutions (leaky dams, woody debris etc) also features. Harry Condi (EA) will be involved when appropriate. The fund is open to anyone with a good project, with a 10% cap on management costs.

4. Update from Partners (2 minutes each)

ALL

- **Jane Burch, ESRT:** sits on EA flood and coastal committee, which could be a source of funds. E.g. reconnecting flood plains.
- **Giles Bloomfield, WMA:** doesn't have capacity Catchment recovery plan currently but noted the Flood & Coastal Risk Management (FCRM) budgets have been doubled to c.£5bn over the next 6 year spend period. Future IDB investment bids could connect with wider partnership lead upstream catchment scale investment opportunities.
- **Tim Darby, ESWAG:** many of his members want funding for new reservoirs. Landowners will give time and manpower when they see a benefit and a return.
- **Paul Bradford, Sustainable Water Solutions** highlighted future water shortages and the need for multi-collaborative solutions. E.g Felixstowe Hydrocycle project is 50% EU funded.
- **Anna Beames, SFWAG** highlighted strategic projects on ponds for Great Crested Newts, developing carbon foot-printing and natural capital reports, to see if landowner assets are a good fit for ELMS. Water Sensitive Farming Project – funding has ceased for the 2nd half.
- **Will Akast, EA** clarified the WEIF funding is still primarily Water Framework Directive, with a focus on priority habitats and species as well. Project delivery capacity needs to be in place.
- **Edwin Van Ek, Woodland Trust** has a £40m 10 year funding agreement with Lloyds Bank for woodland creation, which may include small woodland creation (outside ELMS), trees outside woodlands, riparian planting, agroforestry, wider land management, and possibly water resources. Corporates are coming forward, as are estates looking for ES payments.
- **Peter Cosgrove, AONB** is doing river restoration of the Brett and Stour, including invasive species surveys and removal. He wishes to work more closely with other partners.
- **Anna Martin, Groundwork** is doing engagement work around behaviour changes in water use and sewage, with EA and water companies. Working with Anglia Water around sustainable drainage in homes and community spaces, in 34 priority catchments.
- **Ian Skinner, ESW**—clarified AMP funding is confined to surface water catchments in the Waveney. He outlined Branch Out money (see point 6 below).

5. Future role and membership of the Steering Group and sub-groups

BJ/ESRT

BJ sought confirmation of the continued desire by all to remain on a steering group, which at current size has potential to become unwieldy. All wish to remain, except Groundwork and Woodland Trust who would like to, but will also step out if required or attend specific meetings instead. Wide representation is desired, but a smaller working group to take forward a vision could help to speed progress. There was a preference for shorter more frequent meetings overall.

6. Questions/Issues to raise (15 minutes)

ALL

Tim Darby put forward his view that ESRT should be leading this partnership and questioned why no one from EA Priority Catchment and abstraction reform teams are available. Jane Burch addressed this and wants to work much more closely with Harri Condi at the EA. From ESWAG's perspective landowners are interested in riparian tree planting so their contacts are an opportunity.

Anna Beames would like an ESCP mission statement that defines the objectives, and a strategic strapline. To be specific about water management in this would be a powerful driver. She believes we can't sustain our work on funding cycles so need to think more progressively about this, including private money. SFWAG can bring collaborate working with some of their 450 landowner contacts who could work together on landscape scale. She would like to see one major project for the ESCP to raise our profile.

Giles Bloomfield highlighted the work of Water Resources East and their new vision statement. He has a £12-15m scheme in Benacre pumping station and there is a Biodiversity Credit Scheme Pilot coming through Defra. He can give clients (Benacre estate and upstream landowners, all of which have river restoration and tree planting ambitions), so to align with WRE could give us a role in creating an international exemplar site.

Biodiversity offsetting (previously championed through the Environment Bank) is being progressed through pending Environment Bill (ADA gazette Summer 2020 page 20) was discussed as a potential future source of funding, with suggestions the partnership could be the conduit to narrate the deals between developers and landowners and district councils. Catchment scale work has cross party support, and we could be an enabler. BJ has commented on the WRE strategy and is making good contacts.

GB highlighted the work of Water Resources East and their new vision statement. He has a £12-15m scheme in Benacre pumping station and there is a Biodiversity Credit Scheme Pilot coming through Defra. He can give clients (Benacre estate and upstream landowners, all of which have river restoration and tree planting ambitions), so to align with WRE could give us a role in creating an international exemplar site. Biodiversity offsetting (through the Environment Bank) was discussed, with suggestions the partnership could be the conduit to narrate the deals between developers and landowners and district councils. Catchment scale work has cross party support, and we could be an enabler. BJ has commented on the WRE strategy and is making good contacts.

Giles Bloomfield suggested a partnership with the Broadlands CP, which is ambitious and has attracted £30-50m of investment for pumping stations there. The Esmee Fairbairn Foundation is a good match funder, which gave the Alde/Ore Estuary a £600k grant for outcomes around health and wellbeing of the Estuary and wild swimming for the public. **Paul Bradford** mentioned the Alde/Ike/Snape heat maps, which have shown a resource problem is coming up there so something to watch looking beyond 2026. Abstractors could contribute here. Alternative sources of money for project management were discussed, including the RFCC and AMP.

Ian Skinner outlined Essex and Suffolk Water's funding: Branch Out funding has been expanded, with £10-25k available for priority catchment and invasive species control. Their Water Resource Management Plan for next 25 years is being written and will include funding strategies. Anglia Water could also be a good partner.

Summary/ Actions/ Future Topics and Meetings

BJ/ALL

Action 1: Will Akast to circulate the WEIF criteria to everyone in the partnership.

Action 2: Brendan Joyce to invite some members to a working group to develop the ESCP vision.

Action 3: Brendan Joyce / Kirsty Wilmot to invite an Anglia Water representative to the next meeting.

The meeting ended with the potential for much more discussion, especially on collaboration opportunities on the projects mentioned. The next steps are to gather a small working group to focus down on the ESCP vision and think about the sort of projects this vision can steer.