

South West regional planning and co-ordination meeting – Water for Wildlife

AGENDA

Time: 10am to 1pm

Date: 28th September 2007

Venue: EA offices, Exminster House, Exminster

Aim of meeting: To develop ideas for projects to be included in the AMP5 submission of the water industry.

Attendees:

Chris Rostron - Water for Wildlife UK Manager

Lucy Rogers – Avon Wildlife Trust, Head of Biodiversity

James Field - Avon Wildlife Trust

Neil Sherwood – Natural England

Ruth Barden - Wessex Water

Sarah Williams - Dorset Wildlife Trust

Mervyn Newman - East Devon District Council

Martin de Retuerto – Wessex Chalk Streams Officer, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

Beth Nightingale – Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

Charlie Taylor - Devon Wildlife Trust

Cathy McGarvey – South West Water

Paul Allen - Somerset Wildlife Trust

Victoria Whitehouse - Cornwall Wildlife Trust

Kate Stokes – Cornwall Wildlife Trust

Andy Baines – EA

Stuart Beckhurst (Water Quality) – EA

Mike Williams – EA

Lynsay McClean (Water Resources) - EA

Douglas Kite – Natural England

Apologies:

Lyn Jenkins – EA regional habitat creation manager

Simon Brenman - Regional Director (Wildlife Trusts)

Martin Ross, South West Water

Chris Klee - Bristol Water

Harriet Candy - Bristol Water

1. Introductions and matters arising

For individual updates – see partners summaries.

DK – AMP4 had a lot of designated sites work, including phosphate (P) stripping work at Sewage Treatment Works (STW's). Avon and Frome particular targets (about 16 sites) and Camel. Investigations coming to fruition now, important big one on the Avon.

Somerset Levels – looking at sewage treatment works and input to the levels, also impact on Dorset Heaths and some other sites. **Need to do more work on schemes to look at their effectiveness. PR09 could look at how this has been achieved.**

No. of smaller schemes on SSSI's could be included in AMP5 that were missed as part of AMP4. NE keen to support **long-term sustainable solutions**, taking climate change into account, and looking at catchment approach.

Review of consents on Natura 2000 sites – unlikely to be done in time for AMP5, with deadlines of 2006/8/10.

Currently no guidance from Defra on Schemes, and despite overarching support for catchment scale schemes, important not to give too much support until Ofwat finally put out some guidance.

EA habitat creation work is focussing on inter-tidal creation first then freshwater at some point in the future. Mostly linked to BAP habitat creation.

Defra funding of CSF projects – have put out statement saying that they are not making a decision yet.

2. Update on AMP5 discussion

Robust economic case must be made to get projects into AMP5, and will need DWI buy in, to show why customers should be bearing the cost. Rising nitrate levels are an issue across the region e.g. in the Mendips. Wessex Water doing some research on nitrate cycling through aquifers, showing age of nitrates.

Water safety plan – high level document, but will be statutory from 2013. Work has been carried out on catchment management for water quality, but links have not been made to biodiversity. Could easily be benefits for both. Potential for investigations project to demonstrate this link?

Development across the region also an issue – new towns planned for outside Plymouth and Exeter. Crownbrook (Exeter) will be an ecotown, capping daily water use at 125 l per head (average is 155 l per head).

Water quality trends have been identified, but also issues around 'peakiness' of river systems and how peaks of nitrate / pesticide could be reduced through a catchment approach. Don't need to wait for general levels, as even temporary spikes still lead to failure of water quality.

Combined approach – catchment management may not deliver the reliability of a plant, but can reduce its running costs or the need to upgrade.

Cryptosporidium – biological agents – expensive and energy intensive to treat. Membranes are costly, and once a plant is in, expensive to 'mothball' even if the problem is not constant.

Energy for pumping water becoming more of a sustainability issue.

3. Background data and evidence (30 minutes)

Group discussions based on area (South West Water, North Wessex and South Wessex).

South West –

SWW developing a list of priority catchments. Most relevant approaches are to moorland (Exmoor, Bodmin, Dartmoor and West Penwith). Links of water quality to biodiversity and abstraction.

Existing CSF projects could be seen as already delivering, or use additional funding to complement work depending on Ofwat's viewpoint. Otter catchment, E Devon, issues around water quality in ground water and abstraction. Agronomic advice would be useful to deal with this.

Water transfer and energy use – still needs to be tackled and promoted as an issue. Some residual issues from previous AMPs, e.g. reducing inputs from STW's to a minimal level. Science has moved on, and there is a need to look at how well these have achieved benefits for biodiversity. Question of whether P removal is required to similar levels in the winter (more dilution and less plant growth).

South Wessex –

WW has discussed priorities internally and with regulators and identified catchments, but still reliant on Ofwat decision. Keen on catchment management and planning on continuing to do this, and looking ahead to AMP6. Definitely want to see joint work with TWTs to deliver biodiversity benefits linked to this. Considering improvements to the Hampshire Avon through river restoration e.g. R Wylde, project group already set up.

North Wessex –

Need to tie in costs to customer benefits to get inclusion in AMP5. Somerset Levels and Moors – AMP looked at contribution from surrounding STW's. Potential for looking at small scale sustainable methods of reducing impact of P, potentially through extensive reedbed / wetland? Need to attach good monitoring to this to demonstrate effectiveness.

Need better understanding of sustainable P solutions, including seasonal consents. Research opps exist for water abstraction impacts, but not for water quality. Question over whether disposal of sludge on land was contributing to diffuse ag pollution?

Endocrine disruptor project was funded nationally across the water industry, similar opportunity for looking at managing phosphate? Defra are key player, **CR to check**.

4. Next steps for project development work

Water industry will be making some key decisions over the next few months, but need to develop projects before then. **Wildlife Trusts to discuss internally, then talk to contacts at the water company, EA biodiversity contact and NE**. For NE, talk to

Mark Taylor for Devon and Cornwall based at Taunton, or Doug Kite for the rest of the South West.

5. AOB and date of next meeting
17th January, 10.30 to 1.00 at Exminster House, Exeter.
Then 1pm to 3pm water vole regional project discussion.