

Catchment Management Issues Across Devon

10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Friday 19th July

NFU Meeting Room, Pynes Hill, Exeter, EX2 5ST

1. Introductions and background

Present:

ORGANISATION	INDIVIDUAL	POSITION
Devon County Council	Peter Chamberlain	Environment Manager / Devon LNP Executive Chair
	Martin Hutchings	Flood & Coastal Risk Manager
	Sarah Jennings	County Ecologist / Devon LNP Manager
	Kirstie Pritchard	Natural Environment Partnerships Officer
Devon Wildlife Trust	Peter Burgess	Director of Conservation and Development
	Ed Parr-Ferris	
	Lisa Schneidau	N.Devon Nature Improvement Area Project Manager
Westcountry Rivers Trust	Laurence Couldrick	Director
	Rosie Lear	
	Freya Stacey	
Environment Agency	Lesley Newport	Environment Programme Manager
	Mark Rice	
	Brett Grosvenor	Catchment Coordinator – North Devon
	Rob Price	Catchment Coordinator – South Devon
	Tom Dauben	Partnership & Strategic Overview Team
South West Water	David Smith	Upstream Thinking and Environment Manager
AONBs	Tim Youngs	Manager – Blackdown Hills AONB
	Chris Woodruff	Manager – East Devon AONB
	Adam Davidson	Manager – South Devon AONB
National Parks	Chris Giles	Dartmoor
	Alex Farris	Exmoor
N. Devon Biosphere Reserve	Andy Bell	Biosphere Reserve Coordinator
NFU South West	Paul Cottington	Environment Advisor
Natural England	Rob Lamboll	Catchment Sensitive Farming

Purpose for meeting:

- LNP / DCC and other groups who engage across all three partnerships are keen to understand how they can link into catchment issues.
- There is a lot happening across the catchment partnerships, these are well coordinated at local level (at catchment scale), but there is a need to bring together at a county-wide level and there has been discussion with DWT/WRT regarding coordination between the three partnerships.
- This meeting attempt to identify where things are currently, to share information and to decide if is useful to have a regular way to share information and coordinate activities strategically.

2. Catchment Partnerships Overview – current position / projects / priorities

East Devon (Ed Parr Ferris)

- DWT hosts the East Devon Catchment Partnership which includes Exmoor and Blackdown Hills, with a high proportion of protected landscape within the catchment.
- It includes the Exe, Otter, Axe and Sid Estuaries each presenting different challenges. Largely rural but includes Exeter.
- Largest issue is agricultural diffuse pollution; this is a productive landscape with large scale run-off and erosion.
- Recent works focus on managing maize, soils and NFM manual (manual will be produced as a video and with interactive functioning)

- Engaged local communities in species protection; white clawed crayfish on Culm particularly successful.
- BHAONB communities conference focused on parish engagement around southern catchment
- Projects include: Connecting the Culm project (soils, flooding, NFM, community blueprint development); Ottery St Mary NFM project (Cory and Coly); Woods for water; Lymptone NFM; River otter beaver trial (NFM); Exmoor non-native invasive species project (WEG funded - new techniques to manage invasive species); Upstream thinking (wetland restoration); Great trees in the Clyst valley (engaging community with ancient trees / trees in landscape).

North Devon (Lisa Schneidau)

- ND Catchment Partnership is a working group of the ND Biosphere and incorporates Biosphere priorities as well as catchment issues. The catchment received input from the woodland, nature improvement and communities working groups. Previously co-hosted by DWT and WRT, now DWT taking on lead function.
- WEG funded projects include Woods for Water (woodland as NFM) and DWT project on Torridge (river restoration project focusing on northern headwaters which are currently close to good status, focus on improvements as well as smaller tributaries downstream. £400,000 to capital projects over next 12 months to enable actions for land managers to improve water quality and looking at river bed improvement). Interested in soils project and learning from WRT. Also looking at a volunteer project to focus on Himalayan balsam (removal).
- Culm grassland restoration project has been running since 2016, investigating value as an NFM measure, continues to 2020. Have a full time PhD student looking at how culm grassland holds water (vegetation vs soil modelling); due to publish March 2021.
- Endangered species project looking at a genetically distinct population of freshwater pearl mussel - working with landowners surrounding population and doing some captive breeding experiments to develop a long term species recovery plan.
- BR working with EA on natural capital accounting to improve ecosystem services.
- North Devon pioneer has put in a successful ELMS application around supporting landowners to recognise natural capital benefits which may include water environment elements.
- Currently discussing how to tackle an issue with farms not understanding /not complying with water quality regs. Est. 95% not compliant. Identified as a key issue that catchment partnership could support.

South Devon (Rosie Lear)

- Catchment Partnership is co-hosted by WRT and SDAONB and includes the Yealm, Erme, Avon, Salcombe-Kinsbridge, Dart and Teign Estuaries.
- Work on environmental improvements and community engagement working with estuary partnerships.
- Currently doing a refresh of partnership priorities and developing a project pipeline
- Will be completing stakeholder analysis over summer
- Projects include – River charter for the Dart at Dartington (community engagement), farm workshops on Gara and weir work.
- Developing projects – conserving salmon and seatrout on the Teign; MCZ estuary forums conference; advanced mooring pilots.

Tamar catchment (Laurence Couldrick)

- Tamar was an original pilot for catchment working, so involved in numerous projects previously including Upstream thinking (fisheries in upper catchment, farm assurance, Plymouth river keepers etc).
- WRT are host, but have not had an officer in role to cover the post until recently. Freya now in post and engaging with TECF and Tamara landscape project and will be refreshing the estuary plan.

3. Other Catchment Scale Programmes and Projects – including Upstream Thinking & CSF Up Stream thinking

South West Water (David Smith)

- SWW in Devon focussed on water quality in areas for abstraction of drinking water which are at risk from contaminants - Fernworthy, Dart, Exe, Tamar and Otter (all surface water extraction with the exception of the Otter). Plans to continue investment in these areas for the next 5 years.
- Looking a new investigation areas which have been flagged at risk from Geosmin and Methyl-Isoborneol (MIB), dissolved organic carbon and total carbon; catchments are Meldon, Avon and Lower Tavy
- New scheme for 2020-2025 include Wistlandpound and Roadford (Wolf); also looking at Exmoor uplands with regard to impact of ditches on draining moorland.
- Delivery model is working in partnership. Delivery happens through catchment partnerships - DWT/WRT deliver Upstream thinking so SWW don't have a strong direct role in partnerships.
- Also work significantly with South west lakes trust who potentially should be involved in this group
- Other work includes mitigation for fish and eels at abstraction points. Screens on abstraction pipes etc to meet compliance requirements.
- Generally waste water discharges into rivers are from small rural communities and so within prescribed limites and not a major issue. Medium discharges occur close to larger towns (Tiverton etc) and larger discharges (e.g. Exeter) are into estuaries.

Catchment sensitive farming (Rob Lamboll)

- CSF is a partnership between DEFRA, NE & EA to achieve WFD targets through environmental stewardship and a voluntary approach
- CFS officers are based locally and there is a national team employed by NE – priority areas shown on Magic (<https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx> - Countryside Stewardship Water Quality Priority Areas (England) layer).
- Focus on area with water quality issues that are likely to result from agriculture only – I.e. where there is potential to influence. Shortlist priority farms within those area (stock density / size etc) and start there. Can add other farms within red area if necessary. Approx. 700 farms on mailing list currently.
- Issues include sediment, phosphates, nitrates, eutrophication, bathing waters and pesticides.
- Offer free and confidential 1:1 specialist advice; events/workshops; grant scheme (countryside stewardship).
- Phase 4 due to end in 2021 – targets based on engagement and outcomes (behaviour change / water quality improvement)
- Phase 5 planned but faces uncertainties re funding and Brexit.
- Developmental work includes ELMS, supply chain work, water companies, natural flood risk management and water resources.

4. Other Approaches to Natural Flood Management (Martin Hutchings and Tom Dauben)

- NFM is working with natural processes to protect and restore. There are a variety of possible interventions. EA has published information with a suit of case studies and information (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-with-natural-processes-to-reduce-flood-risk>)
- Currently funding for schemes is determined through a 'benefits calculator'. It is difficult to calculate the benefits from natural process using this traditional calculator, but it is being improved. In reality solutions are likely to involve a mix of hard engineering and natural upstream processes.
- £15m investment nationally – projects must reduce flood risk or coastal erosion, improve habitats and increase biodiversity, contribute to R&D and build partnership

- Developing a tool to inform on the impact of NFM interventions to enable prioritisation of areas of potential works
- DCC currently working on a guidance document specific to Devon including case studies and lessons learnt. Keen to make this a collaborative document.
- EA has an online tool where partners can upload information on existing NFM projects: *EA database developed in partnership by JBA and Lancaster University which aims to record all NFM projects nationally. JBA have developed an online mapping system which can be viewed here: <http://naturalprocesses.jbahosting.com>*
Should you wish to add to the JBA map then you will need to complete the attached form and return it to Emily Christopherson at JBA (Emily.Christopherson@jbaconsulting.com)
- Often the landowner carrying out NFM measures is not the direct beneficiary so looking at how to encourage engagement and raise awareness with local communities on work being done upstream – bringing land owners and communities together with a positive outcome.
- All DCC and EA flood schemes must consider NFM as well as other options. NFM unlikely to be the full solution but can reduce impact on hard engineering: address additional effect of climate change effect, increase lifetime of hard engineering works and slow flows to able better temporal management of water flow.
- Woods for water projects have multiple benefits: water quality for phosphates, strategic new habitat/woodland plus NFM.
- Potential for Devon wide working on joint data sets.
- River basin management plans due for review, consultations on this provide an opportunity to engage with local communities
- Corry and Coly NFM project used a desktop exercise to identify opportunities to connect flood plains, ground truthing was then done to test feasibility of opportunities and engage landowners. This worked well at warming up landowners and often found data set underestimated opportunities.
- Catchment partnership are important for linking various elements flooding, water quality, and soils for example.
- FC and EA developed a natural flood management risk matrix (<https://catchmentbasedapproach.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/190521-Assessing-the-risk.pdf>) to identifying the right location for NFM measures.
- Devon Landscape Policy Group are developing a Devon wide advice note on how to ensure landscape considerations are taken into account in NFM to ensure measures to not detract from landscape quality.
- It was noted that as more requests are made for NFM measures the regulatory requirements can affect timescales for delivery and we need to find a way to deal with this.

5. **Addressing Soils & Land Management - Devon and Cornwall Soils Alliance** (Laurence Couldrick)

- WEG soils project: Building capability and capacity to provide advice to farmers / landowners
- Aim to increase knowledge of soils advice in officers / advisers who are engaging with landowners and farmers on other issues
- Not lobbying, just about pulling existing projects and partnerships together to join up on this issue
- Targets for training advisers (40+) and identifying mentors (10+); 2 demonstration areas Axe (Corry Brook) and Camel (allne) to showcase actions; 7 feasibility reports (current farming vs soil capability)
- Lots of support for project already, linking to sustainable soils alliance to share national messages
- Farmers fall into four categories - champions, interested, dis-engaged and serial offenders. Need to understand farmers and farming practice as well as soils to understand how to advise and make changes

6. Catchment Monitoring Programmes – demonstrating success (incl. Citizen Science/River fly/Monitoring) – (Rosie Lear)

- Simon Browning (WRT) keen to talk to all catchment partnerships re monitoring
- West Country CSI – a volunteering project on monitoring. Volunteers complete a simple template survey form on their local river/stream (including observations on landuse, wildlife, indicators of pollution etc). Once a couple of observational surveys have been completed WRT provide a simple water quality monitoring kit (measures dissolved solids, suspended solids and phosphate)
- Train volunteers to collect data which is more useful and scientifically robust
- Online data system (<https://wrt.org.uk/project/become-a-citizen-scientist/>). Currently need to be a surveyer to access data.
- CaBA (Catchment Based Approach) National support includes workshops, data user group (CaBA data package).

7. National Position (Policy / Defra Funding Programmes) (Lesley Newport, Tom Dauben, Brett Grosvenor's)

- Need to develop collective and consistent monitoring, aim to start process through River Basin management plan review. Will include a collaborative process to review and develop new plans through involving partners in a place based planning exercise.
- WEIF (Water Env Improvement Fund) is a key delivery mechanism but very targeted to WFD. Continues to 2021. Currently looking forward, spending review bid for further funding taking place currently for next 7 years to facilitate longer term projects
- NCIF (natural capital investment fund) is broadening scope of capital fund to align with 25 year environment plan. (£139 million nationally over 7 years). If bid is successful EA will refine prioritisation criteria with the aim of a wider remit.
- Flood and Coastal Risk Management. Current model used to prioritised protects focuses on houses protected and (bat) habitat enhanced. The existing metrics will remain in place to 2021, with the potential to review with a new funding programme. Timescale for new funding stream is uncertain.
- Currently £6m available for projects, but only able to spend if fits criteria. Habitat creation and overall economic benefit criteria could be more flexible in the future.
- Starting to consider plans and priorities for 2021 to 2027 and beyond. Need partners to do the same. Catchment partnership action plans feed into medium term plans and should try to align with flood risk priorities.
- WRT planning event to look at how catchment plan align with other partners plans so they can develop some collective asks.
- Water companies in SW also looking to develop opportunities for partnership working and sharing plans

8. Countywide Coordination and Links with Devon LNP – future approach

- Existing Catchment partnerships work well at right scale, and include the right stakeholders on the ground, but we recognise that there are key stakeholders that do not get an opportunity to find out what is happening and input at the county scale
- Key benefits of county working would include:
 - Access to data
 - Sharing knowledge and skill at wider scale
 - Reducing overlap and duplication
 - Consistent engagement of stakeholders across all partnership
 - Developing cross boundary projects
- Majority of group found the meeting useful and see benefit to working at a county scale

9. Next Steps

Actions:

- **DCC to follow up with discussions /questions on how best to coordinate future working and who will coordinate**
- **All to identify who is missing from the group and provide contacts (Cornwall reps, South West Lakes Trust etc)**
- **All to identify and agree key objectives for working together**
 - Oversight of catchment issues at county scale
 - Coordination of more strategic issues (e.g. NFM, soils)
 - Develop tools and guidance collaboratively at county level
 - Share learning and experience at a wider level
 - Feed into LEP industrial strategy and other relevant plans
 - Tackling difficult issues that might be common to each catchment (e.g. water regs)
- **DCC to engage partners to feed into Devon guidance on NFM**
- **DCC to provide LNP page to share public information at a county level and create a share point folder for sharing partner information**
- **All catchment hosts to provide a one-page summary of issues and projects for a public audience**
- **Other projects to provide a one-page summary for a public audience**
- **All partners to engage with EA place based planning exercise for River Basin Management plans when available**
- **All to continue to maintain connections outside of these meetings**