

# Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels Catchment Partnership

Turkey Barn – Seven Sisters Country Park – 15<sup>th</sup> July 2015

## Minutes and Actions

Attendees			
Henri Brocklebank (HB)	SWT - Partnership Host	Helen Godfrey (HG)	EA
Rosie Pyper (RP)	EA - Partnership Coordinator	Natalie Bumpuss (NB)	Wealden DC
Louise Parker (LP)	EA	Dave Morgan (DM)	National Trust
Dave Brown (DB)	SERT	Dan Sargeant (DS)	EA
Fran Southgate (FS)	SWT	Marc Perry (MP)	EA
Gill Hesselgrave (GH)	Cuckmere Flood Forum	Mike Richardson (MR)	
Mary Devlin (MD)	Secretariat	Lance Gearing (LG)	Pevensey Advisory Group

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

RP and HB summarised the last Partnership meeting, where members of the Partnership discussed actions for the Partnership in order to produce a prioritised list of potential projects and activities. These were discussed further in 3.0 below.

### 2. Project Updates

#### 2.1 Sessingham Weir

RP circulated photos of the site to show the situation. The funding bid has been successful and analysis has begun on the ground in order to assess the best approach.

A SE Water pipe runs close by and EA have been trying to locate it to assess whether it will be affected by the removal of the weir. Trial pits have been dug and shown that the pipe has valves either side and it is not currently in use. However it is part of the SE Water network and it cannot be moved as this would be very costly. Assuming the pipe isn't too close to the weir, work can proceed to either totally or partially remove the weir.

The concrete structure may be retained if it is found to affect river bed levels too much. The landowner upstream has an abstraction licence and a pump and EA will be working with him to ensure water levels are not affected. He has offered to remove the struts to see what impact that has.

RP suggested that the Partnership could have a site visit to the weir sometime before the next meeting.

DB would like the wider Partnership to be more involved later in the project to assist in habitat work with volunteers.

Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>RP</b> to arrange a site visit to Sessingham Weir before the next meeting</li><li>• <b>RP</b> to keep the Partnership updated on progress with the Sessingham Weir project</li></ul>

## 2.2 Pollution Assessment Volunteers

The Partnership put some money towards this last year and MP provided an update on progress.

The work has been coordinated through John Gallop (EA) and it fits in with Hastings Bathing water project. 11 volunteers are involved, coordinated by HVA and training has been carried out to enable them to monitor pollution incidents as they are reported. So far there have been 3 incidents where volunteers have been asked to attend and it has allowed the information to be gathered very quickly, within 1 day. They are keen to extend the project west to 1 or 2 more streams. It is important to keep the volunteers engaged and keep building up their skills with pollution incidents.

There was a blue green algae bloom this week which EA attended – volunteers have been asked to attend the site daily to report back to EA, so they can react if needed. The process is working very effectively.

HB suggested that we invite some of the volunteers to a future meeting so they can talk about their work, and also involve them in other work that the Partnership does.

Funding for the project is being assessed to see if it can be expanded in the future. Funding is being reviewed at a national level so EA are waiting to see if more or less will be available.

### Actions

- **MP/RP** to look into inviting volunteers to future meetings

## 2.3 Hasting Bathing Water Quality

MP explained that legislation covering this had become twice as more stringent and Hastings bathing water would be classed as poor quality. EA are aiming to get it to 'satisfactory'.

Most of the issues relate to misconnections and poor infrastructure, which is leading to waste water going into surface water and then the sea. There are a lot of cases of misconnections and a lot of work is being done to map them all. Awareness raising work is also being carried out with colleges, building control and the public. Overall bathing water is improving.

GH expressed concern that a similar situation was happening in Hellingly where a new development has been built. NB suggested that Wealden DC might be able to assist but likely to be something to speak with Southern Water about.

### Actions

- **NB** to look into Hellingly pollution and possible enforcement

## 2.4 Septic Tanks

HB summarised the Test and Itchen Catchment Partnership work on septic tanks. They have involved all other catchments in the project which looks at high nutrient levels, as they have identified common issues that would affect other regions. Each catchment has been asked to contribute £1500 toward the project, which will produce information and resources that can be used in any region to help raise awareness of the issues with households and installers.

Some of the issues are due to septic tanks being very old and also the cleaning products that householders use – in particular dishwasher tablets, which contain high levels of phosphates. So

the information will include recommendations on alternative products. Improvements can be made shown quite quickly through this kind of work.

## 2.5 Internal Drainage District

An update on Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels Internal Drainage District from Teresa Willway was circulated prior to the meeting, and is attached again with the minutes.

## 2.6 South East Water and Natural England

Please see update from Robin Kelly below.

## 2.7 Southern Water

Please see update from Paul Linwood below.

## 2.8 Newhaven Port East Expansion

JB gave an update from the Landscape Management Working Group, who are looking at habitat disturbance as a result of the loss of shingle resulting from the port expansion. They have been looking at possible mitigation work, creating new vegetated shingle, but it has been hard to find opportunities or this.

They think that offsite mitigation is the only option but they would like to have it as close as possible. They have looked further east along the coast but do not want to have any impact on existing habitats there. There are two current options – stabilising Seaford beach a bit more or looking further away, perhaps at the west back at the Cuckmere estuary.

The group discussed the option of Eastbourne beach, but the vegetated shingle there has been destroyed so there wouldn't be much to work with. Another option discussed was Pevensey where it reaches the coast as it is a SSSI with vegetated shingle included in the designation, but it does not have any.

Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>DB</b> to raise the above with the Task and Finish Group this week</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>JB</b> to report ideas back to the group and possibly speak with Eastbourne BC</li></ul>

## 3. Partnership Plan

Following on from the meeting held in April, where the group discussed projects and activities for the Partnership, RP and HB summarised the work and invited the group to prioritise the actions identified, and potentially take the lead on them. RP will be putting together a draft document for all partners to review and comment on before it is finalised.

HB and RP are offering 1:1 meeting with partners to discuss project actions and ideas in more detail. They are also looking to involve NFU for more landowner involvement.

Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>RP</b> to circulate the draft list of actions and priorities</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>ALL</b> to comment on the document</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>ALL</b> to contact RP/HB if they would like a 1:1 meeting about projects of actions.</li></ul>

## 4. Any Other Business

### 4.1 Milton Lock

MR asked for news on this project. DS explained that a report had been done but EA were not happy with the outlined options in terms of evidence, so have not been able to take any of them forward.

DS agreed to share the options with the group, with a view to seeing if they can take any of them forward.

#### Actions

- **DS** to send RP the options for Milton Lock so they can be circulated

### 4.2 Project discussions

There was further discussion on project ideas and funding. DB is keen to get potential projects ready submitting to Defra for funding. He suggested partners might be interested in some of the Rivers Trusts projects – information is available in their website. [www.theriverstrust.org/project](http://www.theriverstrust.org/project)

MR suggested a project looking at cases fish loss, which the group thought could possibly be tied into the WFD.

### 4.3 Housing development at Combe Haven

LG raised concerns about the new development at Combe Haven and the impact it could have in terms of flooding. JB and MP explained that EA would ensure this would have been addressed at the planning stage and developers often use schemes to mimic nature.

### 4.4 Silt testing and funding

HB asked EA whether there would be any funding for silt testing. MP explained that EA are looking at long terms options for the Cuckmere meander, as silt is the main issue here but there are issues with what to do with the silt and this affects what funding can be used. DB recommended contacting the Champ project at Brighton University, as this has been looking at de-watering silt.

## **5.0 Updates circulated after the meeting**

### **Natural England and South East Water Update – Robin Kelly**

On 1<sup>st</sup> April Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) and South East Water (SEW) began working in partnership on our 'Upstream Thinking' project. The project's aim is to support farmers and land managers in reducing their losses of agricultural pollutants to surface and ground waters. The geographical extent of the project can be seen outlined in red on the attached map, basically the river catchments upstream of SEW's drinking water abstractions at Barcombe, Arlington, Hazards Green and near Crowhurst Bridge on the Rother.

In this first year of the project our focus is very much on metaldehyde, the active ingredient in most slug pellets. The shaded blue areas on the map are what we have identified as the metaldehyde 'hotspots' – where SEW's Catchment Scientists have seen the highest levels of metaldehyde. As I'm sure you know metaldehyde is very difficult and expensive to remove from water and is causing serious risks to our drinking water supplies.

We have identified all the arable farms in the blue target areas and sent out introductory letters, inviting them along to breakfast meetings we ran in late June and early July. The meetings went well and a good proportion of the arable land area was represented. After this initial contact we have identified two farms willing to run trial plots using alternative slug pellets, one in the Ouse catchment and one in the Waller's Haven. We are aiming to run a second event and farm walks on these sites in November. SEW have also offered to part-fund this alternative product for farms in the target area and we have a number of farms interested in this – we are just finalising the agreement/contract. We also have a list of names for free PA1 and PA4s (the pesticide application qualifications) training and to have their pellet applicators calibrated.

I am hoping we have already successfully raised awareness of the issues metaldehyde can cause for our drinking water supply. One take-home message that seemed to strike a chord with the farmers was one metaldehyde slug pellet in an olympic sized swimming pool is enough to bring pesticide levels in the water over the legal drinking water standard.

### **Southern Water Update – Paul Linwood**

Developments in the catchments –

Southern Water is delivering its NEP funded investigation at Hastings. We are sharing our findings with the EA and Hastings BC and are proposing a second more detailed phase of investigations. We also have a funded NEP scheme to deliver by March at Bexhill to investigate misconnections made into our surface water sewer system. The driver for both of these investigations is the new Bathing Water Directive.

Southern Water is negotiating with the EA about where we are delivering WFD schemes across our region. These negotiations will be concluded in January 2016 when I will be able to properly advise the group where we carrying out capital investment schemes in this catchment.