

RIVER WEY CATCHMENT CONSULTATION WORKSHOPS, SPRING 2012

- EVENT RECORD & CONCLUSIONS

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1. Aims, structure & attendance

Three River Wey Catchment stakeholder consultation workshops were conducted between 18 April and 2 May, at a range of venues and times of day to maximise people's ability to attend.

The primary aims of the events were as follows (not prioritised):-

- To introduce the catchment (its spatial context, character, Water Framework Directive [WFD] status etc.), and key elements of the draft Catchment Implementation Plan (CIP - noting the role of this as a key component of the catchment's overall landscape restoration plan, and with some focus on the WFD 'failure' issues relevant to this catchment);
- To gain feedback on the draft CIP, and obtain initial suggestions on how it might be enhanced and implemented locally (thereby soliciting collaboration/assistance with this);
- To share general information on the WFD; and
- Agree a forward plan to realise the results of feedback and establish key points-of-contact for future development of the work.

The workshops each ran for 2.5-3 hours, and were structured by alternating short presentations with opportunities for small group discussions plus plenary feedback on the various topics presented (a

typical agenda is at Annex A). The agenda was varied slightly across the three events in response to progressive feedback.

The target audience included anybody with an interest in the river environment within the geographic context of the Wey Catchment. In all, the events attracted 68 participants; 27 at St. Thomas-on-the-Bourne Church hall, Farnham (Wednesday 18/04, 2.30-5.30pm); 16 at the National Trust’s Wey Navigation HQ at Dapdune Wharf, Guildford (Saturday 28/04, 10.30-13.30); and 25 at the Church of the Good Shepherd hall at Pyrford (Wednesday 2/05, 6.30-9.00pm). The number of facilitators ranged between 7 and 5.

2. Detailed record from discussion topics

Table	Event & Topic issue
	Farnham, 18 April 2012; ‘Barriers to fish migration’
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nadder Stream as an example, where ponds incorporate a high drop impassable to fish ● A further example is the mill/ornamental weir between Moor Park & Snayles Lynch - candidate for a fish bypass channel? ● Mellow Farm; candidate site for water meadow restoration/reinstatement of oxbows ● Millmead at Guildford identified as an example of aesthetically-designed fish bypass channel ● Waverley Abbey weir is a huge barrier & combines with major road <p>2.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Need to identify/prioritise obstructions & classify their role in obstruction from impossible < easy. Prioritisation by purpose/state of redundancy, as cheaper/easier to remove wholesale than to build a bypass. Flood protection vs. fish passage identified as a potential tension. ● ‘Quick wins’ could be identified, whereby obstructions on smaller water courses are removed via loops, side channels, milling channels. Catchment Walk-overs are required to identify these. ‘Adopt a Tributary’ – ie. River warden-type scheme; these could undertake such walk-overs, & identify riparian owners. If local community involved in pressure for action, this far more effective than EA enforcement. ● EA could supply GIS of known structures on reaches to local groups, for latter to identify further structures. Groups could also identify former management practices, eg. former sluices that might be reinstalled as undershot hatches (ie. less obstructing). Requirement for training workshops to enable local groups to ‘Look after your river’; information sheets on related topics might also be available. <p>3.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Farnham Bourne is a seasonal stream that will naturally dry out, but this appears to happen more frequently than eg. 20 years ago. Fish become stranded when this happens. Is increasing abstraction to blame? Water tables are 40m lower at present so this is likely. ● A privately-owned hydroelectric generator at Frensham Mill is believed to incorporate a fish pass. ● Farnham Angling Society is possibly a good example of an organisation that might supply local reporting of problems & issues. <p>4.</p> <p>Where are the key obstructions? (this table annotated a map of the</p>

5.	<p>upper North Wey obstructions between Alton & Farnham– see Annex B)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● At Anstey Mill the North Wey has 2 channels, one (the older) is obstructed. Owner? ● Alton (Molson-Coors) Brewery – commissioned an ecological survey and impact assessment which identified fish-grid entering site is hatched & needs replacing to aid fish migration. An old weir on site was used as a pollution prevention measure but is now redundant and could be removed. ● Holybourne Stream has several ornamental ponds, inc. at a care home, which as agreed to remove theirs at the downstream end – work must continue. ● Alton Brewery – also hope to remove old ornamental fountain to remove its impact on flow. Staff to form a conservation voluntary group at brewery – possibly by September 2012. ● Abstractors – identify those with licences permitting impoundments that are not needed should have theirs’ revoked. ● Natural obstructions, eg. fallen trees are actually beneficial to fish population dynamics. 	
Farnham, 18 April 2012; ‘Diffuse pollution’		
1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cattle poaching; farmers/landowners need to be pressured to fence buffer strip on river margin. ● Green waste/arising dumping into water course – how to prevent this? Fluvial litter is a huge issue, where to start? ● Golf courses – reluctant to leave any buffer strip. ● There are financial incentives to use a nutrient/pollution/conservation plan, but no enforcement to ensure implementation. ● Need to identify pathways for diffuse pollution as solving some of these may not be expensive/difficult. ● Defra needs to up-its-game on enforcement of pollution legislation generally. ● Local groups could assist with identifying pollution hotspots, eg. Bordon where there are large market gardens ● How to address problem of foul water mis-connections? ● Water companies may be able to pay farmers to treat pollution on site, as cheaper than as extra burden on Sewage Treatment Works (STW). ● Role for local groups in lobbying polluting agencies/sectors? ● Farnham Bourne; mainly in an urban area; there is a STW near Sainsburys; works near Marks Walk. Road run-off a problem including salt. Local flood relief measures, eg. corrugated iron. Pollution likely to be concentrated during low-flow periods. Litter is an issue, as is bank poaching by horses. ● Agencies; EA should remind riparian owners of their responsibilities. ● Training needed on recognition of diffuse pollution signs. ● Over-watering in horticulture, eg. local asparagus grower in Hartley Mauditt Road – water consumption/excess disposal investigation required. ● Instead of allowing stock to directly access watercourses – could have automated pumps to troughs? ● Fly-tipping – how to deal with this? ● Any data on use of water softener? 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Target bank encroachment; target equine owner/livery sector ● Agricultural/equine 'champions' required to infiltrate own sector and demonstrate good practice. ● Septic tanks – where are they? <p>Plenary: the question arose as to the comparative responsibilities of EA vs. riparian owners on main/non-main rivers for issues such as channel de-silting operations. Otherwise covered above.</p>	
	Farnham, 18 April 2012; 'Further issues'	
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Non-native invasive species ● Tree management, problems with alder phytophthora; can coppicing help? Landowners need advice on management solutions. ● Exemplar sites need to be identified to set the benchmark. These could run open days like NGS gardens – call them 'Wey days'? ● Overgrazing of pony paddocks & manure stockpiling problems. SCC horse pasture management project. ● Large gardens adjacent to river – compost leaches into water courses. ● Use the 'Hub' (Aldershot) to publicise exemplars/champions ● Habitat in-stream enhancements inc. gravel importing – cheap & effective. ● Messages via formal education in schools – children are the future (eg. 'Mayfly in the Classroom') ● Invasive signal crayfish – obstructions contain their colonisation, thus removal may present a tension here. 	
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Winterbournes – how to manage watercourses with natural low-flow periods? ● Local groups in an ideal position to monitor water levels/flows; could also monitor aquatic invertebrates; clear debris from water courses; NNIS eradication/containment programmes 	
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Frensham ponds; recreational capacity issues on eg. bank holidays – has impact on water quality ● Question on requirement to remove fallen trees when these are a clear habitat enhancement. ● Some agency is required to co-ordinate efforts of local groups; this where SWT excels, eg. Himalayan balsam work. ● Concern for development impacts; future 'presumption in favour' – is the floodplain again at risk? East Street development in Farnham as an eg. ● Cess-pits - reedbed filtration systems a solution? 	
	Guildford, 28 April 2012; 'Barriers to fish migration'	
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Weirs must be assessed case-by-case as their flow regulation is an important function; but some types of obstruction are genuinely redundant and can be removed with fewer consequences. Univ. of Southampton/EA study mentioned. ● Millmore Common has weirs & waterwheel – obstruction likely being enhanced at present, moreover consented via planning. ● Outdoor recreational groups (inc. canoeists, anglers, ramblers) could be utilised to report/record all obstructions encountered during activity. Social media might be used to aid/streamline reporting. ● Establish local 'ownership' of reaches, in a collegiate approach to 	

<p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>	<p>resolve conflicts/issues/varying perspectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Are there new funds to address problems identified in the CIP? Yes (Catchment Restoration Fund) ● Proposed private hydroelectric schemes require careful consideration to avoid harmful impacts on fish. <p>● North Wey, south of Farnham – de-silting is only option.</p> <p>● At Old Woking there are steps at an old mill building (now a proposed hydroelectric generator) causing an obstruction. [This table drew 3 schematic drawings illustrating obstructions for several key locations]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● North Wey. High Mill Weir – privately owned? 7x Doomsday mills/weirs; Wiley, High, Waverley, Eashing, Shalford, Elstead, + 1 other. ● Pyrford has 2x obstructions. Weybridge has 4x obstructions <p>● Data required on fish species population declines over past 50 years (inc. eg. Eel). Impacts of/on fish farms, eg. feed used by. How many in catchment? How is their discharge regulated? – specifics of licensing conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consultation required when proposing any modification of weirs. ● Joined-up approach required, but also clarity on roles & responsibilities of different agencies EA, LAs, Defra, etc.) ● Clear contact details required for fish migration issues, eg. at EA ● What are land management implications (eg. ditch maintenance) for the Parish/local level. ● Are we aware of existing local Water Fora? (eg. at Worplesdon & Pirbright). 	
<p>Guildford, 28 April 2012; 'Diffuse pollution'</p>		
<p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There are existing schemes to incentivise low-impact farming ● Dog-fouling - does it have a role in urban pollution? ● Oestrogen impacts – is it a real danger of gender-change in fish/impact on fish populations? ● Are there non-polluting alternatives to metaldehydes? ● Role of Reedbed filtration systems <p>● Highways infrastructure and silt-trap/run-off intercepts - how effective are these & are they maintained adequately?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Training as pollution monitors for local volunteer groups who regularly use local reaches; what to look for, who to tell etc. ● Farncombe allotments alongside water course in Godalming as case example. Are any basic water pollution test kits available? Yes. <p>● Equine issues – soil compaction agreed, but what are the river impacts?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If metaldehyde such an issue surely we need tighter legislative control – ie. a ban on use. How does UK compare with rest of EU? Any alternatives? ● Need to encourage more local food production from the Wey catchment, but be prepared to pay higher prices for sustainably sourced products. ● Citizens could report on/monitor point sources, but need to be told where they are. ● JC's modelling – how are hotspots identified data-wise? (JC stated not necessarily based on local water sampling). 	
<p>Guildford, 28 April 2012; 'Habitat restoration'</p>		

<p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Need more reedbed filtration systems in agricultural sector, which also provide habitat creation. ● Non-native invasive species - Himalayan balsam; how to contain spread? ● Better consolidation/co-ordination of resources & expertise required (Surrey Amphibian & Reptile Group has pond creation project). ● Beavers – an ideal agent for wetland restoration; likelihood of any controlled release in Wey catchment is very low, but why exactly? ● Recognition of Wet woodland as valued component of landscape, esp. by planning sector. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Otter conservation project at Moor Park House – planting 20 years back, but not maintained. ● Lammas land at Godalming is a historic landscape, the product of socio-economic evolution of mankind. Must not be forgotten in restoration projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Snayles Lynch similar, dates from c.1628 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How to restrict managed access of cattle and horses to river – fencing? ● Impact of SANGs which impact rivers, eg. dogs ● Burpham Court (Guildford BC) – Cllr. Jenny Wicks currently leads and must be lobbied ● Expand number of Parish-level Water Fora to identify suitable habitat projects. Speak to Worplesdon & Pirbright PCs ● Importance of private riparian gardeners – an opportunity or a problem? <p>Plenary: in addition to above, Bishops Meadow was discussed and the BMT's aspiration for habitat restoration to flood meadow.</p>	
<p>Pyrford, 2 May 2012; 'Diffuse pollution'</p>		
<p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EA should be more robust/effective in its consultative role in planning (Development Control) – and could object more often. Could regulation require more sustainable drainage systems in new development (housing & industrial)? ● Significant extra burden on drainage system from development in Woking area (with high water table & sandy alluvial soils) ● Tougher enforcement required on industrial polluters by EA ● More guidance & support needed for riparian owners (not just farmers), eg. mill owners & industrial estate landlords) ● Issues with regulatory responsibility in Guildford area; delegated by EA to Surrey Wildlife Trust on its estate. ● Golf courses are major polluters in lower Wey area (11x in Woking area alone). Heavy users of pesticides & fertilisers. ● Potential for legal requirement of all licensed abstractors to build & use self-storage capacity & pollution intercepts, with some financial subsidy. A complete register of abstraction licences across the catchment would be useful evidence base to inform/support this. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Impact assessment of vegetation clearance (scrub/trees) required in eg. Hoe Valley re-development, where (legal?) dumping of groundwork & demolition spoil in flood plain <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of fencing allows horses to enter river at Wrecclisham, Farnham <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● More user-friendly incident reporting system required 	

3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Obstruction at Plough Bridge, Byfleet – a shallow weir (concrete ledge) ● Obstruction at Bluegates Hole weir/Byfleet Hill ● River Wey Trust has information on Southern Wey obstructions; but care required when modifying historic structures
4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Are there designated protected areas in rivers, as in sea & ponds, for fish breeding? ● Can't anglers simply 'chuck 'em back' over the other side of the weir?

3. Sampled record from feedback forms

Feedback forms – key messages	
	Farnham, 18 April 2012
	<p>14 returned; all found the event a valuable use of their time, although one felt the agenda to be a little over-ambitious. Diffuse pollution appeared to be the most interesting topic, although a significant number would have liked to spend more time on 'further issues', especially wildlife habitat restoration. As a means of communication on plans and aspirations for the catchment, and who is involved (though not necessarily responsible), the workshop was viewed as an overall success.</p> <p>In terms of progressing agenda topics further; there was felt to be a role for better co-ordination of existing voluntary groups within the Farnham area to become more involved with management of the river; a need for further workshops for targeted audiences (eg. farmers) on particular aspects; and reiteration of committed interest to developing projects such as the North Wey restoration at Alton.</p>
	Guildford, 28 April 2012
	<p>14 returned; everyone found the event of value, some extremely so; variously commending the opportunities to network and to better understand the background and wider context of the current Wey project. However there were no clear winners for the most useful aspect of the event. People generally felt they would have liked to spend some/more time on certain non-tabled issues such as non-native invasive species, although it was acknowledged this would be difficult in an already very full agenda. Most found the venue uncomfortably cold.</p> <p>Suggestions for new/involvement in current project work included furthering establishment of a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) on the Basingstoke Canal; maximising planning gain opportunities to benefit habitat restoration in the Wey floodplain from the current Slyfield Estate master-planning process; establishing 'Friends' groups for river stretches without such representation; Westfield Common – floodplain habitat restoration.</p>
	Pyrford, 2 May 2012
	<p>16 returned; similar to the previous events, all found the workshop of value. Networking, updates on current initiatives and "...hearing the EA's take on slugs" were cited as highlights of the evening. People were impressed by the scale and variety of aspiring initiatives and the</p>

	<p>partnership principles underpinning this, but some felt that prioritisation was importantly lacking and therefore needed. Flood-control issues and how these might link with WFD objectives appeared to be an important neglected area, while others again felt the agenda was rushed and would have liked more time to explore the topics that were covered. The rush-hour start (18.30) proved difficult for many hoping to arrive on time, and the event's pre-publicity was also criticised.</p> <p>We were reminded that for many, particularly representatives from small voluntary trusts, their areas of expertise & thus potential involvement in the overall project are not the immediate concern of the CIP, with its clear focus on addressing causes of WFD failure. The Hoe Stream valley would seem an area for focussing habitat enhancement efforts, with several existing/recent opportunities being missed or renegeged upon.</p>	
Feedback forms – key follow-up leads		
	Farnham, 18 April 2012	
	Molson-Coors Brewery; Pierrepont Farm	
	Guildford, 28 April 2012	
	Godalming Angling Society; www.weyriver.co.uk ; Farnham Town Council	
	Pyrford, 2 May 2012	
	Grayshott Angling Club; RHS Wisley; Horsell Common Conservators	

4. Analysis of immediate priorities

4.1 Obstructions to fish migration

There was variable understanding of the role of obstructions to fish migration in river systems and of just how complex the current situation is, given the considerable historical modification of the River Wey. How the removal of certain structures might impact on their original purpose for construction, including for example flood control, was an important concern. The University of Southampton is currently commissioned by the EA to gain some better understanding of this complexity, and to recommend a prioritised programme of strategic works to ease the dispersal of natural and introduced fish populations. Some key obstructions are already very well-known and several projects to remove/by-pass these will be funded via the Wey Fisheries Action Plan, or as part of proposed bids to the WFD Catchment Restoration Fund.

The workshop identified considerable will to share knowledge on obstructions that may not have previously been recognised. Some participants drew or annotated maps to show these (see Annex A). It was widely agreed that there could be a clear role for voluntary groups in identifying and recording obstructions to supplement the current work of EA/Southampton University. This might be one of a number of functions of River Wardens (see below), assigned to local/neighbourhood reaches to report on the state of 'their' river. Some less conventional approaches to this might include the use of canoes & kayaks.

Devising and implementing technical solutions to fish obstructions is likely to remain with experienced specialists at the EA and other consultative agencies, including the WVFCA and the Wild Trout Trust.

4.2 Diffuse Pollution

The presentation(s) on diffuse pollution within the catchment proved of great interest to most participants. Of particular interest was the EA's presentation of available pollution data, and the methodology behind WFD classification of water-body statuses and indeed the water-bodies themselves. With a sense that the major culprits were not represented at the workshops, the farming and equine community, and golf courses were viewed as priority audiences for some immediate targeted advocacy.

The EA and Surrey Wildlife Trust are jointly funding a Wey Farm Advice Project, shortly to be launched across the catchment but with an initial (Year 1) focus on certain priority water-bodies currently being agreed. These are likely to at least include the Tillingbourne, Cranleigh Waters, Caker Stream/Slea and Tilford-Shalford, which are all failing badly for certain pollutants and/or silt. Officers experienced in advising the farming community will supply free advisory visits to farmers, land-owners and estate managers who request this, or are being investigated by the EA. The same audience will be invited to specialist workshop events on diffuse pollution, soil and nutrient conservation and the over/mis-use of molluscicide. Identifying certain individual 'champions' from this sector, who are seen to be managing exemplar sites via best practice, and where such workshops could be hosted, will be a further aim of this project.

A methodology for identifying diffuse pollution problems is the Catchment Walkover. Here again may be a role for appointed and suitably trained voluntary groups as River Wardens to contribute to this work. Training would include simple recognition of pollution through to use of portable water chemistry testing equipment.

In terms of root-cause prevention of new source-pollution from developments, an advisory WFD-driven seminar for the planning sector on sustainable drainage methods is in its early proposal stages. This might seek to address planners, developers and consultants in one event, or multiply into several events for these individual elements.

4.3 Habitat restoration

At Guildford and particularly Pyrford, the case was presented for wetland habitat restoration on a landscape-scale as providing a multiple set of benefits for both people and wildlife (ie. 'Ecosystem Services' in current parlance). This can clearly contribute to delivery of the focussed WFD objective to improve water quality.

During the discussion that followed several sites were re-affirmed as suited for such an approach, from habitat enhancements to full habitat restoration projects. These include Westfield Common in the Hoe Valley, Burpham Court Farm at Jacobs Well, parts at least of Bishops Meadow and adjoining land to the west, and land at RHS Wisley, and Woking Palace. A systematic review and appraisal of all such sites, in partnership with the relevant decision-making agencies, throughout the catchment would be extremely useful. This is something we would hope to be scoping by the end of the year.

Local voluntary groups, as River Wardens, could be major contributors to such work. Besides supplying physical effort in certain aspects of restoration and creation projects, groups can be trained in biodiversity survey and monitoring, and recognition of, for example, non-native invasive species to inform control and eradication strategy. An exemplar for such work currently in practice is the (Farnham) Bourne Conservation Group.

5. Conclusion

Both Surrey Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency are very grateful to all participants for their contributions and the enthusiasm brought to the various debates at all three workshops. We hope that this marks the beginning of a continuing engagement programme, in which this wider group would become further involved. The Wey Landscape Partnership currently exists simply as a collective and growing 'steering group', but its future structure and governance is currently being formalised. It is likely that any interested workshop participants would be invited to affiliate to the broad partnership, with certain representatives being asked to sit on multiple specialist topic working groups, all of which will report to the reviewed (ie. narrower) core steering group.

This autumn the Environment Agency will open the next window to the Catchment Restoration Fund¹ (for projects beginning in 2013), to which the Wey Landscape Partnership will apply for funding of a suite of sub-projects addressing several of the site-issues identified above. There is time to add to the current short-list of sub-projects and interested participants should contact Surrey Wildlife Trust about this opportunity.

Meanwhile we are also developing a joint Vision Statement for the Wey Landscape Partnership and its over-arching Wey Catchment Landscape Restoration Project, and hope to soon launch a dedicated website to support this.

¹ See; <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/136182.aspx>

Annex A – Example of typical Agenda



River Wey Catchment Consultation Workshops - on behalf of the Wey Landscape Partnership -

Wednesday 2 May, 6.30-9.00pm

at the Church of the Good Shepherd Hall Annex,
Pyrford, GU22 8SP

AGENDA

- 18.00 Registration (tea & coffee available & throughout).
- 18.20 Start: Welcome & introduction to the evening
- 18.30 Scene-setting & background to the Catchment Implementation Plan
- 19.20 Key areas for action (1): Diffuse pollution
- 19.45 Refreshment Break
- 20.00 Key areas for action (2): Habitat restoration
- 20.25 Key areas for action (3): Fish migration
- 20.50 Getting further involved & Next steps
- 21.0 Close

Annex B – Alton-Farnham North Wey obstructions

