

## **Wensum Working Group Meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> Mar2020 @ Bawdeswell Village Hall 18:00 – 20:30**

In attendance Kelvin Allen, Tim Ellis, David Harper, Geoff Phillips, Roger Gibbons, Colin Howlett, Graham Gamble, Terry Lawton, Tim Venes, Chris Turnbull, Jez Wood, John Flowerdew

Apologises Cass Singleton Dennis Willis

Matters Arising - None

### **Stakeholder and Partnership Update**

Kelvin presented the latest progress on the partnership.

Much progress continues on a number of issues, with several meetings of the pollution group since Christmas with the UWFCG and Natural England. This has resulted in all actions having agreed owners and objectives. [See updated List](#)

The next milestone is the Broads Catchment Steering Group meeting, 26<sup>th</sup> March when a proposal for funding a Wensum Catchment Project Officer is expected to gain approval.

More work is required on formalising the governance, which will be progressed once the proposal is in place.

### **Pollution Group Update**

Kelvin presented the concept of identifying 3 key areas to progress specific actions. This is based on analysis of EA sampling across the river, which identifies that upstream on the river Tat has significant issues. This relative small land area covering some 8791Ha and river length of 8km, with a clearly defined monitoring point prior to its confluence with the Wensum. The area would specifically identify point sources and engage with the local community.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> location would focus on the land holdings of the Upper Wensum Farm Group Cluster and implement changes in farming practice in and around the Wendling Back between Fakenham and Dereham.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> location would focus on specific locations identified from the previous and current surveys identifying point sources of either land or road silt ingress. This would be focussed on the Blackwater valley above Great Witchingham.

Slides supporting this [are available here](#).

Kelvin asked for support in adopting this approach, which all agreed seemed a sensible and logical approach.

Online maps are available from google maps below, which are also available from the WWG home page, which has layers defining:

River Compartments, Wensum Tributaries, SSSI Units, River Restoration Locations, River Fisheries and Adjacent Fisheries.

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1k4leffRgbTvXDevq-zxkIsOmHUg&ll=52.729119326857166%2C1.0341427500000009&z=10>

A further map is available from google maps, which has layers defining:

River Compartments, Wensum Tributaries, Water Monitoring Points, Priority Point Source surveyed locations, Sewage Treatment Works

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?hl=en&mid=1H-Gb8yNr2ApPbhMnGg2pG0gXzT8Zh1aO&ll=52.822385510573234%2C1.0341427500000009&z=10>

Point Source Location Surveys and outcomes

Tim Vennes talked the group through the team's efforts on revisiting the 20 top priority point source locations identified from the 2010 APEM report. Tim felt that little or no action had been undertaken on any of these locations, apart from some natural healing by nature as ditches had become overgrown and silted. The report is [available here](#).

There seems a common theme in the nature of small minor roads across the Wensum Valley in that they act as corridors for run off or indeed allowing natural groundwater to escape and pick up road dirt prior to escaping into a nearby ditch. Clearly with the current spell of wet weather many field gateways and minor road verges are not helping the problem, indeed Natural England has released a briefing on clearing farm gateways only recently, see [mud on road link](#).

The Upper Wensum Farming Cluster Group has asked if any of the group wished to attend one of their meetings. Tim Ellis, Terry Lawton, Roger Gibbons and David Harper expressed they would be willing to represent the group.

### **Invertebrates and Riverfly**

David explained that the planned riverfly training event was postponed due to the weather conditions. This event would have provided not only 6 volunteers with skills and certificates to undertake riverfly, but it would have qualified David, Geoff and Dennis to become formal Riverfly trainers. The event will be rescheduled in the spring.

The complexity of process and the varying bodies associated with these invertebrate sampling techniques is challenging. But by following the processes adopted by other catchments, it will be possible to get a compliant solution running across the Wensum.

We are also looking at combining this with citizen science in collating water quality analysis adopting Freshwater Watch. This is currently being piloted in the CAMEO catchment.

### **River Warden Scheme**

John explained his activities in progressing this forward. He has been discussing this with Chris French the Officer employed by the Welland Rivers Trust, who has an active scheme of volunteers running. John advises we should start focussed on a very small community area, which could potentially align with our River Tat suggestion.

Clearly we would want to have our Riverfly and potentially Freshwater Watch schemes mature prior to inviting communities to engage with this. Further investigation in how other established groups are running these successfully in other catchments is required, so we can benefit from their experiences. David and Kelvin will be attending some national conferences in the coming weeks and will seek to build some links into progressing this forward.

### **Fish Survey Reporting Progression**

Julia Stansfield has recruited a new band 4 post to enable improved technical fish survey reporting to be completed across Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk. These will greatly aid the specific concerns in the ongoing debate on fish stocks and health within the Wensum.

### **Lithophilic fish PhD in England**

James Champkin has approached us to undertake a 4 year PhD on Lithophilic fish spawning and habitats. This aligns nicely with our ecology action plan, but it needs the provision of the improved fish survey report to provide the baseline evidence. Kelvin has suggested this be revisited in 2021.

### **Habitat Improvement Project 2020**

Jez will be working this up during the next couple of months.

### **Fishery Access Project**

Andrew Alston has purchased a land holding at Cosstesy with over 750m of river frontage. An initial discussion has taken place with WACA on whether this would be suitable for angling and any habitat works would be required.

### **New Mills Draw Down & EA Update**

Jez reported on the recent 3 days of drawdown of the New Mills sluice. He believes that this is a long term project, based on the removal of the sluice as a costly asset on the Agency, whilst improving fish passage. No immediate issues were identified.

### **FIP Project Bid 2020**

After discussion, it was felt that a combined application from WACA on off channel refuge and habitat works would seem appropriate. Kelvin to work with Tim to complete the application.

### **AOB - Cormorant Licensing**

Roger reported his recent discussions with Natural England on licencing following the general licence consultation, which had 4600 responses. It doesn't seem likely that any change will result from this exercise and the existing regime will continue.

Future Meeting Dates to be held at Bawdeswell Village Hall in around 3 months.

Regards

Kelvin Allen 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020