

Bristol Avon Catchment Pilot Meeting

Thursday 9th February 2012 15:00 - 17:00, Lewis House, Bath

Meeting 2

Present:

Mark Minkley	Team Leader – Environment, B&NES Council
Kären Renshaw	Ecologist, B&NES Council
Dave Laming	Councillor, B&NES Council/Bath Avon River Corridor Grp
Nikki Wood	Environmental Gain Ltd/Bath Avon River Corridor Group
Jon Taylor	Wiltshire Council
Roisin Tobin	Operations, Employment and Training Manager, Groundwork SW
Lesley Nel	Swindon Programme Manager, Groundwork SW
Richard Aston	Asset Management Team, South Gloucestershire Council
Heather Barker	Senior Environment Planning Officer, EA
Rosanne Broome	WFD Planning & Delivery Team, EA
Steve Micklewright	Avon Wildlife Trust
Paula Spiers	Avon Frome Partnership Co-ordinator

Apologies:

David Baxter	Head of Catchment Management, EA
John Ratray	Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

1) Project Update

Funding

The Avon Frome Partnership's funding bid to Defra was successful – the catchment pilot has been awarded £65,100 for the project, plus £5000 seedcorn funding. Due to unexpectedly short deadlines, it was unfortunately not possible to consult partners before submitting the bid.

All agreed that the AFP should feed back to Defra and the EA that setting such short deadlines makes it difficult to involve partners in decision-making.

The £10,000 allocated to working with FWAG was queried as excessive – it was suggested some of this funding could be used for working with land owners other than farmers (e.g. businesses) and include urban parts of the catchment. PS to check the flexibility of budget headings within the terms of the grant.

It was also agreed that the steering group, once formed, should fine-tune the detail of project expenditure once the full scope of the project was agreed.

EA officers will be able to help with data gathering as part of their day job. They will be able to give us a snapshot of the status of water bodies in our catchment and provide data on failures and issues (and what has been tackled to date).

Defra has informed the AFP that the funding must be received by a partner with charitable status. Both Avon Wildlife Trust and Groundwork SW offered to accept the funding on behalf of the AFP. A further meeting will be held next week to agree arrangements.

Evaluation

The catchment pilot will be evaluated by Cascade Consulting who will collect data from us in the form of a Baseline Characterisation Form and Quarterly / Final Review Forms. This work needs to be built into the project programme.

PS to forward further information once it has been sent out by Cascade.

Facilitation

Defra has offered us a 'facilitation package' in addition to the project funding. This will be managed by Dialogue by Design who will send us further details by the end of next week. The first task will be to produce a Stakeholder Engagement Plan.

2) Catchment Pilot Steering Group

The Steering Group will initially be made up of the following. It was agreed that membership of the group will remain flexible and may change as the project progresses.

- Groundwork SW – Lesley Nels or Roisin Tobin
- 1 x Environment Agency officer (tbc)
- Bath Avon River Corridor Group – Nikki Wood
- Avon Wildlife Trust – Steve Micklewright
- Avon Frome Partnership – Paula Spiers and Catchment Pilot Project Officer / Consultant
- Wiltshire Council – Jon Taylor
- Bath & North East Somerset Council – Karen Renshaw
- South Gloucestershire Council (will be represented by the Avon Frome Partnership initially)
- Bristol City Council – Kathy Derrick
- A representative from the Bristol Avon Rivers Trust (tbc)

The steering group will be responsible for producing a project programme, monitoring project progress, making decisions about spending funds and directing the work of the project officer.

3) Memorandum of Agreement

PS will draft a Memorandum of Agreement for the Catchment Pilot and circulate it to the steering group for comments and sign off. This is to be based on the Upper Tone Consortium document tabled at the meeting.

4) Appointment of a project officer

Either a project officer on a fixed term contract or a consultant will be employed to run the project (equivalent of 3 days per week). They will be employed by the organisation that receives the project funding and seconded to the Avon Frome Partnership who will act as accountable body and project manager for the catchment pilot and will manage the project officer/consultant on a day to day basis. The steering group will direct the work of the project officer/consultant.

The Avon Frome Partnership has offered 1 day per week of officer time as an in-kind contribution to the project.

PS to draft a job description for circulation to the steering group

5) Catchment Restoration Fund

Defra has announced that a £28m fund, providing up to £10m each year, has been allocated for projects to be delivered in 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15.

The fund will support work that aims to:

- restore more natural features in and around waters;
- reduce the impact of man-made structures on wildlife in waters; or
- reduce the impact of small, spread-out (diffuse) sources of pollution that arise from rural and urban land use.

The Environment Agency will administer the fund. Formal applications and expressions of interest for projects starting in 2012/13 are invited by 29 February 2012. A second phase of applications for funding in 2012/13 will run until 18 May 2012.

Kathy Derrick will be on the Catchment Restoration Fund review panel. She will let us have more information as it emerges.

Action - need to clarify what is meant by 'WFD protected areas' so that we can identify which areas within the catchment will be eligible. RB will check.

Action – steering group to make a decision about submitting an expression of interest for the May deadline at the next meeting.

6) Bristol Avon Rivers Trust

An inaugural meeting of the Bristol Avon Rivers Trust (BART) was held on 3rd February. BART plan to set up a Trust for the Bristol Avon and North Somerset Streams catchment and to help them get started quickly, they will probably set up under the umbrella of either the existing Severn Rivers Trust or the South West Rivers Trust, with aim of becoming independent in a year's time.

There are some obvious overlaps between the Catchment Pilot work and BART's aims. Both groups will work closely together to identify stakeholders and ensure the sustainability of the catchment management plan. BART could become a key delivery partner for the plan.

It was agreed that a BART rep should be invited to join the steering group and become involved with the catchment plan from an early stage. PS to action.

7) Actions and next steps:

- Decide who will administer the funding on behalf of the Avon Frome Partnership. AFP to meet Groundwork and AWT next week to discuss
- PS to forward further information re evaluation and facilitation once available
- PS to draft job description and memorandum of agreement and circulate to the steering group
- PS to ask Defra if we can be flexible about spending the £10,000 currently allocated to FWAG
- RB to clarify what is meant by 'WFD Protected Areas'
- PS to set up another meeting asap for steering group members to work on next steps, draft a Stakeholder Engagement Plan and plan expression of interest for the Catchment Restoration Fund round in May
- PS to contact Bristol Avon Rivers Trust to discuss steering group membership
- Set up an initial site visit / boat trip