

Second meeting to discuss an holistic approach to Water Management in Suffolk, held on 4 April 2013 in Melton

Present:		Apologies:	
Jane Burch	JB	Trazar Astley-Reid	TAR
Matt Hullis	MH	Stephen Langlois	SL
Giles Bloomfield	GB	Iain Dunnett	ID
James Mason	JM		
Jonathan Thompson	JT		
William Robinson	WR		
Richard Pipe	RP		
Peter Youngs	PY		
Paul Hammett	PH		
Steve Moncaster	SM		
Sarah Wilson	SW		
Bill Parker	BP		
Tim Woodward for Tim Isaac	TW		
Paul Bradford	PB		

Contact details for all group members on final pages of these notes

1. Choosing the catchment for our project

Paul Bradford was appointed as consultant to undertake the catchment selection study. The key aim was to undertake an independent and replicable study of all catchments in the county, using the criteria set out at the last meeting. In addition PB looked at administrative boundaries (EA, county, districts...) as working across boundaries will inevitably make the project more challenging.

The selection criteria used were in five categories:-

- Catchment characteristics
- Water scarcity
- Flood risk
- Environmental issues
- Administrative barriers

Each category was divided into 4-5 criteria. All criteria were scored on a yes/no basis (yes=1; no = 0) with all being weighted equally.

The details are contained in PB's presentation which is attached to these notes.

Some relevant comments made:-

In counties with fewer environmental designations, the criteria could include County Wildlife Sites

Definition of 'water dependant habitat' taken as one where the habitat or species designated requires a certain level of water to remain in good condition.

Unconfined aquifer is defined as one that is not overlain by an impermeable 'confining' strata such as clay.

There is a little known abstractor group in the Little Ouse and Sapiston catchment

There is currently no review of consents/restoring sustainable abstraction (RSA) programme on the Deben catchment but this may occur in the future. The presence of support boreholes assists in keeping aquifers at acceptable levels.

Numbers of abstraction licences used. Would volume be an alternative?

The difference in scores between catchments is marginal and it was questioned how replicable it would be elsewhere. Weighting of criteria could be useful in other situations.

Administrative boundaries are a practical issue that could be overcome. If excluded the Deben and Lark catchments score equally.

Other possible criteria that were not used but could be considered are SuDS, ongoing/planned FCERM works, presence of river groups and other interested parties (e.g. RSPB).

On the basis of the information provided the group decided to begin work on the **Deben, Finn and Lark catchment.**

2. Outline of the Project Scope

Aim of the project is to turn a flood issue into a water resource and where possible to enhance environmental assets and water quality. The aim is to deliver a practical project as well as a methodology for holistic water management that can be repeated elsewhere.

It was agreed to begin by looking at the catchment as a whole, but consider a smaller sub-section if this was not feasible.

Some ideas/issues for further consideration:-

- In the upper catchment the clay soils dry out and are particularly prone to summer flooding.
- Farmers in the catchment have expressed interest in further water storage reservoirs and there is increasing pressure on abstractions.
- There is a borehole supporting both the environment and abstractions.
- There are a number of WFD issues – structures, low oxygen levels, siltation and slow flows.
- Mill River (nr Kirton Sluice) is one of the most pristine in Suffolk and highly valued ecologically.
- The EA has agreed to take a flexible attitude to licensing regulations. We maybe able to use the LEP if regulatory barriers prevent appropriate actions.
- Evidence is required of the feasibility of water on the flood plain mid catchment getting into the aquifer.
- Need to quantify the water surpluses and shortages in the extreme conditions to assess whether they are relatively equally balanced.
- Much of the base flow in the Deben results from STW outfalls.
- Ideally, rural SuDS/storage area(s) upstream should provide means of getting water into the crag for abstraction downstream.
- If not possible to get water into aquifer for downstream abstraction, how could it be moved from upper to lower catchment? Would the redundant government fuel pipe serving the old airbases – currently being considered for selling off – provide a means of transporting water?

- Need to ascertain whether river flows are adequate for abstraction upstream. Currently most abstraction is from the aquifer not the river due to flow issues.
- Wetland/reedbed storage areas could help to address the siltation issues.
- Need to establish the depth of clay layer.
- Flood risk at Debenham. 1 in 5 year return?
- Need to look at current monitoring and data and establish what more information is needed.
- Land use data critical as is future development needs.
- Is it possible to put a monetary value on benefits in order to assess best project?
- Keeping sea water out of the water that is abstracted is a key issue in the estuary.

3. Next Steps

Map of catchment boundary to be circulated – attached to these notes.

All parties need to input what they hope to get from the project – particularly the Water Companies.

ACTION: All to feed back to JB by end April

Data and maps need to be gathered in GIS form to overlay the various issues and establish key issues and possible way forward. This work will need to be done by a consultant as no organisation has the capacity to do this at present.

ACTION: JB/JT/PB will meet to discuss details of best way of doing and funding this work and starting to scope out the possible project options. Findings will be reported to group within 3-4 months if possible.

4. Funding

MH had informed the LEP Green Economy pathfinder of this project. They gave support in principle and maybe able to assist in gaining funding once we have more details of the project.

Until the project is further defined there is nothing more we can do to consider possible funding.

5. Communications

It was agreed that the Essex and Suffolk River Trust could be a valuable member of this group.

RP suggested he did not have detailed knowledge of the Deben and as such there maybe a better representative for ESWAG. **ACTION: PY/RP to inform JB of future representation**

It was agreed that as the project progressed, the partners and personnel involved will need to be reviewed. Planners will be important – at present represented by BP.

The EA WFD manager, Will Akast, will need to be involved. **ACTION: JT to inform him**

SCC via the Flood and Coast newsletter and ESWAG have already informed members of the existence of the project. **ACTION: JB to provide suitable wording for others to share**

After the data gathering phase described above, it will be necessary to inform/consult with a wider range of land managers and local stakeholders. **ACTION: JB/JT will create initial list**

6. Any Other Business

EA is currently consulting on use Environmental Improvement Unit Charge funds to implement hydromorphological measures. This may have some relevance to the project.

- see <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/portal/ho/waterres/eiuc/funds>

PH advised that Secretary of State, Owen Patterson recently suggested the need for greater flexibility between water companies and land managers. This could provide the impetus to remove any institutional/legislative barriers we may come across during this project. The LEP and LGA should provide suitable conduits to government.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be arranged when the relevant data is ready for discussion and further decisions are needed on scoping the project.

Key abbreviations used:

<i>AW</i>	<i>Anglian Water</i>
<i>CAMS</i>	<i>Catchment Abstraction Management Plans</i>
<i>CFMP</i>	<i>Catchment Flood Management Plans</i>
<i>CLA</i>	<i>Country Land & Business Association</i>
<i>ESWAG</i>	<i>East Suffolk Water Abstractors Group</i>
<i>ESW</i>	<i>Essex & Suffolk Water</i>
<i>EA</i>	<i>Environment Agency</i>
<i>FRM</i>	<i>Flood Risk Management</i>
<i>IDB</i>	<i>Internal Drainage Board</i>
<i>LEP</i>	<i>New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership</i>
<i>NFU</i>	<i>National Farmers' Union</i>
<i>NE</i>	<i>Natural England</i>
<i>RSA</i>	<i>Restoring Sustainable Abstraction</i>
<i>SuDS</i>	<i>Sustainable Drainage</i>
<i>SCC</i>	<i>Suffolk County Council</i>
<i>SCDC</i>	<i>Suffolk Coastal District Council</i>
<i>STW</i>	<i>Sewage Treatment Works</i>
<i>SuDS</i>	<i>Sustainable Drainage Systems</i>
<i>WFD</i>	<i>Water Framework Directive</i>

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