

Suffolk Holistic Water Management Project

www.greensuffolk.org/hwmp

Project Update August 2015

As outlined in the last update (March 2015) we now have five working groups taking forward various aspects of the Holistic Water Management Project (HWMP). The sub groups and their key contacts are listed at the end of the relevant section and more information, meeting notes, etc are available on the website www.greensuffolk.org/hwmp. The latest focus of each group is summarised below:

1. Debenham Flood Risk Management Project

The management of flood risk to Debenham is complex due to the three tributaries of the river Deben meeting in the village and costs of many traditional flood management measures are prohibitive. Thus we are exploring a combination of several different ways to reduce risk – by slowing the rate of flow down the catchment into the river and getting the water away fast beyond the confluence of the tributaries.

The project group held a meeting in Debenham community centre which was attended by 23 landowners and interested parties from Aspell and Debenham. We discussed Natural Flood Management features such as ponds and temporary storage areas, suitable both upstream and downstream of Debenham to help manage flood risk, reduce silt and phosphates getting into the watercourse and create wildlife habitats.

We followed the meeting with visits to seven landowners who had expressed an interest, to discuss features that may be suitable on their land and sources of help and funding to deliver the necessary works. These ranged in size and form, from small ponds to temporary flood storage areas and larger in-channel structures.



Site of potential flood storage feature

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As a result of these discussions we are adding these features into the hydraulic model to ascertain the collective flood risk benefits they could provide, as well as ensuring they will not have an adverse flood impact elsewhere. We are expecting results back shortly which will then be discussed with the landowners. We aim to construct some of the smaller features later this year. Larger features will require more detailed design and thus will not be constructed just yet.

We are also investigating the benefits that larger flood storage features could provide, such as storing flood flows in the Derry Brook ford on Stony Lane. The embankments along the ford are high, therefore potentially offering space for storing flood water. This idea is being investigated as part of the hydraulic modelling being carried out in order to understand the impact of storing water would have on flood depths, and the duration that the ford would be impassable.

*RIGHT: Derry Brook ford at Stony Lane.
Note the high banks*



ABOVE: Suggested location of dual channel.

We are carrying out further investigations into creating a two stage channel to help improve flows downstream of the village. These have shown that the width of the extended channel could potentially be less than originally thought. However, the high cost of disposing of the excavated material makes the proposal expensive. A number of local farmers have expressed an interest in using some of the spoil which could significantly reduce costs. Local support such as this will be very important to this project.

DEBENHAM SUB GROUP CONTACTS:

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2. Felixstowe Peninsula Project

This project focuses on using Internal Drainage Board (IDB) drainage water, which is currently pumped out into the Deben Estuary, for irrigating crops and/or public water supply. The water would be held in a large balancing reservoir (approximately 4 Ha) and then piped inland to smaller farm reservoirs or possibly held for public water supply. Eight farmers have already expressed an interest in using up to 850 Ml of water a year (enough to grow crops worth £2.4 million). The proposal could also reduce the impact of abstraction on the Bucklesham Mill River and potentially help provide a cost effective solution to relieving the predicted public water supply deficit in East Suffolk over the next 20 to 30 years.



LEFT: The Kings Fleet and Falkenham Marshes, Felixstowe. This is the potential location for the balancing reservoir.

The East Suffolk IDB and Environment Agency (EA) are currently metering the water pumped out into the Deben in order to calculate how much could be available for supply.

They are also investigating similar shared reservoir schemes in the UK and abroad and talking with landowner groups to identify the best operational and financial models for building the reservoir, and its associated infrastructure, and for managing the sale/distribution of the water.

FELIXSTOWE PENINSULA SUB GROUP CONTACTS:

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Tim Darby, ESWAG, (Landowner group lead)

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3. Reservoir Planning & Consents Streamlining

The aim of this group is to make the process of creating storage reservoirs more streamlined for both regulators and applicants. The group comprises the Environment Agency, Natural England, Suffolk Coastal DC planning; Suffolk CC Archaeology; Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and a consultant involved in reservoir projects. Currently it can cost up to £40,000 for the average farm reservoir just to get the consents in place but farmers cannot access grant funding until they have these. This can lead to a 'catch 22' situation where farmers can't access grants because they do not have the funds to obtain the necessary consents.



The Suffolk County Council archaeology team is now allowing reservoir developments to be authorised subject to an archaeology condition which requires an investigation to be carried out before construction. This allows farmers to apply for grants before incurring the costs of the investigation. The archaeology team has also agreed to provide up-front support to help landowners understand the risk of incurring significant additional costs before selecting a reservoir site.

The project group is also considering Natural England's online 'Magic' service and their chargeable pre-application 'DAS' service as ways of enabling reservoir developers to assess the environmental risks of their proposals before submitting an application.

We hope that the creation of the balancing reservoir as part of the Felixstowe Peninsula project will be the test of the effectiveness of this streamlining project.

SUB GROUP CONTACT: Jane Burch, SCC jane.burch@suffolk.gov.uk

4. Water Framework Directive and Channel Improvements

It was hoped that the removal of Brandeston Weir - and replacement with natural pools and riffles – would be a flagship project for the HWMP, but despite a series of very positive initial meetings this has been postponed due to the reluctance of the landowner. This demonstrates that there is still have some way to go in communicating the benefits river restoration projects to a wider group of local stakeholders (e.g. landowners and parish councils). Funds previously allocated to the Brandeston project have been re-allocated to other projects, with an emphasis on meeting similar objectives (i.e. Deben channel enhancement and removal of barriers to fish passage).



River Deben at Easton

The Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust - East Suffolk Catchment Partnership (ESCP) is working closely with the HWMP and has appointed a project officer (Mary Nordon) to work with local landowners to install a number of river enhancements such as side channels, riffles, flow deflectors, rural SuDS (to reduce flood risk and capture sediment) and tree planting (to help decrease water temperatures) between Brandeston and Easton, this autumn. Other ESCP projects in the Deben catchment include water quality improvement and sediment control measures in the Sandlings.

The HWMP group is discussing potential river enhancement opportunities at Ufford and Wickham Market, working closely with relevant landowners.



LEFT: An example of one way of managing bank erosion caused by cattle poaching. Ideas such as this are being discussed with landowners with the aim of reducing sediment and pollution in the watercourses.

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5. Abstraction Reform (licence trading)

The aim of this group is to work alongside the Environment Agency's licence trading and reform agenda to make better use of existing abstraction licences in the Deben catchment. The WFD requirement to avoid the 'risk of deterioration' has, however, made progress difficult. Positive discussions have taken place between EA and the East Suffolk Water Abstractors Group (ESWAG) with some agreements found but significant obstacles have obstructed proposals to share water both on and off farm. One potential success is an agreement between the water company and a landowner and the EA to transfer unused licence capacity to the landowner on an annual basis and a further possible option under discussion is a farmer run water-main.

SUB GROUP CONTACT:

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6. Funding

The HWMP is currently funded by 'ad hoc' and 'in kind' contributions from Suffolk County Council and the Environment Agency, with further 'in kind' contributions from Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust (ESRT), the East Suffolk IDB, and ESWAG. Significant additional funding will be required to carry out the detailed assessments required for a number of the projects, particularly the Felixstowe Peninsula proposals.

A potential source of funding is the LEADER programme. Applications are likely to open in October with funding available up to £40k (match funded) which will be awarded in January 2016.

Additional sources of funding may be available from the New Anglia LEP (with applications expected to be open in November) and the European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) for agricultural business development and cooperation and infrastructure (e.g. irrigation mains) development.

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