

Suffolk Holistic Water Management Project

www.greensuffolk.org/hwmp

Project Update October 2014

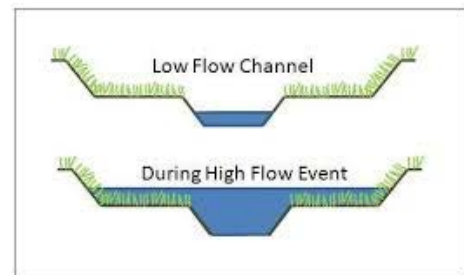
The Holistic Water Management Project (HWMP) on the River Deben continues to make good progress and is gaining support and awareness from a wide range of organisations and individuals. We have had the opportunity to present the project to neighbouring counties, the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee and at national conferences.

As outlined in the last update in June (still available on the website), in addition to the original group overseeing it, we now have five working groups taking forward various aspects of the project. The sub groups and their key contacts are listed at the end of the relevant section.

The latest focus of each group is summarised below (with links to relevant papers where appropriate).

1. Debenham Flood Alleviation Project: Following the initial appraisal report the group has been discussing the possible options for dealing with the historic flooding in the village with the key landowners and affected parties. Upstream of the village we are seeking ways to capture and slow the water through a series of basins or ponds. In order to make sure this would not adversely affect those even higher up the catchment additional modelling has been completed.

In the village, at the confluence of the Cherry Tree Brook/River Deben the option of creating a 2-stage channel is being discussed with landowners (see *diagram*). Not only would this help water to move downstream onto available floodplains more quickly in a flood event, it will also make maintenance of the channel easier than it is at present as well as delivering environmental benefits. The major cost of this work will be the disposal of the excavated material, so we are seeking local uses of it to make the project cost effective.



At the same time we have been looking at two poorly maintained structures within the river that appear to have no current function – it is believed they were once used to ensure the local fire service always had water available in the village. With the owners' agreement we hope to remove these structures, with the aim of restoring the channel to a more natural state.

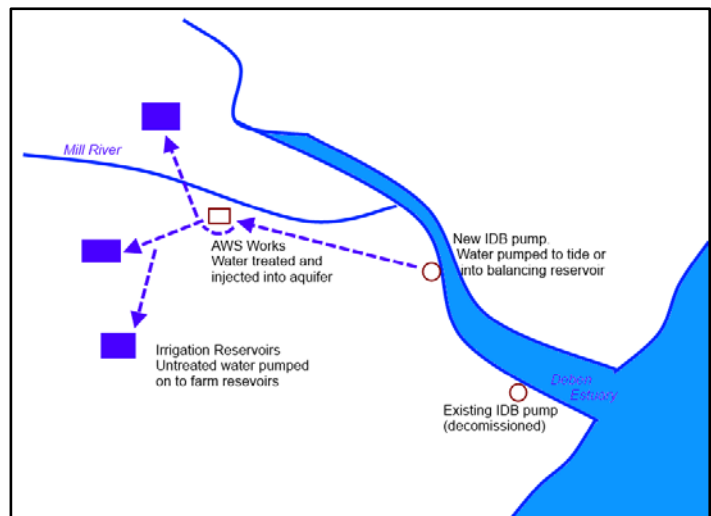
Alongside considering flood alleviation measures, opportunities for providing water to support better flows in the river during the summer are being considered, but the unreliability of rainfall and lack of storage space means this may not be a reliable source of water.

The next phase of work will be to consult more widely with the local community about the proposals and then to develop and cost up the preferred options. Funding has been found for the current appraisal works, but it is highly likely that additional sources of money, beyond flood grant in aid, will be required to deliver any options.

SUB GROUP CONTACT: Will Todd, EA will.todd@environment-agency.gov.uk

2. Felixstowe Peninsula Project: Details of this project and notes from various meetings held earlier in the year can be found on the website.

The key aspects of the project revolve around the refurbishment and possible relocation of the Internal Drainage Board's (IDB) King's Fleet pump and, associated with it, the provision of a storage reservoir that would hold water from the pump prior to distribution. (diagram illustrates concept).



Currently the pump outfall (see photo below) is damaging the important designated habitats (SPA and SSSI). As a temporary measure soft engineering structures (brushwood, bales, coir) have been put in place, by the Deben Estuary Partnership, in order to stabilise and restore the saltmarsh. (For details see

<http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/news/success-for-deben-saltmarsh-restoration/>)



Initial estimations suggest some 1200 ML water goes through the pump in a typical year. Monitoring equipment will shortly be in place to confirm this. If all this water was available, there is a demand from landowners for some 800 ML of water and Anglian Water has indicated it could be interested to receive water at its treatment works at Bucklesham – possibly for aquifer recharge after treatment.

There is strong support from local landowners in the area who are keen to obtain more secure sources of water and initial calculations suggest this additional supply could bring result in an additional £1.5 to 2.0million to the local economy. In addition, some landowners have indicated they might consider releasing unsustainable summer abstraction licences if a new, reliable water source could be provided, thus providing environmental benefits.

The IDB is taking forward initial appraisal works including level surveys to determine the feasibility of draining water to a new pump site further north nearer the point of need and possible sites for a reservoir. Work is also being undertaken to better understand the ecological impact, particularly on wading birds and eels, of the Kings Fleet pump ceasing to operate at this point and relocation further north.

SUB GROUP CONTACTS:

Giles Bloomfield, East Suffolk IDB

giles@wlma.org

Peter Youngs, ESWAG,

eswag@tiscali.co.uk (landowner group lead)

www.greensuffolk.org/hwmp

3. Reservoir Planning & Consents streamlining sub group: The aim of this group is to make the whole process of creating storage reservoirs more streamline for both the regulators and applicants alike. The group comprises the Environment Agency, Natural England, Suffolk Coastal DC planning; Suffolk County Council Archaeology; the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and a consultant involved in reservoir projects. The group met in July (notes on the website) and began by trying to understand all the consents and associated costs involved in creating a reservoir; what data is needed and at what stage and the basis on which the various agencies take decisions about the acceptability or otherwise of a proposed reservoir. Further work is now taking place to capture all this information and collate all available sources of advice before considering ways in which the process can be streamlined. Currently it costs some £40,000 for the average farm reservoir just to get the consents in place – costs that can ultimately be wasted if the permission to construct is not forthcoming.

The ultimate aim is to test a better way for regulators and planning authorities to work with applicants in delivering the storage reservoir element of the Felixstowe Peninsula Project.

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

4. Water Framework Directive and channel improvements

All aspects of the wider project will be seeking to deliver improvements to river flows and water quality and seeking to reconnect the river with its floodplains where possible. Through a publicity campaign we are hoping to raise the importance of restoring farm ponds and creating other rural SuDS basins (*picture illustrates a typical basin*) where water can soak into the aquifer. We are also linking with the work of the Catchment Sensitive Farming team to get farmers to create barriers to reduce silt and pollution entering the river.



In the middle stretches of the river there are several structures which are being looked at with a view to their removal, subject to landowners agreeing that they have no current function. Our first project is focussing on the weir/control boards at Brandeston School (see *photo*) and we will shortly be holding a meeting with local landowners to confirm their views on removing the structure and replacing it with riffles and pools.

The Essex and Suffolk River Trust, who are leading the East Suffolk Catchments Partnership, is working closely with the project on these 'in-channel' improvements. For more details about their work see <http://essexsuffolkrivertrust.org/>

SUB GROUP CONTACTS:

Will Akast, EA will.akast@environment-agency.gov.uk
Chris McArthur, ESRT info@essexsuffolkrivertrust.org

5. Licence Trading and Abstraction Reform

The Felixstowe Peninsula Proposal requires imaginative re-thinking of the current water resources regulatory framework. Water resources regulations could also be improved to help landowners in the rest of the Deben catchment make more effective use of their existing abstraction licences and at the same time provide better environmental protection through trading or sharing resources. This project is running alongside Defra's Abstraction Reform programme. The Environment Agency's Abstraction Reform team is maintaining close links with the group and providing advice and support to help ensure proposals remain consistent with Defra's aspirations and to evaluate how aspects of abstraction reform work in a 'live' setting.

The East Suffolk Water Abstractors Group (ESWAG) has identified a number of land owners who are keen to share their abstraction licences and they are discussing possible regulatory options with the Environment Agency to facilitate this.

SUB GROUP CONTACT:

Jonathan Thompson, EA jonathan.thompson@environment-agency.gov.uk

Funding and Project support: Consultant, Paul Bradford continues to give technical support to the project. Cranfield University is working with the project to develop one or more postgraduate Independent Study Assignment proposals (ISAs). These will focus on the work of the Felixstowe Peninsula and Regulatory Reform sub groups and are likely to involve investigating water demand, willingness to pay and models for water allocation and management.

In addition we are seeking LEADER Funding and support from the Norfolk & Suffolk Local Enterprise Partnership (as part of their Green Pathfinder) to enable some of the technical assessments needed to progress.

Funding to deliver the outcomes will be sought once options are developed further.

CONTACTS:

Matt Hullis, Suffolk County Council matt.hullis@suffolk.gov.uk
Paul Bradford, Consultant paul@bradfordbrighton.co.uk

*Update collated by **Jane Burch**
Flood & Coastal Policy Manager, Suffolk County Council
jane.burch@suffolk.gov.uk 01473 264782*

www.greensuffolk.org/hwmp