

| <h1>Meeting Notes</h1> | | Meeting: Water Environment Governance Group | |
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| Attendees: Richard Powell (Chair), Barry Bendall, Graham Dale, Melissa Lockwood, Mike Madine, Clare Deasy, Laura Kennedy, Stephen Thompson, Kim Wallis | | Date: 27/01/21 | Location: MS Teams |
| Apologies: David Alborough | | Distribution: Attendees and Apologies | |
| Note: A full set of documents is available in the Water Environment Governance Group Teams Site | | | |
| No. | Agenda Item and Notes | | |
| 2 | Review of Actions CD confirmed that all actions raised at the previous meeting had been completed. The updated action log has been added to the meeting information pack. | | |
| 3 | Carlton Marshes Evidence Pack for Sign Off KW presented the updated evidence pack for Carlton Marshes, taking on board previous feedback received. It was also noted that the Wildlife Trust quotes used for the pack have been updated. The group received updated the evidence pack positively, but had the following queries: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GD – How is the quoted length assured? Can the individual path lengths be itemised and related to the map? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ KW – This length is calculated for the footpaths/bridleways for each site using GIS mapping tools. We can put more lengths on the map. • GD/RP – Could before and after photographs be included in the evidence pack? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ KW – Photos of the site before the wetland and footpaths creation can be obtained. • BB – Has the quoted length been measured by NWG or third parties? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ KW – Confirmed that NWG calculate this and that the figure is confirmed by the Wildlife Trust. ○ BB – This approach is good and should be applied in all cases moving forward. <p>ACTION: KW to update the Carlton Marshes evidence pack with individual path lengths and photographs before and after the project was delivered.</p> <p>DECISION: The group formally signed off the Carlton Marshes project as delivered with 16km water environment improved. (Updates to the evidence pack will be included from the action point above).</p> | | |

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| | <p>ODI Mechanism and Funding Approach</p> <p>CD presented the flow chart for project submission, approval and sign off.</p> <p>The following points were discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BB – What are the scenarios where a project would be approved by the WEGG but not funded for delivery? Would this be because there were too many projects approved or may the decision be taken not to deliver a particular project? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CD – The inclusion of this stage on the flow chart is to highlight that approval isn’t a guarantee of delivery. It is hoped that all approved projects will be delivered but there may be factors outside of NWG control, such as dependency on match-funding. It may also be that it is necessary to have projects approved and then to prioritise for delivery, if more projects are approved than there is funding for. ○ MM – In the case where more projects are approved than there is funding to deliver, we can have projects to carry forward for future delivery. ○ RP – The WEGG can help to prioritise also in this situation. ○ CD – WEGG assistance in prioritisation could be included on the diagram. <p>ACTION: CD to add WEGG guidance on prioritisation into the ODI process diagram.</p> • GD – Does the mapping portal show all projects at different stages? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CD – It is proposed that the projects mapped on the portal will align with the scorecard in showing the different stages, demonstrating visual progress on the mapping portal. Changes to the mapping portal will be easier in future when the portal is controlled by the NWG team rather than consultants. • ML – When a project is signed off in principle, but more information is required, when do the kilometres delivered get assured? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CD – The evidence to support this will be included in the project evidence pack presented at the sign off stage. ○ Slides will be shared so the process can be reviewed in detail. <p>ACTION: CD to share slide deck with the WEGG.</p> <p>CD presented the scorecard and ODI position table. The ODI position table was added in response to previous feedback to include reward and penalty on the scorecard, but which is best viewed at programme level not for individual projects. The current position was shared in the slide deck.</p> <p>MM presented a slide of different scenarios for investment and associated penalty / reward. When the business case was prepared for the Water Environment ODI, it was hoped that the project would be self-funding, however this is not yet the case. NWG have absorbed costs associated with the feasibility study and the Branch Out funding – only costs for Kielder are being claimed back in Year 1.</p> |
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MM noted that it is important to find a balance between ensuring projects are delivered and also that money is generated to reinvest in future projects. Only Scenario D options generate funds for re-investment after costs are accounted for. It is therefore quite difficult to create reward to share without a significant programme. For NW, this would mean upfront investment to be reclaimed through customer bills in later years.

MM stated that there may need to be a seed fund from NWG each year, which could be recovered, but which would not be enough to generate the self-funding cycle as a budget for seed funding would still be required each year. The approach is being discussed with the NWG Executive Leadership Team at the moment and their steer is required to determine how much NWG are able to invest and the subsequent scale of the programme.

The following queries were raised:

- GD – How does the £46,000 from Y1 sit in this scenario?
 - MM – £46,000 is the amount which needs to be reinvested in projects from Year 1, as this is 50% of the reward received after costs for the two projects approved. The costs this year are lower than for the year 2 scenarios as the costs of the feasibility study and Branch Out investment have been waived.
 - GD – If this had not been the case, what would the costs have been?
 - MM – This would have been £223,500 of above and beyond investment with a £138,168 reward, therefore full costs would not be met.
ACTION – CD to update the costs table for year 1 to include feasibility costs in total.

- BB – How does this scenario align with what was presented in the business plan?
 - MM – the business plan calculated the breakeven point at 300km; CD clarified that this included resource (7-8 FTE) and £500,000 cash. Delivering 60km per annum would break even in this case. MM clarified that the current scenarios are not unexpected, however the later start than planned and uncertainty has had an impact on Year 1 delivery and planning for Year 2, limiting the ability to plan ahead and build on big opportunities with partners.

- ML – How can Branch Out funding be reclaimed, is this not WINEP?
 - MM – Branch Out has two strands – core Branch Out and two new WINEP funds. Only discretionary (core) WINEP can be reclaimed. CD noted that there was a slide on Branch Out in the previous slide pack which set out this and explained the baseline and the above and beyond.
ACTION: CD to recirculate the Branch Out slide to the WEGG for info.

- BB – There is a resource cost implication for partners to be involved in developing projects, not just on the ground delivery. Could the programme support partner’s resources?
 - MM queried whether this would be people or money. BB clarified the suggestion would be an upfront commitment to enable partners to reclaim costs associated with project preparation. MM confirmed this would be taken away for consideration.
ACTION: Water Environment Team to consider how funding partners’ resource costs might work within the AMP programme.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BB – Should the contribution level be considered at a programme level rather than project level? It will be varied across projects – some will need a much greater contribution than others. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CD – it is intended that the contribution level would be an average across the programme. NWG need to plan for Year 2 investment and relate this to likely performance in terms of km water environment improved. We need to ensure the WEGG will work with NWG to help ensure the approach delivers for the ODI. ○ BB – investing less for projects with a large km claim would be acceptable provided it is balanced with projects that may need a larger investment for smaller km claim that are important priorities and need the support to be delivered. ○ ML – This approach works well as an overview of the programme and what is being delivered to track progress. ○ RP – This also gives flexibility for the programme to be as successful as possible. It is helpful to know the level of investment needed for reward to be reinvested. <p>MM thanked the group for useful input. The feedback will be used to develop NWG’s approach and agree the level of investment in projects with partners.</p> <p>CD queried whether the group would prefer a drip-feed of projects for approval or bulk review. The group preferred to continue with the present approach of reviewing – and approving - projects when they are ready.</p> |
| 5 | <p>Review and Refinement of Agreed Principles</p> <p>CD introduced this item, stating that the principles will be shared externally once they are agreed. A working document is currently available for review (in the MS Teams area) and is in its second iteration.</p> <p>There are a number of areas the team would like to discuss and invite WEGG steer on, as follows:</p> <p><u>Accessible water environment</u></p> <p>ST shared the proposed approach in the slide deck with case studies to discuss and identify what would classify as accessible water environment, linking this to proximity, visibility, sound and interaction. Some specific questions were put to the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How near should a footpath be to water to be applicable? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ GD – tributaries could also be considered • What about paths away from water that are used to access the water environment? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ RP – as the length measured is the footpath, rather than the water environment, the view would be that only the paths by the river can be counted. • What should the rules be when the footpath used isn’t a public right of way (PRoW) or permissive path? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ GD – on non-permissive paths, could NWG work with landowners to encourage access? |

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| | <p>The view from the group was that questions such as these should be a case by case judgement call that can be reviewed and agreed through project approval.</p> <p><u>Above and beyond</u></p> <p>CD presented a slide showing the elements that would be considered baseline and those that would be considered above and beyond. The River Gaunless case study was shared as an example, where P removal at New Moors STW will improve water quality along the length of the Gaunless until its confluence with the River Wear. Would the group agree that work in addition to the WINEP regulatory scheme to deliver improvements in an additional category, or as additional enhancements within the same category as long as 2 out of 3 elements were covered, would be eligible?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ML – in principle, really liked the idea that the population can benefit from water quality improvements resulting from P removal as this would not always be visible otherwise. • BB – strongly support this concept as it allows holistic environmental solutions and complements regulatory requirements, recognition that single element improvements such as P removal are only part of what is likely to be required in a catchment. <p><u>Eligible areas</u></p> <p>KW presented a slide showing the agreed areas for ESW (and Norfolk) and queried the need to prioritise projects that fall within our ESW supply area, or does this not matter at all as we are taking a broader catchment approach?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RP felt that there is a need to relate back to the ODI for ESW, so the projects in our supply areas and customer boundaries should be the priorities. GD agreed with this, noting that if there is an area well used by our customers that is only slightly outside of the supply area, then this could also be acceptable. • KW queried whether projects in our surface water catchment should also form a priority? • It was felt that this could be acceptable, as any work will improve downstream areas, however if the project was any further removed from our activities then it should be considered as lower priority. In this regard, projects with a catchment focus could be acceptable but projects with a site-specific focus may not be. It may be that even where upstream improvements are undertaken, any improvements to access should be downstream closer to customers. This should be considered on a site by site basis – aligning with customer expectations for ESW investment. • CD – NWG will continue to map all opportunities to consider them through the first assessment, then apply the case by case assessment after that, bearing in mind the above comments. If any further views from WEGG are needed, case studies can be brought to future meetings. |
| 6 | <p>Group Membership</p> <p>RP introduced this item:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity is ongoing to try to replace Natalie LeBrun from RSPB as the Blueprint for Water Representative. • Technically, BB is the only independent member at present, all others are Customer Challenge Group members. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RP has spoken to James Copeland at the NFU to seek a northern farmer that could add benefit to group. • It is felt that at least two more members are required that are not part of the Customer Challenge Group. <p>One person that is a possibility is Justine Oakes (Head of Sustainability at the University of Suffolk) – she works a lot with community groups in Suffolk.</p> <p>Additional suggestions were welcomed from the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GD – support suggestions made (Justine Oakes and a farmer via NFU) • ML – Could Local Nature Partnerships be approached for interest? Could also ask the wider Forum for contacts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ RP - agreed these are good suggestions. • CD sits on the urban North East Local Nature Partnerships (North East England Nature Partnership and the Tees Valley Nature Partnership) and suggests this would be good representation. Would the preference be for Tees Valley or North East? (RP – North East would be preferred and happy to support in this) <p>ACTION: CD to set up a call with North East England Nature Partnership contact and invite RP.</p> <p>ACTION: RP to speak to others on the Water Forum to agree whether to approach Justine Oakes to join the group.</p> |
| 7 | <p>AOB</p> <p>KW sought group views on an additional Suffolk Wildlife Trust project proposal at Oulton Broad, north of Carlton Marshes. NWG have been approached for funding for a new scrape, wind pump and further access improvements. Would the group want to support something so close to an existing project?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ML – need to be able to describe how the access is unique and greater, and whether this balances with the investment required. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ KW – access isn’t new, it would be providing wildlife scape in publicly accessible area as main benefit. • GD – previously felt if there were better priorities elsewhere, then focus should be on those. However, given a number of projects are needed to make the ODI scheme successful as discussed earlier, this could potentially be a positive contribution. • RP – limited visibility of water environment from footpath so not particularly supportive. There could be better projects elsewhere that provide greater customer benefit from the baseline situation. • CD asked if the level of contribution required was set, and the timing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It was felt that any level of contribution would be welcome. KW can clarify if this is a potential consideration. KW advised that it could potentially be a Y1 project. |

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| | <p>ACTION: KW to seek further details on the proposal from Suffolk Wildlife Trust on the Oulton Broad project, then the Water Environment Team will decide whether to bring this project back to the WEGG for approval or to rule it out.</p> |
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