

Meeting Notes		Meeting: Water Environment Governance Group	
Attendees: Richard Powell (Chair), Anna Gerring, Graham Dale, Melissa Lockwood, Mike Madine, Clare Deasy, Kim Wallis, Stephen Thompson, Laura Kennedy		Date: 21/04/22	Location: MS Teams
Apologies: Mike Jeffries		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		
1	<p>Introductions</p> <p>RP welcomed AG to the WEGG. AG has joined the group after Barry Bendall stood down and is the Regional Development Manager (North) at The Rivers Trust. AG has been working closely with CD and will be managing the new North East Catchments Hub, which will also support partnership elements of the bluespaces scheme.</p> <p>Group members introduced themselves to AG.</p>		
2	<p>Review of Actions</p> <p>The action log was presented.</p> <p>ST provided an update on the three outstanding actions, all of which are part of ongoing activity is linked into current work plan. The actions will be removed from the action log:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ST to speak to portal developers about adding a self-service export feature for completed projects for stakeholder and partner use – process being developed. • WEI Team to discuss how the completed projects on the portal can best be shared with customers, liaising with the Customer team – updates to the webpages and branding have been completed. • WEI Team to share details of upcoming activities on project sites with WEGG, and add this activity to the communications plan – the group will be updated. 		
3	<p>ODI Update and Scorecard Reporting</p> <p><u>Year 2</u></p> <p>Two projects are awaiting final details in April 2022 before the evidence packs can be shared for sign-off.</p> <p>The remaining evidence packs (2 have already been approved) will be sent via email, with nine outstanding, for sign-off by the end of May.</p>		

	<p>Whilst the ODI target has been achieved by a considerable margin (10 km per year), Year 2 performance has been short of the ambitious internal target due to delays and undeliverable projects. There have been challenges around reliance on partners, small levels of funding committed, and ensuring that the partners are supported to deliver work on the ground.</p> <p>For Years 3 – 5, the internal target is 58km p.a. plus any carryover from previous years.</p> <p>Updates on the following Year 2 projects were provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilder Coast – part now included in Year 3 project (1.7km). The Saltburn Gill elements of the project are linked with car park improvements in Saltburn which were delayed due to damage caused to a sewer during construction. • Derwent Reservoir – project now delivered and evidence pack produced. • Marden Quarry – some issues experienced by North Tyneside Council in relation to arranging contractors etc. however the team hope the project will be completed in the next few weeks. • Bocking Backwater – the structure that would have been removed to aid fish passage is only accessible to a private piece of land, and permissions have not been granted. A substitute project is to be presented was this meeting (see the Year 3 project approvals section). • Coldfair Green – this project was intended for Year 2, but did not get to Candidate Projects stage due to timings for the capital plan. This has evolved into a bigger project for Year 3. <p>The kilometres wate environment improved not delivered in Year 2 have been carried forward to Year 3, resulting in an internal target of 66.5km for Year 3 (+8.5km).</p> <p><u>Year 3 Project Plan</u></p> <p>The first projects in the Year 3 plan have already been approved by the WEGG, with the remainder of the core plan being presented at the meeting today. Other projects may still be developed later in the year if opportunities arise.</p> <p>Approval of projects at this meeting will mean that the core Year 3 Project Plan is complete to meet the internal target and the team can move these into delivery.</p> <p>AG queried whether a summary of approved projects was available. CD advised that a full set of project forms is available on the WEGG MS Teams area. It was noted that WEGG members had difficulties accessing the MS Teams site. SharePoint was suggested as an alternative that may be easier to access.</p> <p>ACTION: CD to request a SharePoint site for use by the WEGG rather than MS Teams</p> <p><i>Note, this site has been created and is available here: https://nwqcloud.sharepoint.com/sites/td0273/dcs/Forms/AllItems.aspx</i></p>
4	<p>Year 3 Project Approvals</p> <p><u>Wilder Coast 2022-24</u></p> <p>ST presented the project form for the 2nd phase of the Wilder Coast project which is delivered by the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust. This will build upon the initial project that was part bluespaces and part Branch Out funded, and which included engagement activities, nature reserve improvements and enhanced wetlands. The full evidence pack for the first phase will be provided in May.</p>

The 2022-24 project will support a project officer role, encouraging behaviour change and developing a sense of environmental stewardship, along with physical interventions and access improvements. The contribution will be £9,000 p.a. and this has secured match funding from Tees Valley Wildlife Trust.

RP – supported this project with its different approaches to engagement with the community across a large area. RP queried whether the project covered an area of deprivation – ST confirmed this was the case. PR also welcomed the inclusion of wastewater education aspects such as unflushables (very topical).

ML – supportive of the first phase in Year 2 and agreed it would be good to build upon this in Years 3 and 4. Particularly welcome are the circular walking routes for the community and visitors.

GD – queried the inclusion of some of the claimed areas on the map from the earlier phase as well as the new proposed phase. ST clarified this and confirmed that there had been no double counting – the areas had been amended to reflect the focus of work in Year 2 and include new areas in Year 3 and 4 in addition to the original areas.

DECISION: The WEGG agreed to approve the Wilder Coast 2022-24 project.

Hedley Hall Water

This is a project in partnership with the Woodland Trust in the Tyne catchment. The project links with access improvements including a circular surfaced path and supports enhancement of the water environment on site, including de-culverting and wetland creation. The project contribution would be £8,000 with additional funding secured through the Woodland Trust.

RP – queried whether there was evidence for enhancing or expanding the SSSI interest on site. ST advised that the key benefits in terms of the SSSI will be the footpath improvements which would reduce disturbance to the SSSI, as well as the undertaking of invasive species management.

ML – queried whether monitoring was planned in relation to the natural flood management aspect (such as planting to slow the flow). It would be good to prove success or share learning on the approach taken. ST confirmed this is something that could be developed with the partners on the wider scheme.

AG – queried the absence of reference to WFD classifications – was this intentional? ST advised that this information would be included on some projects when specifically looking at WFD, for example, but not included on all projects where the benefits expected to be delivered are not towards these indicators.

GD – queried the existing land use where the ponds are proposed. ST advised that this is partly relatively newly planted and partly marshy grassland.

GD – could the site be linked with Beamish Museum as this is a big draw to the area? ST advised that the site is popular in its own right and links across wider areas. CD added that when considering AMP8 work, there is the possibility of taking a catchment approach on the Team which would offer the opportunity to add to the water environment on top of other water quality WFD requirements and to link objectively more widely across the catchment.

DECISION: The WEGG agreed to approve the Hedley Hall Water project.

Healing Hazel Dene

This project would be the second to link with SeaScapes National Lottery Heritage Fund Landscape Partnership programme. Hazel Dene, a coastal stream in a small valley near Seaham, has issues with litter and fly tipping and the project aims to revitalise the area, re-engage the community and coordinate restoration work. Physical improvements would include meadow restoration, invasive species management and access improvements. A 'Friends of Hazel Dene' group would be established to promote long lasting improvements in the area. The project contribution would be £1,650 with additional contribution from SeaScapes.

RP – the project looks like it could deliver a lot of benefit for a relatively small investment, as well as being a good opportunity to engage with customers.

GD – supportive of the proposal and queried whether there was an opportunity to engage with the golf club and Biffa, located nearby. ST welcomed the suggestion and said businesses at Spectrum Business Park are also in close proximity and could offer opportunity for further partnership working. A bid for meadow improvements has already been submitted to Biffa.

ML – queried how often future check-ins will take place. ST advised that SeaScapes will have a presence in the area and be supporting project objectives through to 2025.

DECISION: The WEGG agreed to approve the Healing Hazel Dene project.

Roman River

KW presented this project which would focus on improvement to fish passage and biodiversity. This project is a substitution for the undeliverable Bocking Backwater project. The Roman River feeds Abberton reservoir via the Layer Brook. Parts of the river are to be dredged to improve water quality as well as abstraction. For fish passage, the mill and gauging station barriers have been identified as priorities. There is also a dormouse population in the area which would be supported with dormouse boxes and monitoring. The project would require a £10,000 contribution from Bluespaces.

AG – this looks to be an interesting project. Are there plans to help reduce sedimentation in the longer term through planting etc.? KW advised that dredging is part of a five year plan, with major dredging initially then maintenance. Efforts are also being made to bring the MoD on board which would help with longer term plans in this aspect.

GD – there is a need for careful dredging to avoid harm. KW agreed and confirmed that best practice methodology would be followed.

ML – it is good to be engaging with wider groups, along with assisting fish passage. Project team needs to ensure any approvals needed are progressed soon. KW advised that activities can be undertaken under statutory undertaker rights.

GD – queried whether water was added to Roman River from the Ely Ouse transfer before being taken out. KW confirmed that the transfer discharges to another part of Abberton.

DECISION: The WEGG agreed to approve the Roman River project.

	<p><u>Flybury Point</u></p> <p>This project is at a RSPB site and would involve physical earthworks at a cost of £7,000. Match funding has been confirmed. The creation of wetland and scrubby islands would support avocets and spoonbills in particular, supporting the Suffolk Wader Strategy.</p> <p>AG – queried the phasing of the project and kilometres claimed – has this been considered with regard to enabling future phases to be supported? KW advised that maximum funding has been sought for the first phase as this was required to enable the first element to progress. Future support on this project has not been ruled out, however if the km have already been fully claimed there is also opportunity on other RSPB projects moving forward.</p> <p>DECISION: The WEGG agreed to approve the Flybury Point project.</p>
5	<p>North East Catchments Hub & PR24</p> <p>CD introduced this agenda item. NWG are beginning to think about the future approach to Bluespaces for PR24, which includes whether this should be through an ODI or potentially as inclusion of schemes in the WINEP. AG is running the new North East Catchments Hub, which is initially a year-long project aligning with the development of the AMP8 WINEP, and has resources for catchment partnerships to support AMP8 planning and linked AMP7 delivery.</p> <p>A presentation on the North East Catchments Hub was shared. This included a summary of changes to WINEP, the opportunities this presents and the timescales involved.</p> <p>AG provided further information on the project – the North East Catchments Hub is the output of a strategic partnership between The Rivers Trust and NW. There are opportunities around the need to consider catchment and nature-based solutions first for WINEP, and also the new 25 Year Environment Plan driver. The Hub will help to identify bluespaces projects through catchment partnership engagement. It is hoped that benefits can be delivered across all aspects.</p> <p>RP – asked for information on the requirement for customer engagement through WINEP. CD advised that non-statutory schemes will require customer support however it is not yet clear at what level this support needs to be demonstrated at. This is a new area for WINEP.</p> <p>ML – the access element is an important aspect of bluespaces projects, which is something not included in past WINEPs but now forms part of the four new wider environment outcomes. Timescales for the development of WINEP are short. It is important not to lose the benefits of the WEGG as a group and the bluespaces approach, in their current forms. Potentially both approaches could be followed (i.e. blending of WINEP and current governance and scheme). If other WaSCs are not at the same level of thinking on projects such as bluespaces, some of the existing good work could be lost if only the WINEP approach is pursued.</p> <p>MM – supported ML’s comments. Good work has been done but the highest representatives of regulators have not always been involved. There is a need to ensure that the project voice is not lost amongst regulatory change. To force change, the strategic messages need to reach the right people.</p> <p>AG – echoed MM’s comments from a Rivers Trust perspective. There are some additional people that could be introduced to the conversation which AG will consider. Thoughts on past learnings to help inform future Hub work are welcomed.</p> <p>GD – the Hub is an excellent idea. GD is supportive of bluespaces being wider than WINEP – need to look at how all activities come together and identify the best approaches. GD suggested there may be learnings from Water Resources East, and agreed with ML that the positives of bluespaces and WEGG shouldn’t be lost amongst the other big requirements coming up next AMP (e.g. storm overflow work).</p>

Make our meeting effective



	<p>RP – it is easier to drop things in future than restart them afterwards. RP suggests the WEGG could run in parallel if WINEP was used. In terms of reaching the highest levels of regulators, Rebecca Pow was recommended, alongside non-executive members of the EA Board and the chairs of the RFCCs. The Heritage Lottery Fund chairs are also worth speaking to – linking history and the natural environment. Tourism and heritage are good areas to engage and influence.</p> <p>The Hub slides will be circulated around the group as they are included in the meeting presentation pack, and will also be available in the shared area.</p>
6	<p>AOB</p> <p>GD – noted that only Year 1 projects are currently on the website. CD advised that the website will be updated at the end of Year 2 in line with APR. The team are thinking about how the website can be used more actively once the updates for Year 2 have been made, e.g. including summaries of Year 3 projects in delivery. GD suggested the website could help the company to engage with volunteers.</p>