

MINUTES

WATER QUALITY SUB GROUP PRELIMINARY MEETING
Monday 14 September 2015 10.00-11.30
Lynemouth Resource Centre

PRESENT:

Anne Bromley (Chair)
Clare Steward, Catchment Coordinator, The Environment Agency
Trevor Dixon, Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Manager, NCC
Peter Kerr, Northumberland Rivers Trust
Emma Craig, Northumberland Wildlife Trust
Lynn Bird, Friends of the Dene group
Julia and Barry Say
Declan Conley, Environment Team, Lynemouth Power Station
Gillian Mason
Colin Bell
James Stafford, Groundwork Trust

APOLOGIES:

Jean Gardner
Cllr Milburn Douglas

cc: Kevin Hindmarsh and Pat
McCann, Cell Big Local
Michael Orde, Smiths Gore
representing Crown Estates

There was a power point presentation by Clare Steward which covered questions raised by the group. (See attached)

MONITORING

The Environment Agency monitor water and report back to EU. The investigation programme runs over a 6 year period. Cycle 1 has just finished and we're just coming into Cycle 2 which this data is from. Diffuse source pollution. Run off caused by use of herbicides and pesticides, build up of sediment could be from grazing - causing reduced oxygen levels.

EA in process of releasing River basin management plan - should be published December 2015 and will be available to the public, via website?

Fish and invertebrates are poor because of oxygen levels. This area is on a flood plain.

AIM: to get quality up to GOOD

DATA:

Copy of data collected at 8 points on the river attached.

MEASURES TO TAKE:

Agricultural runoff seems to be the main source of pollution. Caveat re putting blame on certain bodies, especially farmers who are not necessarily able to afford measures to ensure run off doesn't pollute rivers, etc.

In answer to that:

EMMA CRAIG: The Wildlife Trust were involved in putting up fences, which are very effective at keeping farm animals away from watercourses.

PETER KERR: Confirmed that the Rivers Trust have used fencing around Blyth area very effectively. Some funding was provided via EA.

JAMES STAFFORD: Field run off from ditches - need to find out exactly which ones by monitoring overflow when it rains heavily so can possibly re-route them? Volunteers could help with this?

CLARE STEWARD: Northumbria Rural Diffuse Pollution Project could possibly be a source of funding for this - via Rivers Trust.

RIPARIAN RIGHTS; This was raised because the river does not belong to community, although it would benefit. EA has produced a pamphlet about this called; "Living On the Edge." (Can be downloaded from EA website)

EEL REGULATIONS: Eels are depleted so now protected. Weirs and fords block their passage. The Eels Regulations 2009 set out recommendations. Eel passes can be installed. Funding decisions taken in October/November for 2016
Ref: Pete Kerr and Declan Conley

PETER KERR: QUANTITY important too - there's not enough flow in river. Questions: whether flow problem upstream? Is it caused by mass runoff; sediment?

CAUTIONS PRECAUTIONS AND SAFETY

Care to wash hands thoroughly after being near water, or on banks. Algae can be poisonous, especially blue-green and red algae.

Water depth can be treacherous.

Giant hogweed and balsam are a "statutory" nuisance and listed as invasive species.

There are regulations about control. Hogweed causes photosensitivity, highly toxic.

Signal crayfish are a hazard - care to wash boots, wellies, to stop cross contamination since they can do a population explosion. Before doing anything in a river consult consult consult.

N.B. Environment Agency gives advice on working in or near water, as do the Rivers Trust and Wildlife Trust.

FUNDING

Seek advice and help from partners in the application process. (see below under CONSULTING.)

A study to assess micro-organisms and existing makeup of river (consulting with experts) could be a good start. Could draw on university research too for mutual benefit.

Possibilities: Crowd funding. KickStarter Community Chest funding.

CONSULTANTS (present and recommended)

Rivers Trust, Wildlife Trust, Northumberland Catchment Partnership Group, Northumbria Rural Diffuse programme,

Riverside Programme for groups via Rivers Trust and training for communities.

Northumbrian Water - have maps of streams, rivers, etc. may be available on line. Consult with anyway.

Power Station - new water cleaning facility. Eel directive.

Woodlands for Water, George Dodds, Northumberland Advisor for Forestry
Commission - tree planting scheme to help stabilise banks.
Harworth Estates, Alcan site
Natural England

MANAGEMENT

Try not to get into schemes which entail management, which is costly and ongoing.
Do it and leave it be e.g. dredging has to be repeated.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

An initial study, with consultant guidance, could get funding. Using photographs
(making sure to date and label them) and create some sort of database of river life.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS:

- the impact of mercury in the coastal area - would that be a leftover from the Alcan Aluminium works?
- change in shape of river mouth - it was meandering, but is now straight?
- Would dredging be a solution? (See 'Management' below)
- the run off from Haydon Letch - is it different from agricultural runoff?
- is the whole coast as well as main river involved - there's a blockage in estuary and tide no longer reaches bridge. Is this down to human activity?
- There is an aquifer under the whole village which was the village well. It had to be sealed off for safety.
- Storm water. (see answer by Trevor Dixon below)
- Grey water after heavy rain - find source next time it rains; take camera so can prove, and date the pix. Would be a good source of data to keep up to date.
- ESTUARY What are the effects of the embankment; and, shape of estuary?
- Sand bar - if barrier cleared would sand bar naturally occur?
- Question of building a tidal flow modifier or pier. Groynes. But keep it management free and cost effective.
- Tidal range is 5+ metres.
- Tie in with university research possible?

TREVOR DIXON: Surface water sewers - that is pavement runoff, is dealt with by Northumbrian Water so not necessary for this group to consider.

- There's a lot of green algae in river just now. JAMES; Reed beds could help? As long as they don't overgrow.

EMMA: Right type of reeds, not bullrushes - feathery ones. Phragmites australis?

NEXT MEETING: Combined meeting and Walk around Estuary - Monday 5
October 2015 at 10.30 am

Bring camera/notebook and waterproofs

Meet at bridge over Lyne near Estuary. Limited parking near bridge.

ACRONYMS: EA = Environment Agency