

World Wetlands Day Conference 2004: Policy into Action
February 3rd, SOAS, London

A CIWEM Conference

World Wetlands Day Conference 2004

Wetlands: Policy into Action

2nd and 3rd February, 2004

SOAS, London

The aim of this conference is to bring together all the key organisations in the UK involved in wetlands issues to share knowledge, discuss innovative techniques, network, consider good practice case studies and promote business and wetland biodiversity.

Delegate Notes

Dr Peter Spillett

Thames Water

Geoff Bateman OBE

Environment Agency

Dr Chris Spray

Northumbrian Water

The Countryside Agency Countryside Council for Wales

English Heritage English Nature Environment Agency

Defra Ewan Associates Ltd Halcrow

Northumbrian Water Royal Haskoning Severn Trent Water

Thames Water WWF-UK Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

This event is accredited for **Continuing Professional Development** under the CIWEM CPD Scheme

Organised by **CMS - Coastal Management for Sustainability**

World Wetlands Day Conference 2004

Wetlands: Policy into Action

2nd and 3rd February, 2004 at SOAS, London

Background to the conference

World Wetlands Day (WWD) marks the signing of the Convention on Wetlands on 2nd February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea. The Ramsar Convention was a major milestone in the recognition of the importance of wetlands both to society and biodiversity. The challenges we face today are no less real than when the convention was signed in 1971. WWD was celebrated for the first time in 1997. Each year, government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and groups of citizens at all levels of the community have taken advantage of WWD to undertake actions aimed at raising public awareness of wetland values and benefits in general and the Ramsar Convention in particular. This will be the third WWD conference in the UK and is building on the experience we have developed so far.

Aims and Objectives of this conference

The aim of the conference is to bring together all the key organisations in the UK involved in wetlands issues to share knowledge, discuss innovative techniques, network, consider good practice case studies and promote business and wetland biodiversity. During the WWD 2003 conference we canvassed delegates for ideas on what they saw as the function of the conference. Not surprisingly this resulted in a mix of differing objectives. We have worked these into this year's programme with a view to helping structure the way we approach the conference and take forward important themes. The objectives of the WWD 2004 conference are to:

- Understand the state of wetlands in order to identify where progress needs to be made
- Explore how major policy initiatives and investment programmes should be developed to benefit wetland habitats
- Share plans on how the World Wetlands Day could be broadened and developed to promote wetlands on a much larger scale than at present – we will be seeking your help in developing this programme
- Develop an understanding of how best practice can help resolve key issues in practice in order to help take forward key themes such as partnership, the role of project officers etc.
- Promote the RSPB/CIWEM Living Wetlands Award and to promote the importance of an international view of wetlands
- Produce a CD of the event in order to structure the way wetland issues from the event are communicated and put into practice, and developed with a sense of continuity.

CIWEM and World Wetlands Day

The Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM) represents a wide range of professionals from all sectors involved in the sustainable management of the environment. CIWEM is committed to developing a structured long-term programme of co-ordinated conferences and other events on this important subject. This approach will help maintain a focused approach as issues develop in the next few years and will provide continuity of thinking especially in terms of the information provided to Conference delegates and the literature that CIWEM publishes.

If you would like to hear more about CIWEM, its range of publications and its approach to wetlands and related issues please contact Justin Taberham (E-mail: Justin@ciwem.com).

In preparing the programme and planning the additional events on 2nd February we are keen to give people a much wider range of opportunities to network.

Programme

Feb 2nd 1300 to 1700 Free entrance and a guided technical tour and discussion session at London Wetlands Centre, Barnes, London – hosted by WWT

Feb 2nd 1730 to 2100: Presentations start 18.30 World Wetlands Day Wine Reception at SOAS, London
The LIFE in UK Rivers project Launch of the Reports and Final Presentation

Feb 3rd World Wetlands Day Conference 2004

0900 Registration and Coffee on Arrival

0945 **Chairman's Welcome – Peter Spillett, Thames Water**

Session 1 - Policy Development and Practice

0950 The Water Framework Directive – Maximising the benefits for wetlands
Ruth Davis, Head of Water Policy, RSPB

1015 The Periodic Review Process - How do we make the most of it for wetlands?
Chris Spray, Director of Environment, Northumbrian Water

1040 Flood management and opportunities for wetlands Ann Skinner, Environment Agency

1105 CAP reform – the opportunities for wetlands Ellie Robinson, National Trust

1130 Refreshments and buffet

Session 2 - The State of Wetlands Chairman: Chris Spray, Northumbrian Water

1215 The state of wetlands – an English Nature perspective James Marsden, English Nature

1245 Developing UK WWD on a bigger scale Doug Hulyer, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

1315 The RSPB/CIWEM Living Wetlands Award 2004 Phil Rothwell, RSPB

1340 Announcement of the winner of the 2004 RSPB/CIWEM Living Wetlands Award

1345 Refreshments and sweet

Session 3 - Good Practice Case Studies Chairman: Geoff Bateman OBE, Environment Agency

1430 From policy objective to demonstration project – making a start: Beckingham Marshes
Tim Cleeves, RSPB

1450 Partnership in action – key lessons from Cuckmere Haven Jonathan Light, National Trust

1510 The value of project officers in catchment management – The Severn and Avon Vales
Brian Smith, Environment Agency/English Nature

1530 Promoting wetlands to the public – The Swale and Ure Washlands Project
Simon Warwick, The Lower Ure Conservation Trust

1550 Chairman's closing remarks

16:00 Close

The Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM) and World Wetlands Day

Justin Taberham

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Tel: 020 7831 3110 Fax: 020 7405 4967

The Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM) is an independent professional body representing managers, and other professionals, who are responsible for the stewardship of this country's environmental assets. CIWEM's agreed purpose is to develop and promote the better and integrated management of the environment; to foster a better understanding of water and environmental issues and to enhance the quality of people's lives. This is achieved through CIWEM's Royal Charter; education, training and development; dissemination of information; conferences and events; research and publications; contact with Government, agencies and other bodies; partnerships with other organisations, and the publication of Policy Position Statements (PPS) and Information Sheets.

CIWEM has a diverse membership of global environment sector professionals working on all aspects of wetlands issues, from research, regulation and water resources to site management and technical policy.

CIWEM believes that positive progress is achievable by bringing together all those involved in wetlands issues to network and highlight issues of relevance to all parts of the environment sector. Shared knowledge and understanding facilitated by independent organisations like CIWEM is key to sustainable wetland management in the future.

CIWEM will continue to organise events on wetlands issues in the future with a view to being a partner in a wetlands network of all those involved in this issue.

CIWEM is the foremost professional body for the people who plan and protect and care for the environment and its resources. It's the only institution that takes care of every aspect of works and services for the environment and sustainable development. And it's the only body for environmental management with a Royal Charter to confer professional status on its members.

CIWEM helps its members to expand their knowledge and encourages everyone working for the environment to abide by the highest professional standards. It shares information and best practice in meetings of local branches and specialist groups in the UK and around the world and through its top quality publications. The wide diversity of its members reflects the diversity of the environment sector, ensuring CIWEM's advice to all levels of government is balanced and reliable.

All CIWEM's members benefit through ready access to key people in environmental management and a strong network of environmental professionals, meetings and conferences to keep their professional skills sharp. This is backed up by a widely recognised and authoritative journal, a comprehensive web site, an excellent topical magazine, many specialist publications and an annual international directory. There are also accredited training and development opportunities.

You can join CIWEM as an Environmental Partner with very little formality. You will enjoy many of these benefits while working towards the professional status and recognition of full membership in the appropriate grade. All non-Members attending national conferences will receive a year's free Environmental Partner grade of membership.

The Water Framework Directive – Maximising the Benefits for Wetlands

Ruth Davis

RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL,
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Those who originally conceived of the Water Framework Directive intended it be a management toolkit for the whole hydrological cycle – including wetlands. The 'ecologists' Directive, as it is often known, was the brainchild of water managers who understood the vital role of wetlands in determining the health of rivers, lakes, coastal and transitional waters. Perhaps a decade ago this was an idea before its time – because it is true that this ambitious concept is not explicitly reflected in the law we now have on our statute books. However, more and more people recognise that in reality, it will be impossible to deliver WFD without integrating wetland protection and enhancement. There is no intellectual case for assessing the condition of a river in isolation from its floodplain, or an estuary in isolation from its inter-tidal habitats. This message is reflected in the new European Common Implementation Strategy Guidance on WFD, and in the emerging thinking in Defra, The Scottish Executive, EA and SEPA. Collectively, we are beginning to recognise the implications of the WFD for flood management and land drainage policies, for chemical water standards and groundwater protection, and for determining future water resource management strategies. The challenge will be to identify quickly and clearly the tools needed to make sure that WFD benefits wetlands – and that wetlands play their full part in delivering WFD standards.

References

Peacock, Catherine (2003) **Rivers, Floodplains and Wetlands: Connectivity and Dynamics**. RSPB Research Report. Copies available at the conference or by contacting denise.roscoe@rspb.org.uk

Horizontal Guidance Document on the Role of Wetlands in the Water Framework Directive.

Produced as part of the EU Common Implementation Strategy for the Water Framework Directive, and available on-line at <http://forum.europa.eu.int/Public/irc/env/wfd/library>.

The Periodic Review Process – How could we make the most of it for wetlands?

Chris Spray

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The Periodic Review process doesn't serve the environment or the key stakeholders well although in theory there is no reason why it shouldn't. There are still key problems with timing and co-ordination with other agendas (e.g. the Water Framework Directive), decision making and sustainability.

The current round has certainly not worked for wetlands and there are many who are disillusioned with the process and who are calling for fundamental reviews. This presentation will explore a number of these issues in more detail and how the process might be changed to benefit wetlands more directly.

The most recent decisions by the Government, as a direct result of the Prime Minister's intervention have only served to further confuse the process even further.

Flood risk management and opportunities for wetlands

Ann Skinner

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Albert Einstein said that "Today's problems cannot be solved if we continue to think the way we thought when we created them". This is manifestly true of our response to flooding. Flood risk is increasing as a direct result of both climate change and land use/ land management decisions. Sea levels are rising faster than predicted and we are experiencing greater climatic extremes. Winters are wetter with more severe storms and heavier rainfall events. Summers are drier, particularly in the south and east where the demand for water and land for development is highest.

Whilst we need our built assets (the walls and embankments), particularly if we continue to build in our floodplains, we will soon reach the point where we cannot make them any higher. We need to have more confidence in the use of wetlands as a cost-effective solution to some of our flooding problems. The Environment Agency is moving away from the concept of flood defence (which implies that we can defend people and property from all floods) towards a strategy of raising awareness of the increasing risks and devising better ways of dealing with the inevitable floods of the future.

We are developing strategic long-term plans that will analyse the causes of flooding in a specific catchment or coastal cell (including historic wetland loss and current land use/ management) and identify all available options for reducing flood risk. These are likely to include:

- Using sustainable drainage systems to reduce urban run-off
- Restoring permeable grasslands and reducing soil compaction
- Protecting and restoring naturally functioning flood plains
- Maintaining built defences and developing effective flood warning systems.

The scale of flood risk is significant. 10% of the population in England and Wales live in flood risk areas, with 1.8 million vulnerable homes and 185,000 businesses at risk, representing a capital value of >£200 billion. We must broaden the focus of flood management measures to achieve solutions that will reduce flood risk and:

- address water resource and diffuse pollution issues
- achieve more sustainable land use and management in both urban and rural areas
- create attractive landscapes with eco-tourism potential that will contribute to economic regeneration
- contribute to the restoration and enhancement of biological diversity.

All those involved in wetland conservation can help turn these aspirations into reality.

CAP reform – the opportunities for wetlands

Ellie Robinson

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The reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in June 2003 is likely to lead to significant changes in land management and land use, perhaps representing the most radical shift since the post-war era. In amongst the jargon of 'CAP speak' – decoupling, cross compliance, modulation - there are some critical decisions taking place now and over the next few months that will shape future prospects for wetlands. There are major opportunities within reach, but so much depends on how the new CAP package is implemented and whether the momentum for further reform can be sustained.

One of the main consequences of the recent reforms is that the long overlooked issue of resource protection has risen rapidly up the agenda of policy makers. Whilst this is potentially good news for wetlands, the challenge to turn our aspirations into practical changes on the ground is only just beginning. It is clear that the solutions have to come from stakeholders like us as much as from Government.

For further information on CAP reform:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/capreform/index.htm>

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/capreform/index_en.htm

Key reference

Analyses of the Environmental Effects of the Common Agricultural Policy. Report by the United Kingdom in compliance with Article 2.1(a) of Commission Regulation (EC) No 963/2001

The state of wetlands – an English Nature perspective

James Marsden,

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England has a wide variety of freshwater and wetland habitats represented in its streams, rivers, lakes, fens, bogs and grazing marshes – as well as in artificial habitats such as reservoirs, canals and ponds. Historic losses of wetlands have been considerable – half of our lowland bogs, fens and grazing marshes. Those remaining have been degraded by pollution – from agriculture, sewage and industry; drainage; physical modification; abstraction; and alien invasive species, such as signal crayfish and Australian swamp stonecrop.

Nevertheless, important habitats and species survive – mainly in designated sites. 120 European Special Areas of Conservation have been selected for habitats as diverse as 'rivers with water crowfoot communities' and 'transition mires and quaking bogs' and species ranging from 'freshwater pearl mussel' to 'Desmoulin's whorl snail'. 73 Special Protection Areas for Birds have been classified, mainly for migratory waterfowl. There are 75 Ramsar Convention wetlands in England, most of them are also SPAs for migratory waterfowl.

English Nature is responsible for setting conservation objectives for these international sites and for notifying over 800 Sites of Special Scientific Interest for wetland wildlife. In 2003, English Nature completed its first six-year cycle of condition assessment of SSSIs. Less than two-thirds of wetland SSSIs are in 'favourable' condition, and this figure goes down to one-third for rivers and bogs. The main causes of adverse condition are drainage, diffuse pollution and polluting discharges. The impact of invasive alien species is also giving cause for concern.

English Nature is working with Defra and others to put in place a programme of improvements which will help deliver the Government's Public Service Agreement targets for SSSIs and farmland birds, and to achieve the UK BAP and England Biodiversity Strategy targets for water and wetlands.

Developing UK World Wetlands Day on a bigger scale

Doug Hulyer

Director of Conservation Programmes & Development, The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge, Glos., GL2 7BT 01453 891900 enquiries@wwt.org.uk

At the CIWEM WWD conference 2003, Doug Hulyer provided an overview of the potential for wetland centres to deliver substantial communications, education and public awareness (CEPA) benefits for wetlands.

World Wetlands Day provides enormous opportunities for raising the profile of the functions and values of wetlands; in the UK we have hardly begun to realise that potential. This 2004 presentation will put WWD in the context of the emerging Ramsar UK CEPA Strategy and the England Biodiversity Strategy; it draws on the WWD experience of other countries over the past five years. A new agenda for nature conservation in the UK is emerging fast as the acceptance of the ecosystem approach grows; wetlands are in the front-line of this agenda and WWD provides a unique opportunity to create a 'vision for the landscape'.

The CIWEM WWD conference, provides a valuable platform for WWD, but remains limited in its audience; this could grow to become the annual technical focus to support a broader and more effective public engagement agenda. How committed is the sector to this agenda? Despite calls for others to be more joined-up, is the wetland sector, in particular, and the nature conservation world in general, maximising its own resource base through such a joined-up approach? 2004 will be a landmark year for wetlands CEPA – the time for talk is over.

The RSPB/CIWEM Living Wetlands Award 2004

The RSPB/CIWEM Living Wetlands Award was established in 2003 as a means of recognising and rewarding projects which demonstrate the multiple functions and sustainable use of wetland habitats. Funds for the Award are provided by CIWEM and the RSPB. The 2003 Award was won by the Swale and Ure Washlands Project [which is being described at the WWD 2004 conference].

Entries may relate to UK projects at the planning, design, in-work or completed stages, however special attention will be paid to projects that can demonstrate appreciable delivery of the priorities listed below.

Essential Criteria

To be eligible for the Award, projects must:

- contribute to the delivery of priority UK Biodiversity Action Plan species and habitat targets for freshwater wetlands
- deliver multiple benefits e.g. flood alleviation, wastewater treatment, recreation, eco-tourism, water resource security
- ensure no priority BAP species or habitats are harmed by the project

Desirable Criteria

In addition, projects could:

- incorporate active community involvement
- contribute to increases in numbers of breeding wading birds (e.g. redshank, snipe, lapwing) and/or other threatened wetland species
- contribute to restoration of floodplain functions

Entries should be in the form of a succinct summary report, up to ten A4 pages in length including figures, tables and photographs.

There are two options for submission (Option (a) is preferable, for environmental reasons):

- a) A hard copy of the report can be sent to Helen Wilson at CIWEM, along with an electronic copy in MS Word format sent as an e-mail attachment (if the file size is under 1MB) to Helen@ciwem.com, or four individual copies sent on CD.

Alternatively,

- b) Four hard copies of the report can be sent to Helen Wilson at CIWEM.

The Award consists of the Mance Memorial Trophy (a bronze snipe), a framed certificate and a cheque for £1,500, which should be used to fund the delivery of further UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) targets, publicity of the project and/or related education.

The closing date for entries is 31st December 2003. The winner will be announced at the CIWEM World Wetlands Day Conference 2004, which will be held in London on 3rd February 2004. The Award will be presented at the CIWEM Annual Dinner in London on 22nd April 2004. The best submissions may be included in a subsequent publication.

To make an application, or for further information, please contact:

Helen Wilson, Policy Officer, CIWEM, 15 John Street, London, WC1N 2EB

Tel: 020 7831 3110 E-mail: helen@ciwem.com

For technical queries about wetlands, please contact the RSPB Water Policy Team on 01767 680551

For all publicity enquiries, please contact Andre Farrar at RSPB on 01767 680551 or e-mail:

Andre.Farrar@rspb.org.uk

Living Wetlands Award 2004 – Projects

The judging for the 2004 award was carried out in January by representatives of RSPB and CIWEM and the task was not easy – entries this year were of a consistently high quality. We would like to outline a number of the entries to highlight how varied they were:

The Upper Kennet Rehabilitation Project (Thames Water)

The project developed from ideas raised back in 1996 at the Axford Public Inquiry. As part of its evidence in support of the renewal of the variation to the Axford Abstraction licence, Thames Water argued that significant environmental improvements could be achieved with existing flows by targeted cost-effective river rehabilitation measures. In order to develop this concept further, the company offered to fund a substantial river rehabilitation project in the upper Kennet, with involvement from all interested parties.

Since this time, a five-year project led by Thames Water in partnership with the Environment Agency, English Nature, Action for the River Kennet (ARK, a local community group), local landowners and river keepers has developed to respond to some of this deterioration. It has aimed to implement and monitor rehabilitation measures along 10km of the River Kennet between Marlborough and Knighton in Wiltshire. The rehabilitation work carried out has demonstrated the effectiveness of a range of environmental enhancements and is intended to be a catalyst to encourage further rehabilitation work.

Paul Holme Strays Managed Realignment Scheme (Arup, on behalf of all the organizations involved in the scheme)

Paul Holme Strays Managed Realignment Scheme is the first scheme of its kind to have been successfully implemented on the Humber Estuary. Construction was completed in September and the site was officially opened by Peter Bye on 9th October 2003. It is a scheme with multiple objectives that forms part of the Environment Agency's wider strategy for the future management of the estuary as a whole. The scheme involved realignment of the existing flood defence embankments along a three- kilometre stretch of the north bank of the Humber to create 80 hectares of intertidal habitat and over three kilometres of freshwater soke dike, whilst increasing the standard of protection against flooding afforded to some 6,000 properties. The scheme was promoted by the Environment Agency and constructed by Edmund Nuttall Limited, with Arup Water as designers. The scheme was conceived on the basis of a Feasibility Study, Outline Design and Environmental Statement prepared by Halcrow.

Sculthorpe Moor Community Nature Reserve (The Hawk and Owl Trust)

Sculthorpe Moor Community Nature Reserve is a 17-hectare (42 acre) site near Fakenham in Norfolk comprising of bio-diverse freshwater wetlands including wet woodland (alder Carr), river valley fen and saw-sedge, reedbed and its rare habitats and wildlife. The site forms part of the River Wensum designated SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) and has also been designated candidate SAC. Leased to the Hawk and Owl Trust as a nature reserve from a local trust, The Francis Beckham Trust, Sculthorpe Moor originally was given to the local parish community as part of the Enclosures Act in 1730 as a fuel moor. Research reinforces the site's rich heritage value, as it was also a mediaeval deer chase, one of only two in Norfolk. As well as creating valuable wildlife habitats, Sculthorpe Moor Community Nature Reserve also provides a landscape, which benefits the local community by aiming to stimulate the local tourist economy. The project has linked to other complimentary Objective 2 funded projects in the Fakenham with the common aim of extending public access to other areas of the Upper Wensum Valley.

Can Spoonbills play a role in “integral water management” on Texel? (Waterboard Hollands Noorderkwartier)

This unexpected but welcome Dutch entry is about a food-chain approach to transfer well treated wastewater into usable biomass which benefits populations of spoonbill and other bird species. The approach might prove valuable in the UK.

Reedbeds for Bitterns in the Lee Valley Regional Park (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority)

In the Lee Valley Special Protection Area, at 70 Acres Lake, the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority has created a 37 hectare wetland nature reserve with over five hectares of reedbeds being restored and created specifically to benefit Bitterns and other biodiversity action plan priority species such as Water Voles and Otters. The area is situated within the River Lee Country Park on the northern outskirts of London and attracts one million visitors annually for a range of recreational activities including angling, cycling and walking. Over 14,000 people now visit the Lee Valley Park Bittern Watchpoint at 70 Acres Lake to see and learn about Bitterns through a range of interpretive media. In recent years up to seven Bitterns have wintered at 70 Acres Lake.

Wigan Flashes – Living Wetland (The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire Merseyside and Greater Manchester)

The Wigan Flashes are a group of eight shallow wetlands, formed originally as a result of mining subsidence, which extend south from near Wigan's town centre. Over time, the industrial landscape has evolved in to a mixture of open water, reedbed, mossland, willow carr and fenland. Management of the site aims to further enhance it to become one of the most important wildlife sites in the North West. Work already carried out at the site has made quantifiable improvements in terms of habitat development and recreational amenity. Community groups are involved along side the working group of the Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council, Lancashire Wildlife Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), English Nature and the Environment Agency.

The area is extensive, covering over 240 hectares, making it comparable to the nearby Leighton Moss Nature Reserve, in terms of its ability to support reedbed species including the nationally rare bittern, which now over-winters on the site. It is hoped that the large reedbeds will become a breeding site for the bittern. The Wigan Flashes have been recognised as being nationally important with areas being designated as a Site of Biological Importance (SBI), and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Most recently, the whole site has been designated as a Local Nature Reserve. The site is delivering towards the bittern and reedbed Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs).

Creation of Floodplain Grazing Marsh at Aston Hall Farm, Stone, Staffs (Severn Trent Water Ltd and project partners)

In 1994, Severn Trent Water began surveying habitat and species diversity at its 1600 operational water and sewage treatment works. In 1999 they launched our Biodiversity Action Plan, and began enhancing these sites through improved grounds maintenance.

In addition to operational sites, STW own a large stock of non-treatment landholdings. In 1999 they began surveying these estates, and trialing improvements on a model site. Aston Hall Farm near Stone in Staffordshire is a three hundred-acre mixed farm typical of several owned by the company for recycling sewage biosolids to agriculture.

ANNOUNCEMENT:

The winner of the RSPB/CIWEM Living Wetlands Award for 2004 is the Creation of Floodplain Grazing Marsh at Aston Hall Farm, Stone, Staffs (Severn Trent Water Ltd and project partners). At CIWEM's Annual Dinner in April we will present the award to Severn Trent Water.

Beckingham Marshes - Project Specification

A collaborative project between the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Environment Agency

Tim Cleeves

Beckingham Project Manager, RSPB, Westleigh Mews, Wakefield Road, Huddersfield, Yorkshire HD8 8QD 01484 861148

Beckingham Marshes Vision Statement

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the Environment Agency (the Agency), working with partners and supporters, aim to transform the Beckingham Marshes flood storage reservoir into a nationally important wildlife area that can be enjoyed by local people and visitors. Through on-going investment, we can restore the landscape for wildlife and provide new facilities and learning opportunities for local communities and visitors, yet still retain the Marshes primary purpose of alleviating flood risk.

How we will do it?

The Beckingham Marshes Project is one of the largest wetland habitat restoration projects in the UK. Following on from the year 2000 signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Agency and the RSPB, the Agency is to lease land to the RSPB to be managed by the RSPB as a Nature reserve. The project will proceed in three phases, the first phase will last three years and when the final phase is complete, in 2013, the nature reserve will cover nearly 800 hectares.

Currently the drained farmland does not support waders; crucially a few breeding waders do still exist in the flood plain. The wetland restoration proposals for Beckingham Marshes will make a significant contribution to the UK Biodiversity Action Plan targets for re-creation of lowland wet grassland (8% of the national target) and will contribute to RSPB key species targets for breeding waders (lapwing, snipe and redshank), bittern and a suite of farmland birds.

Today, much of the area is arable farmland, and the historic links back to the grazing marshes of the past have been lost. Most of the arable land will be returned to grassland and by managing water levels in the ditch systems and re-introducing cattle grazing, the right conditions will be created for a whole range of breeding and wintering birds as well as other wildlife and plants now absent or rare in the Trent Valley.

The RSPB and the Environment Agency, working with partners and supporters, aim to restore a historic, multi-use landscape of national importance for flood storage and wildlife, which will demonstrate that wetland wildlife can successfully co-exist with commercial land uses. The land will become a major nature reserve managed by the RSPB and will support large numbers of breeding wading birds, as well as other wildlife such as water voles and damsel flies.

The wading birds, like lapwings and redshanks, have suffered huge declines in the East Midlands and the project will restore their farmland habitat on a scale large enough to protect them for future generations to enjoy. The project will result in the richest, most populated, breeding wader site in the East Midlands. By managing water levels and encouraging traditional farming practices such as grazing by cattle, the partners will provide an enhanced environment for a wide range of other wetland wildlife.

The restored marshes will continue to support economically viable activities, including an operational oilfield and a timber- processing factory. The land will continue to be farmed and the majority of the land will be managed for cattle grazing.

Beckingham Marshes plays an essential role in reducing flood risk to Gainsborough and nearby villages by holding the extra floodwater in the floodplain. This key function will remain.

The project will make a real difference to local people and wildlife and demonstrate that multi-use floodplains can be a reality. People who enjoy using the marshes will find improved facilities. Nature trails and education initiatives will be provided.

Establishing a large nature reserve close to Gainsborough will have positive impacts on the local economy.

Biodiversity Vision

The project will restore almost 800 hectares of farmland to grazing marshes capable of supporting breeding sites for over 400 pairs of waders. These waders will include over 300 pairs of lapwings, 85 pairs of redshanks and smaller numbers of curlew and snipe. In winter, large numbers of waterfowl will use the site. The main habitat to be restored is damp grassland with an extensive system of wet ditches. Cattle will graze these fields. In some areas, there will be shallow pools and reeds. The UK Biodiversity Action Plan sets a target of restoring 10,000 hectares of wet grazing marsh; the Beckingham Marshes Project will contribute over 8% to this target.

Interpretation

There are two priority audiences to focus upon in the development of the Reserve.

Showing local people the variety of wild birds and other wildlife using the site will engender a sense of local pride in Beckingham Marshes -'their' local wetland. The project will demonstrate that wetlands are a positive asset for local people. The wetland restoration work will have economic benefits in the local community as well as tangible benefits for recreation and education. People will continue to enjoy walking in the area on way-marked routes and interpretation will be provided to increase their enjoyment. Watch points and improved access routes will be provided. There will be a system set up to communicate regularly with local people to keep them up to date with progress.

The second priority audience will be professionals with a particular interest in habitat restoration, flood management and environmentally sensitive farming practises. The project will highlight the way in which a multi-purpose floodplain, like Beckingham, can function economically while supporting a much richer and more bio-diverse landscape in harmony.

With all the potential audiences, there is a need to enthuse and advocate the beauty and interest of wetlands and their wildlife. The link between the way man uses wetlands and their intrinsic value to wildlife will be used. Tried and tested programmes to help engage with priority audiences will be used.

Partnership in Action – Key Lessons from Cuckmere Haven

Jonathan Light

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The estuary of the River Cuckmere lies just east of Seaford in East Sussex and is one of the few remaining undeveloped estuaries in the South East of England. The Cuckmere Valley lies within the proposed South Downs National Park and is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a Heritage Coast.

However, this landscape is under threat from flooding due to rising sea levels and increasingly stormy weather. No change is not an option. The Cuckmere Estuary Restoration Partnership was formed in 2001 to plan for the restoration of a naturally functioning estuary. The partnership comprises:

The Environment Agency – has powers to maintain flood defences along the river

English Nature – is the Government's advisor on nature conservation

The National Trust – is the main owner of the floodplain to the west of the river

Other organisations such as East Sussex County Council, the Sussex Downs Conservation Board and Lewes District Council have also been closely involved.

The aim of this talk is to share some of the features of partnership working on this project and draw out some general learning points for partnership working on schemes of a similar nature.

The value of project officers in catchment management. The Severn & Avon Vales Wetlands Partnership

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This presentation is based on my personal experiences over the past sixteen years as the Project/Partnership Officer on two catchment based management projects; The Severn and Avon Vales Wetlands Partnership (SAVWP) [2000 to present] and the Medway River Project [1988 –2000]. I have illustrated the key issues with examples drawn from my work with the Severn and Avon Vales Wetlands Partnership.

Partnerships are diverse in their management and operational structures, but all share at least one common characteristic: They are all collectives of individuals and organisations with shared goals.

So what is the role of the Project Officer? What do they add to the partnership?

- A project officer is a focal point and a driving force, ensuring that issues or objectives remain high on the individual and collective agendas. SAVWP's aims encompass six themes: Agriculture / rural land use & economy; Biodiversity and landscape; Floodplain and water resource management; Data collation and dissemination; Communication and promotion and Funding. No single organisation has the remit or resources to address all SAVWP's aims, nor will any single body contribute towards achieving all our objectives. All will have their own priorities. But, working through the Wetlands Partnership Officer provides a strategic context that enhances and strengthens individual actions, ensuring that they contribute to SAVWP's collective goals.
- Project Officers are networkers, co-ordinators and facilitators. If partnership action is to be effective it must be co-ordinated and advice given to landowners or third parties must be consistent. Whilst the project officer may not be directly responsible for delivering that advice, they can ensure that all partners have access to the relevant information and support. The key factors in SAVWP's success in engaging with the farming community have been its ability to deliver viable economic incentives, propose realistic objectives and to support its advice with sound management guidance.
- Project officers are technical specialists, able to give detailed advice, at a moment's call and without access to data. Conversely we are "Jacks of all trades", able to turn our hand to any problem and find a solution by practical common sense and trial or error. In reality we are neither, but we can facilitate access to appropriate sources of advice and ensure that advice is of a consistent and appropriate standard.

Whilst the objectives and mode of operation will vary, the primary benefit of the partnership structure is that it provides a strategic context for action. Within the partnership structure, project officers provide essential cohesion and focus, ensuring that maximum benefit is gained from limited resources. By co-ordinating action through a project officer, partnerships can add profile and momentum to their actions and unlock resources to develop multi-disciplinary solutions.

In conclusion, a project officer provides an essential catalyst for action that can influence priorities and the allocation of resources. By working through a project officer, partnerships can achieve far greater impact than would be realised from the sum of their individual actions.

From One Old Quarry to an Area Wetlands Strategy

Simon Warwick,

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In the 1950s, quarrying for sand and gravel began at Nosterfield, a village near Ripon, east of the Yorkshire Dales. Even while quarrying continued, birds and bird watchers, flocked in. By 1993 the site was attracting enough birds of sufficient importance for Nosterfield to be listed as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. This enabled a plan to turn the former quarry into a landfill site to be quashed.

In 1997, we formed the Lower Ure Conservation Trust (LUCT), specifically to purchase 28 hectares of the site, using Landfill Tax funding. Tarmac leased a further 14 hectares to us, creating a substantial reserve. Our policy of natural regeneration, as opposed to planting and sowing, has enabled us to demonstrate to North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) and the industry, that former extraction sites do not necessarily need to be subject to 'quick-fix' restoration, but can develop naturally.

We have used Nosterfield as a flagship in a partnership that was to develop a string of wetland sites along the historic washlands of the vales of the Swale and Ure. Working through a partnership, the Swale & Ure Washlands Project aims to promote a future strategy for the washlands.

The vale has many sand and gravel workings, both active and redundant. Others are proposed. Our aim is to develop a strategy that provides for a blend of wildlife conservation, leisure and commercial interests. Using the knowledge gained through the restoration of Nosterfield, we are producing Non-Statutory Mineral Planning Guidance which it is hoped NYCC will adopt. The washlands are a vital natural resource, with huge biodiversity; a unique landscape of compelling beauty, combined with great archaeological and historical importance – a sacred valley in the Celtic era – and it has vast mineral wealth. By bringing together all interested parties under a single umbrella, the Swale & Ure Washlands Project is providing a forum for a sustainable future for the washlands. This broad-church approach also attracts funding from a wide range of sources. This has enabled LUCT to fund research, survey and consultation work, in partnership with other organisations and individuals. By developing a strategy through which everyone stands to gain, we hope to win acceptance and support necessary to realise the vision for the washlands.

From One Old Quarry to an Area Wetlands Strategy

Short paper by Simon Warwick, Lower Ure Conservation Trust

Introduction

A former sand and gravel quarry has been used to focus attention on good restoration practice and the need for more wetland sites. It has evolved into an award winning nature reserve. Its success has provided the impetus for the creation of an area wetlands project, which in turn is producing a local strategy and contributing to regional strategic planning policy. It is working through a series of partnerships and shared interests, an approach that has attracted funding and support from a wide spectrum.

Nosterfield Nature Reserve

Like many projects, ours began with an opportunity when a former sand and gravel quarry at Nosterfield became available. It lies in the vale of the River Ure, north of Ripon in North Yorkshire, east of the Yorkshire Dales. A small charitable trust, the Lower Ure Conservation Trust, was formed, which was able to apply for Landfill Tax Credit funds to purchase 28 hectares of the site. The minerals company that had sold on the 28 hectares still owned 14 hectares and was prepared to lease them.

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We wanted to use Nosterfield as a case study, an example of good practice. After careful research, we defined clear aims, the Primary Objectives being:

- To create and improve habitat for breeding waders and waterfowl (particularly Redshank *Tringa totanus* and Shoveler *Anas clypeata*); also for wintering and passage waterfowl and waders. All of this we wished to achieve through natural regeneration. We did not want the quick fix of tree planting, commercial wildflower meadow mixes and the idea that nature conservation is just large scale gardening which that encourages. What we did want was local knowledge and participation. We used the knowledge of local bird watchers who had been visiting the site for over twenty years. We also listened to local inhabitants, farmers and land managers, etc. to learn from their experiences.

This approach has resulted in some 30 species of wader visiting the site each year, some of which breed, including 17 pairs of Redshank hatching over 40 young in each of the last two years. A similar number of wildfowl species visit which includes between 7 and 10 breeding pairs of Shoveler. Nationally scarce plants such as Blunt-flowered rush (*Juncus subnodulosus*) and Mudwort (*Limosella aquatica*) have colonised the site, as have hundreds of Bee orchids (*Ophreys apifera*) and Yellow-wort (*Blactstonia perfoliata*). However, we always knew that this area of the county was lacking good quality wetland habitat. We also know that historically it had once had a rich mosaic of wetlands. What we hoped for was a string of high-quality wetland sites.

The Swale and Ure Washlands Project

We had two basic starting points. The first was that the area has a long history of sand and gravel extraction. The resulting voids were restored to agricultural land, used as landfill sites, or developed under the 'standard package' of a sailing lake, a fishing lake and an awkward corner left for 'nature conservation'; this final area was often poorly thought out and opportunities were missed. Leaving aside the issue of whether mineral extraction should or should not take place in this area, if it is going to happen, what sort of restoration should be pursued? Secondly, what we proposed was a co-ordinated approach, one that seized the opportunities for nature conservation, but also recognised the claims of landscape value, tourism and other economic interests.

The Partnership

It took many phone calls, letters and persuasion, to bring together a partnership of the North Yorkshire County Council, English Nature and the Environment Agency, together with all the minerals companies (except one) operating in the area; namely, Brown & Potter; Hanson; Lafarge Aggregates; Tancred Gravel Ltd. and Tarmac. The companies jointly contributed £100,000 of industry funding over a three year period. The statutory bodies have assisted in kind; the county council provides office space, for example.

This initial cash enabled us to employ a Project Officer, whose task it would be to build other partnerships, oversee a 'Vision' document, raise additional funding, and most importantly, produce a strategy document and proposals for Non-Statutory Minerals Planning Guidance which the county council hoped to adopt.

The Project Officer was highly successful at raising extra funds. The project now has a budget of £550,000 over three years, from January 2001 to March 2004. Other funders include the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund; Landfill Tax credits; National Lottery New Opportunities Fund; Heritage Lottery Fund; Ernest Cook Charitable Trust and the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation.

In addition to the Project Officer, we now have a Field Officer, responsible for advising farmers and landowners on wetland establishment, re-creation and management. He will also oversee some projects and assist with the management of Nosterfield Nature Reserve.

What Are The Swale & Ure Washlands ?

A washland is an historical floodplain, often with ancient water management systems. The Swale washlands extend from Catterick in the north, run south past Northallerton and Thirsk for a few miles south of Boroughbridge. The A1 trunk road runs roughly parallel to the Swale along this vale. To the

west, the Ure washlands begin downstream of Masham, on the edge of the Yorkshire Dales, south through Ripon and Boroughbridge. The two rivers meet east of Boroughbridge.

They are a vital resource, with enormous biodiversity, a unique landscape of compelling beauty, great archaeological and historic importance – they were sacred valleys in the Celtic era – and, of course, contain a vast mineral wealth. Links between the river valleys form green corridors, natural routes binding all the interests together. All of the partners, and many other associated organisations and individuals have a vested interest in the future of the washlands.

Projects Within the Project

The strength of the Swale & Ure Washlands Project has enabled it to raise funds to commission others to carry out new research work. We have initiated a project with Durham University to survey and research the paleo-archaeological records for the Holocene period. This suggests that the River Ure once supported a diverse and extensive wetland environment. Evidence exists for larger areas of sedge, reed, wet grassland and open water.

Local Biodiversity Action Plans have their own targets and the Project is examining ways in which it can contribute to their achievement. In addition to key habitats such as reedbeds, wet grassland and wet woodlands, species such as Otter (*Lutra lutra*), White-clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) and both the River and Sea lampreys (*Lampetra fluviatilis* and *Petromyzon marinus*) occur in the washlands area. We have secured funding for distribution surveys of Water Vole (*Arvicola terrestris*), and have developed close links with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's own Rivers and Wetlands Project.

A key factor for local people is the quality of the local landscape. Through consultation, our Strategy Document reflects all this. New proposals, whatever they are, must respect the character of the washlands. Our guidelines will help achieve changes that make a positive and sympathetic contribution to the area.

The washlands are a vital and integral part of local flood defences and form part of strategies at catchment level. They also potentially add to water resources, by storing water 'off-river' which, when draining off adjacent land in late spring, increases river flows for longer, making more water available for abstraction particularly for public supplies.

New habitats, such as reedbeds, wet grassland and wet woodland, not only add to wildlife diversity, they can add to flood defence capacity and water resource availability. Our research and proposals gel closely with the Environment Agency, the statutory authority on both these issues. Agriculture plays a major part in the local economy, and the washlands and wetland areas largely depend on agricultural management for their continued existence and viability. Our partnership with the regional Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group, plus the involvement of local landowners, is helping to produce integrated plans.

Like most of rural England, tourism and recreation are major growth industries. They have a greater economic value than agriculture and employ more people. The Swale & Ure Washlands area includes several settlements that are used as bases for local tourism - Ripon, Masham, Thirsk and Boroughbridge, all of which have local historic and cultural interests in addition to the landscape on the doorstep. Our partnership projects, particularly the Anglo-American Countryside Exchange

initiative, highlighted the lack of co-ordinated marketing of the area's attractions. Low intensity tourism, such as riding, canoeing, cycling and walking relies on extensive geographical areas. Our partnerships are helping to develop a joined-up tourism approach. In addition, the overall vision for the future of the washlands will result in an attractiveness which draws in investment; great enjoyment for all who live, work and visit the area; better health and well being for all and it will stimulate public interest in the cultural and natural history of the area. Our aim is positive enterprises which build on the distinctive character of the area.

Of course, mineral extractions and other development, even continued agricultural activities, risk the possible loss of local heritage. Such losses threaten to destroy the sense of place, breaking links

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between past and present. The washlands area holds several nationally important archaeological sites, throughout the whole area. At Catterick there are Neolithic ceremonial monuments, a Roman town and fort, and a Saxon cemetery. Masham had a Saxon township next to it. Just north of Nosterfield lie the Thornborough henges, more Neolithic structures, and the landscape alongside the A1 at Boroughbridge holds other Neolithic features, including the Devil's Arrows standing stones. All of the above will inform and direct the Minerals and Land-use Strategy that we are producing, which is due for publication in early 2004. It will include proposals for Non-Statutory Planning Guidance for the review of the county council's Minerals Local Plan.

Our intention is to seize the opportunities offered to create and re-create habitats, to enhance existing ones and to provide new community assets. Contributing to biodiversity is now seen as a measure of good business citizenship and, of course, is a key test of sustainability.

Our strategy will seek opportunities to restore and re-create links between existing and proposed habitats. Many existing habitats, in particular wet grasslands and wet woodlands, are often threatened by isolation and fragmentation. The same is true of species, such as Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) and populations can become unviable. Evidence from the past will give integrity to proposals for habitat re-creation and natural regeneration will be our preferred option. It may take longer, but the result is more sustainable.

And Finally

The project has succeeded in forging a common purpose through its partnerships. There will always be tensions, but we have improved understanding between partners. It has spawned additional initiatives, such as those on tourism and recreation.

To succeed in the long-term needs knowledge and commitment by all of the communities within the washlands. We have embarked on an education and awareness programme, involving local people in the practicalities and the process of implementation. With its facilities and resources, the Nosterfield Nature Reserve is the main focal point for this work. So everything, to some degree, turns full circle.

Wetland Acronyms

A list of acronyms will appear on the WWD CD – do you have any that are important?

AMP	Asset Management Programme see Also PRO5 Periodic Review 2005 = PRO5
BARS	Biodiversity Action Recording System
CEPA	Communications, education and public awareness
CIS Working Groups	Water Framework Directive
CFMP	Catchment Flood Management Plans (under the WFD Directive)... also river basin management plans
DWPA Project	Diffuse Water Pollution and Agriculture Project – 2004 Defra
EBS	England Biodiversity Strategy
ECOSTAT	WFD Group on Ecological status
EFRA	Environment Farming and Rural Affairs – usually in the context of EFRA committee work conducted to review (by MPs) the work of Defra.
PRO	See AMP - Periodic Review 2005 = PRO5
RBMP	River basin Management plans – Water Framework Directive
REFCOND	Water Framework Directive Group on Reference Conditions –
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SUDS	Sustainable Urban Drainage
WFD	Water Framework Directive

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Meeting Evaluation

1. Name _____ Phone _____

2. How valuable did you find the meeting? (circle)

Not valuable

Very valuable

1

2

3

4

5

How would you change the objectives diagram?

*

*

Can you offer information for the CD? If so what?

*

*

Who's who in Wetlands – Groups and Committees

Group name _____

Main purpose _____

Best contact & website _____

Key Projects

Project name _____

Contact details _____

Please leave at the registration desk or send to Bob Earll at CMS, Candle Cottage,
Kempey, Glos, GL18 2 BU