

# Arun Valley Vision Steering Group - Meeting Notes

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2017 – 14.00 to 16.30  
White Swan, 16 Chichester Road, Arundel, BN18 0AD

## Attendees

Dr John Godfrey (Chair)  
Gill Farquharson (Chair)  
Sara Denton (AVVG Project Officer) – Environment Agency  
Jeremy Burgess – South Downs National Park Authority  
Andy Townsend – Environment Agency  
John Archer – Arun and Rother Rivers Trust  
Mat Jackson - WSCC  
Adrian Waller – Amberley Landowners  
Henri Brocklebank - Sussex Wildlife Trust  
Claire Kerr – RSPB  
Steve Gilbert – RSPB  
Kate Rice – Southern Water  
Roger Spencer – Arun District Council  
Fran Southgate – Sussex Wildlife Trust  
Peter Knight – Duke of Norfolk Estate  
James Osman - NFU  
Derek Waller – Arundel Town Council

## Apologies

Martin Brightwell – Horsham District Council  
Mark Maclaughlin – Horsham District Council  
Matthew Woodcock – Forestry Services  
Elaine Webster – Natural England  
Neil Esslemont – Network Rail  
Tom Ormesher – NFU  
Gordon Wilson - Environment Agency

## Welcome and Introduction to the Meeting

1. Introduction and welcome to all members of the steering group (See attendee list above).
2. Minutes and actions from the previous meeting were agreed by members of the steering group.
3. Dr John Godfrey requested that John Gower be invited to all future AVVG Steering Group meeting to provide a progress update on the SU3 Investigation.
4. John Godfrey informed the group about a recent meeting with Colin Hicks concerning Business Improvement Districts. Colin had informed John that there was more money available than there were bids being made. They would potentially be keen to see a bid from a rural area. There are both grants and loans available. **Suggested that Mat Jackson follow up with Colin Hicks as part of the work of the Delivery Mechanisms Sub-group.**

LTRAS – the Environment Agency informed the group that they are intending to take a phased approach. Currently looking at the recommendations made in LTRAS and as Phase 1 for Arundel are proposing to set up a steering group of funding partners.

5. Arun District Council are currently undertaking works in Arundel maintaining the river banks at Jubilee Gardens. They are undertaking works where the Council is the riparian owner.
6. The group asked for clarification on the treasury guidelines for protected sites. **Andy Townsend agreed to send a link out to the group.**

7. John Godfrey updated the group the meeting held with Nick Herbert MP on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2017. The key point were:
  - a. Keen to see that the group had an identified a geographical area as a focus for the project.
  - b. He would like the final output from the group to identify the following:
    - i. What is the definition of ‘managing’ in the context of the Arun Valley
    - ii. What are the major issues
    - iii. Some recommendation on how these issues can be resolved
  - c. He would like something to be able to take to the Environment Minister Michael Gove and to use this work as a national pilot.
  - d. The chairs of the AVVG plan to regularly update Nick Herbert MP and will see him again in a few months.
8. Fran Southgate highlighted the point that should would not like to see the group used for gain political positioning or purposed.

John Godfrey responded by saying this was not the intention but it was important to raise the profile of the AVVG with Government.

9. John Godfrey updated the group on the recent presentation undertaken by John, Gill and Sara at the RFCC meeting on October 18<sup>th</sup> 2017. The presentation was well received by the group and was supported by the 2 West Sussex members. The chair of the RFCC Lorraine Brown was very supportive of the progress the project has made and offered support from the RFCC in the future. The intention is to update the RFCC as the project develops.

#### **Update from Sub-groups**

10. Delivery mechanisms update:
  - a. Developed a draft discussion paper which has been circulated to sub-group members for comments.
  - b. First meeting of the group held on 25<sup>th</sup> October with a further meeting planned for 31<sup>st</sup> October.
11. Sustainable Catchment Management update:
  - a. Established a group of representatives
  - b. Initial meeting held (13-October)
  - c. Scoped out what we are about
  - d. Working with EA – Atkins contract (evidence collation for SU3)
  - e. Template drafted to “index” data/ evidence
  - f. Next meeting planned on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017
12. **The subgroups will report back to the steering group at meeting with a more detailed paper to be produced for the meetings by Sara Denton on a regular basis.**
13. The possible need for some additional resource was identified and it was suggested that a volunteer could be used to undertake this role. **Sara Denton to speak to Steve Gilberts regarding how to recruit a volunteer if needed.**

#### **Presentation from Peter Knight, Norfolk Estate**

See attached presentation

14. Mat Jackson asked how the figures regarding arable farming at a national scale reflected locally.

Peter Knight responded by saying that production locally is predominantly sheep and beef.

15. Peter Knight made an important point with regards agricultural change and the vision for the Arun Valley in that the current features in the Arun Valley are maintained by grazing if this changes with agricultural policy in the future then the features of the valley will also change.
16. Peter Knight highlighted the fact that many of the landowners are now playing catch-up with regards to the implications of the Lower Tidal River Arun Strategy (LTRAS).
17. Andy Townsend informed the group that implementation of the maintenance protocol is typically 2 years during which time maintenance will continue, subject to funding.
18. Derek Waller informed the group that the RFCC has not yet signed off the implementation of LTRAS. However, once LTRAS is implemented maintenance will stop. **Post meeting note - LTRAS was signed off by the Environment Agency nationally in Jan 2014. It contains recommendations for both new schemes and for maintaining existing defences. The RFCC signs off all individual schemes and the annual maintenance programme, which the Environment Agency assemble using funds allocated by central government at the beginning of each year. The EA has no money or reserves of its own, therefore if central govt don't provide funds then the RFCC members (other than EA) i.e local councils, would have to provide the monies to do this work.**
19. Adrian Waller highlighted the fact that maintenance is only being carried out when and where the funding is available. Claire Kerr added that whilst maintenance is happening, the maintenance schedule is not transparent.
20. Adrian Waller informed the group that many of the structure in the Arun Valley are 60-70 years old.
21. Peter Knight also informed the group that the Norfolk Estate was prepared to make an area of land approx. 130 acres available to develop some form of flood storage.

Mat Jackson suggested that this was a great aspiration project but would need to consider Flood Risk Management Act and the Reservoirs Act. Could lead to multiple benefits.

22. Peter Knight informed the group that the Norfolk Estate was uninsurable, unsaleable and unmortgagable. The Norfolk Estate are keen to find a long term solution for maintenance of assets in the Arun Valley and have offered the Environment Agency a contribution of £15k per year to support this. As yet the Environment Agency has not taken up this offer. **Post Meeting note – The Environment Agency have taken up this offer, but due to a temporary unexpected increase in Govt funds for maintenance the EA does not need to draw those funds for its core maintenance work in SU4 for this year and expected the next. However, we have told the Norfolk Estate to bank the money for the future, (which they agreed) as it is likely to be needed when larger items of maintenance (such as repairing bank slippages) are needed. It is highly likely that the offer will be formally taken up ( an agreement will be needed taking time and costing money on both sides) to make the arrangement work. We are concentrating our efforts on more important -issues such as Town walls issue, AVVG at this moment.**
23. Henri Brocklebank asked a question regarding Network Rails responsibilities in that if the embankments were undermined beneath their rail track - who would be responsible for the repair?
 

Peter Knight responded by saying that the responsibility sits with the riparian landowner.

Adrian Waller added that Network ~~R~~rail~~n~~ have issues throughout the Arun Valley that need to be addressed.
24. Derek Waller asked if the baseline figures in LTRAS for SU4 could be recalculated

Andy Townsend responded by saying that the EA have followed treasury guidelines in making the calculations for LTRAS which looks at costs and benefits. In addition, sensitivity tests are applied to the figures.

25. Derek Waller informed the group that the guidance in the CFMP was used to define how the strategic units in LTRAS were divided.

Mat Jackson added that the CFMP, LTRAS and the River Basin Management Plan were now out of date. In addition, the EA acknowledged that there were issues with the modelling for LTRAS. It is suggested that a change of approach is required.

Gill Farquharson agreed and suggested that it would be more productive to explore catchment solutions.

Adrian Waller said that even if LTRAS was scrapped there are still many issues throughout the catchment that need to be resolved.

Andy Townsend suggested that collaborative maintenance agreements is definitely worth exploring.

26. Adrian highlighted the need to think outside the box in terms of solutions and suggested the use of spoil from sites to create/repair embankments. However, the consent process which currently exists is the stumbling block.

### **Abolition of the Arun Valley IDB**

#### **Key Points:**

- a. Therese Coffey has decided to hold a local public enquiry into the abolition of the Arun Valley IDB.
- b. There have been representation from a range of organisations.
- c. The Chair of the AVVG wrote a letter to Therese Coffey not as an objection to the abolition of the IDB but asking for the decision to be delayed until the AVVG work was completed and recommendation were made.
- d. The AVVG will be represented at the public enquiry.
- e. SWT/NFU and RSPB put in a joint objection
- f. Statements of case need to be submitted by 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017 and the 10<sup>th</sup> January has been suggested as the earliest date for the public enquiry.

27. Derek Waller suggested that having no Horsham District Council representation on the AVVG Steering Group should be made as a point at the public enquiry.

It was suggested that this should also be brought to the attention of Nick Herbert MP and Louise Goldsmith. **John Godfrey agreed to bring this to their attention.**

### **Update on Agricultural Policy – James Osman, NFU**

#### **Key Points:**

- a. The farming community is currently focussing on BREXIT. A trade agreement is of huge concern to them at the moment more so than subsidies.
- b. NFU have produced a paper on domestic agricultural policy (see attached paper).
- c. Need a timeline for BREXIT process as certainty is needed for the next 3-4 years for business planning.
- d. There will be a similar subsidy systems up to 2022 with a new policy being rolled out 2022-2025.
- e. To facilitate the development of a future agricultural policy, the NFU are proposing a framework formed of three constituent parts:
  - i. Productivity measures and business resilience
  - ii. Volatility mitigation measures and management tools
  - iii. Environmental measures
- f. Arun Valley – intensify, diversify or die
- g. There are opportunities for British produce

28. Kate Rice highlighted the Payments for Ecosystems Services Interreg Project which is being led by Southern Water in the western Rother. Southern Water are interested in how good land management can deliver improvements.

**Dates of future meetings 2017**

6<sup>th</sup> December 2017