

Arun Valley Vision Steering Group - Meeting Notes

Wednesday 6th September 2017 – 14.00 to 16.30

The 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
Derek Waller – Arundel Town Council
Tom Ormesher – NFU
Mat Jackson - WSCC
Adrian Waller – Amberley Landowners
Henri Brocklebank - Sussex Wildlife Trust
Claire Kerr – RSPB
Steve Gilbert – RSPB
Julianne Evans – RSPB
Peter Knight – Duke of Norfolk Estate
Matthew Woodcock – Forestry Services
Elaine Webster – Natural England

Apologies

Martin Brightwell – Horsham District Council
Mark Maclaughlin – Horsham District Council
Tony Whitbread – Sussex Wildlife Trust
Kate Rice – Southern water
Joel Hufford – Southern Water
Roger Spencer – Arun District Council
Neil Esslemont – Network Rail

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 updated the group on work which has been undertaken to produce a map of the project area to define to geographical boundary (see attached map). The group agreed that defining the project area was a good idea but impact from the whole catchment must be considered. Work is being undertaken by the Environment Agency to add additional layers to the map.
4. Henri Brocklebank offered the services of the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre for additional data and GIS layers which could be made available.
5. Mat Jackson raised the point that boundaries for the project should be flexible to ensure that no groups or parishes are being excluded. This concern was noted.

Arun Valley Vision Themes of Work

6. Tom Ormesher talked through the discussion paper which details the work a small group of AVVG Members have developed to identify some themes of work for the group. Through several meetings the group have identified the following themes:
 - a. Sustainable Catchment Management
 - b. Community Consensus
 - c. Delivery Mechanisms
7. Claire Kerr raised the point that Environment Agency funding is becoming more difficult to obtain. We need to undertake a gap analysis to understand what is already being delivered in the catchment and what can be delivered by other organisation and community groups. This is a piece of work that could be delivered by the Sustainable Catchment Management subgroup.
8. Tom Ormesher identified the need to build consensus with the local communities and is currently exploring developing a community voice project. This project will endeavour to engage with local communities to understand what they want for the Arun Valley. We are currently exploring opportunities to fund such a project in the catchment.
9. The Delivery Mechanisms subgroup will look to explore funding opportunities for the catchment. This could include funding to deliver ongoing maintenance within the catchment when/if the IDB is abolished.
10. Derek Waller raised the point that Arun are utilising the money from the IDB to fund other things and that Horsham District Council are unwilling to participate. He also stressed that getting parish council to participate is often difficult.
11. Claire Kerr identified the need to undertake some audience analysis.
12. Adrian Waller made the point that the community at large still do not understand that things have to change and that the Environment Agency cannot keep defending in the same way as it has historically. A significant level of engagement and education is needed to ensure these changes are understood.
13. Matthew Woodcock asked what the impact of tidal flooding is in the catchment. Derek Waller responded by saying that over time tidal flooding will become more dominant.
14. The group agreed that 3 subgroups should be formed to take forward the work themes which have been identified. The theme leaders will be:
 - a. Integrated Catchment Management – Claire Kerr
 - b. Community Consensus – Tom Ormesher
 - c. Delivery Mechanisms – Mat Jackson

The theme leaders will work together over the next few weeks to identify a scope of work for each theme and look to identify the stakeholder who should be involved in each group. Any members of the steering group interested in participating in one of these groups to contact Sara Denton at sara.denton@environment-agency.gov.uk or 07557190705

Presentation from Fran Southgate, Henri Brocklebank and Julianne evans

Arun Valley (see attached presentation)

15. Key points:

- a. The Arun Valley is unique geologically – chalk is particularly important for aquifers.
- b. This area has important habitats such as greensand chalk streams and ancient woodlands.
- c. Use species as an indicator of the health of the aquatic environment (e.g. Otter).
- d. There are a number of organisations who have been set up to protect habitat and species (e.g. Sussex Wildlife Trust, RSPB).

- e. There are a range of issues which need be tackled which include:
 - i. Invasive species
 - ii. Climate change
 - iii. Flooding
- f. Need to take more of a landscape scale approach to conservation which includes creating ecological networks.
- g. SWT have created a habitat potential model.
- h. Natural England have undertaken climate change mapping for the Arun Valley.
- i. Natural Flood Management targeting is becoming more important.
- j. The Greensand and chalk aquifers need to be protected in the Arun Valley.

Designations in the Arun Valley

16. Key points:

- a. There are 4 Ramsar sites in Sussex and 72 in England
- b. Together these 3 component sites comprise an area of **wet meadows** on the floodplain of the River Arun between Pulborough and Amberley. The area is of **outstanding ornithological importance** notably for wintering wildfowl and breeding waders.
- c. A designation under the European Birds Directive, aimed at conserving the habitat of certain rare or vulnerable birds. There are 6 SPAs in Sussex. The Arun valley is specifically designated for its Bewick's swan and waterfowl assemblages
- d. A designation under the European Habitats Directive, aimed at establishing a **network of important high quality conservation sites** that contribute to conserving habitats and species in most need at a European level. There are 12 SACs in Sussex
- e. *Anisus vorticulus* occurs across a range of sites in southern and eastern England. The Arun valley is one of the three main population centres for this species in the UK.
- f. Areas notified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as being of special interest to nature conservation. Natural England are responsible for selecting and protecting SSSIs. There are 150 in Sussex.

17. John Godfrey asked if all the international and national designations have the same boundaries?

Elaine Webster, Natural England responded by saying yes and that they are all underpinned by SSSI.

Actions and Decisions	Deadline
Henri Brocklebank to produce a map which includes all SSSI's in the Arun Valley	Next Meeting

Threats and Opportunities

18. Key Points:

a. Threats:

- **Water quality**
 - turbidity
 - pollution
 - salinity
- **Water quantity**
 - urban run off
 - sewage treatment works
 - rainfall
- **Climate change**
 - temperature rise
 - increased precipitation
 - seasonal weather patterns
 - sea level rise

b. Opportunities:

- Flood mitigation

- Financial benefits
- Improved natural capital
- Improved ecosystem services
- Biodiversity conservation
- Exemplar for other river catchments

Summary

In summary:

- The Arun Valley is a special place for wildlife – now and in the future.
 - Wildlife will benefit from a landscape scale/ catchment wide approach
 - Improved natural capital and ecosystem services will benefit biodiversity, the rural economy and society more widely
 - Adaptation to climate change is both a challenge and opportunity
 - Collaborative working to realise an exemplar for other river catchments
- Gill Farquharson asked what penalties are applicable for anyone causing damage to protected sites. Elaine Webster responded by saying that fines and management plans can be implemented if damage or deterioration is caused.
 - Derek Waller raised the point that continued salination will have a significant impact on the protected sites. Sedimentation is already causing significant issues and the Environment Agency is not doing enough to clear sediment.
 - Adrian Waller raised the point that significant issues are also being caused through the collapse of the aquifer.
 - Julianne Evans highlighted that the slower flows with sea level rise will also cause greater sediment deposition.
 - Henri Brocklebank outlined the significant work being done through the catchment partnership to tackle sedimentation particularly in the Western Rother. Research projects such as A-STAR and SMART have been undertaken by Portsmouth and Northampton University. Jeremy Burgess said the results of this research were due immanently and would be made available to the group. In addition, INTERREG funding has been secured and a project led by Southern Water focussed on developing a payments for ecosystem services (PES) model in the Western Rother working with the land management community.
 - Adrian Waller raised the issue of what monitoring is undertaken in the intertidal zones. Henri Brocklebank responded by saying the Sussex Marine and Coastal Forum is working to support the Catchment Partnership. A project called Seaview is looking to develop a series of indicator to identify what good ecological status/potential looks like in transitional and coastal waters. Chichester Harbour is currently being used as a pilot area for Sussex and this project will eventually be rolled out along the Sussex coast.
 - The questions was raised when will it become unviable to continue to manage/protect the protected site and decide to transition to something else. Natural England were asked if these conversations are being had at a nation level.
 - Derek Waller raised the issue of the protected Ramshorn Snail and what will happen over time and will a new habitat need to be found?
 - Adrian Waller said there was a short-term issue of rainfall and pollution which eventually ends up in the protected sites.
 - Claire Kerr made the point that Medmerry was an excellent example of where compensatory habitat can be created.
 - Steve Gilbert said that EU and International designations are not meant to be inflexible. We need to decide what can be delivered and help trigger those discussions at a national level.

30. Peter Knight said there was an issue in that the Environment Agency have not cleared out the IDB ditches effectively and landowners have not played their part.

31. Adrian Waller said the issue rested with the slow steady withdrawal of maintenance. It is very easy to blame the Environment Agency but unfortunately they are having to follow government guidelines. The political will is needed to support delivery at a local level.

AOB

32. Next meeting on 27th September 2017 at the Environment Agency Offices, Worthing.
Presentations from Gordon Wilson, John Gower and Tom Ormesher.

Dates of future meetings 2017

27th September 2017

25th October 2017

1st November 2017 (wider stakeholder meeting)

6th December 2017