

South Chilterns Sub- Catchment Stakeholder Workshops

Facilitator's Summary

1. A vision for a healthy and sustainable South Chilterns Catchment

A FAIR BALANCE

- a sustainable, multi-functional river, valued for heritage and wildlife as well as a for a water resource.
- balancing the demands for recreation, abstraction, hydro power, ecological enhancement, farming, historical structures, flood mitigation schemes and new developments.
- planning controls to ensure the natural river and flood plains are protected
- recreational activities are safeguarded

PEOPLE MORE AWARE OF WATER AS A VALUABLE & LIMITED RESOURCE

- education & awareness raising for all ages
- local communities working together
- reduce water consumption
- appropriate access and footpaths will help to raise awareness and appreciation
- more connection between people and the rivers, valuing it for wildlife
- have meetings outside working hours
- promote responsible use of water and understanding of the impact of activities
- historic features maintained and explained
- landowner, farmers and public understanding their responsibilities

COORDINATED ECO MANAGEMENT

- need to minimise flooding risks balanced with protection of ecology
- no culverts and barriers, more traditional flood meadows
- more meanders
- natural, well managed banks where possible
- invasive non-native species under control
- protected habitats
- control of silt, road run off and other pollution sources like sewage outflow
- promote natural water storage
- incentives to plant buffer strips

COMMUNICATION

- a clear plan supported by different agencies
- clearer channels of communication for members of the public to the appropriate person/organisation
- better cooperation between land owners and EA
- all measures to be evidence based, not based on opinion & perception

2. Ideas for actions to work towards the vision.

AWARENESS RAISING/EDUCATION/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

These were themes that were discussed in each sub-catchment so it would make sense to take a strategic overview of projects and funding sources. Some issues like encouraging less water consumption and negotiating more sustainable abstraction are probably best tackled on a more strategic scale. There was lots of enthusiasm about involving volunteers at local level and improving networking between groups with similar aims could help to promote good practice (e.g. River Fly Partnership, Revive the Wye)

SUSTAINABLE ECO-MANAGEMENT

This was another common theme across all three sub-catchments, to be achieved with an inclusive partnership approach. In all three sub-catchments they wanted to see fewer physical modifications and improvements to habitats, also investigation of the causes of low flows and more sustainable abstraction. Minimising flooding risks was seen as a major incentive for river improvements.

COLLABARATIVE WORKING

This was seen as essential to get a more integrated approach and to make the most of limited resources. The leadership of the EA with FWR's help to form an inclusive and wide ranging steering group was welcomed. The importance of communicating with landowners, farmers and developers was repeated often.

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

In the Wye, Hughenden and Middle Thames there was a call for a 'one-stop' shop for members of the public to find out who they need to talk to about the river. This might be provided by the FWR web site but will need input from relevant organisations.

3. Feedback on the workshops

- Most people felt that we had fully or almost fully met our objectives, a few thought only partially met the objectives and one person thought not at all.
- People found it very useful to meet other interested parties, to exchange ideas and hear about different projects. The EA's presentations were also useful for setting the scene.
- Key messages for taking forward the Catchment Management Plan were similar in each workshop e.g.
 - work together & get the right people
 - coordinate activities
 - educate the wider public
 - involve local people
 - focus on delivery and a few key issues
- There was over whelming support for the idea of an integrated approach to Catchment Management and enthusiasm for being kept informed.
- The facilitation, the venues & the lunches were mostly well appreciated. A minority at the meeting in Marlow were dissatisfied with the facilitation.