



Summary of West Cumbria Catchment Partnership Meeting

29th January 2020

Attendees:

20 people attended the workshop

Caitlin Pearson - West Cumbria Rivers Trust
David Kennedy – Environment Agency
Louisa Simpson-Brown – United Utilities
Mel Fletcher – Natural England
Neville Elstone – Cumbria Woodlands
Paul Barnes – Community/Farming
representative
Robert Frewen – CLA
Vikki Salas - West Cumbria Rivers Trust
Jan Darrall – Friends of the Lake District
Rachael Osborne – Highways England
Anna Hetterley – Environment Agency

Richard Denyer – CSFP Independent chair
Kerry Morgan – National Trust
Jo Ratcliffe – Environment Agency
Hannah Barnes – Love my Beach
Faith Cole – Community representative
John Gorst – United Utilities
Gavin Murray – Cumbria County Council
Tim Duckmanton – Lake District National Park
Authority.
Peter Fox – Forestry Commission

Meeting presentations are available on the attached Powerpoint slides. Any questions and discussions are summarised below.

Introduction from Richard Denyer – Independent chairperson CSFP

Richard introduced himself as the new independent chairperson of the Cumbria Strategic Flood Partnership, who took up the position in late 2019. He is in a period of learning and orientation to familiarise himself with the Catchment Partnerships and individual organisations. Richard outlined his experience and qualifications including being on the board of several NGOs and on the Woodland Advisory Committee. From previous positions, Richard is very familiar with the issues the CSFP is facing but is learning how the whole picture fits together with the groups working in Cumbria.

The CSFP are aware that the mechanisms for achieving our aspirations need refining and restructuring. The CSFP are creating a new strategy. Partners inputted to this at a workshop in December.

Project Updates

Project Pipeline – Vikki Salas

Updates on project progress and new projects still need to be inputted to the Google spreadsheet. The spreadsheet populates the Catchment Partnership mapping portal and is a very useful resource to keep partners and the public up to date on what is happening and to coordinate work.

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/15SKBeMte6kpiH_v5XimW8QM3NWQfmT-wNlndMFsl4Qk/edit#gid=1172685711

The next session will be a detailed look at projects, prioritisation and delivery gaps so the group needs updates in advance of the next Catchment Partnership meeting.

Action: All partners to update spreadsheet by end February.

A66/Braithwaite working group – Rachael Osborne – Highways England

A working group meeting was held in mid-January. The aim of this project is to protect Braithwaite village and the A66 from flooding using engineered flood defences. The group is now looking in more detail at Thornthwaite aqueduct and options are being progressed for the scheme. Modelling for the flood alleviation scheme is complete but Highways England are hoping to do some more modelling of Newlands beck with WCRT to look at the potential for remeandering and NFM. This will depend on funding availability. Progress was delayed by the election but budgets and funding for the next five years should be allocated soon.

Crummock weir – Faith Cole and Paul Barnes – Community representatives/CRAGG/Derwent river catchment group

See attached slides for full details.

The Derwent River Catchment Group exists to look at options to reduce flood risk, thinking strategically at a catchment scale. Qualified hydrologists have suggested that using the lakes to better attenuate flood water could provide significant reductions in flood risk to properties. The group has been working with the Environment Agency and United Utilities to look at the potential for flood storage in Thirlmere Reservoir for a number of years. As United Utilities will cease to abstract water from Crummock Water by 2022, there is now also the opportunity to investigate the potential for increasing attenuation potential of this lake.

AECOM produced a study on Crummock Water and showed that making the retaining walls 2 m higher would have no effect on flood risk to Cockermouth and could possibly make things worse due to changes in the timing of the flood peak. Hydrologists within the group have done their own modelling of the potential to use Crummock Water to reduce flood peaks to Cockermouth. Practical considerations such as cost:benefit, safety, funding and liability are being considered by the group but the results presented were just an initial modelling exercise to determine the attenuation potential. The model used was a simple inflow-outflow model designed for smaller attenuation features. The advantage of it for this first stage of modelling is that it runs very quickly and so multiple different scenarios could be investigated.

The current weir and associated structures keep the water level in the lake artificially high. The model investigated removing the weir but keeping the retaining walls so that there was extra

capacity in the lake. Extreme flood events would still overtop the walls but it would provide a lot of potential for attenuation. The results of the modelling are shown in the attached presentation. Lowering the outflow by 2 or 3 m could result in very significant reductions to flood risk to Cockermouth. The group recognise that this is unlikely to be acceptable to National Trust, Natural England and others and that a 1 m reduction in the height of the outflow is more realistic.

The liabilities of keeping the retaining walls are a key issue. The Derwent River Catchment Group are looking into this. The amount of attenuation provided means even with liabilities and maintenance costs it is a very cost effective method of reducing flood risk.

Jan Darrall (Friends of the Lake District) asked how the presentation given to the Catchment Partnership in July 2019 by Alice Senior of United Utilities fitted alongside this work. Alice's presentation outlined that United Utilities were looking at the effects of removing all the infrastructure from Crummock as this was a legal obligation within the Special Area of Conservation. Was there any commonality or differences between the modelling done by United Utilities and by Derwent River Catchment Group?

Louisa Simpson-Brown (United Utilities) said United Utilities will have a stakeholder event in spring. The Derwent River Catchment Group and United Utilities modellers need to work together on this. There has been some joined up working between them; Ian McCoy of United Utilities has been to Derwent River Catchment Group meetings with the PhD student who is contributing to United Utilities modelling of the weir. The timescale for the project is abstraction until 2022, the new design through planning and consenting by 2025 and all work completed by 2030.

There was also a meeting on 10th January 2020 attended by the Environment Agency, United Utilities, National Trust, Landowners and Natural England. The community want to keep the momentum going on this project and are also keen to look at the potential of hydro-electric power generation using the redundant pipe infrastructure.

Neville Elstone (Cumbria Woodlands) pointed out that the two modellers are asking different questions and the modelling is being done for different purposes. Could United Utilities specifically look at the modelling from the perspective of using the lake as a flood storage basin to allow the modelling to be combined? Dave Kennedy (Environment Agency) said the models and aims are not very far apart we just need to ensure the processes are aligned.

John Gorst (United Utilities) reminded the group that liabilities are a big question and that the area is a SAC so United Utilities have a strong legal requirement to keep it in good condition which is likely to mean removing all infrastructure. Natural England, the Environment Agency and United Utilities need to have these legal conversations.

It was agreed that a working group including all relevant organisations/groups needs to meet before a wider stakeholder event. United Utilities will lead this working group and it should regularly report back to the wider Catchment Partnership.

Action: Louisa Simpson-Brown (United Utilities) to feed back to relevant staff in United Utilities and progress formation of a working group for Crummock Water.

Partnership updates

Working together meeting – Vikki Salas – West Cumbria Rivers Trust

A meeting between LDNPA planners, the Environment Agency, Natural England and Rivers Trusts was held in mid-January to discuss planning, consenting and streamlining the delivery process, particularly for NFM interventions. Good progress is being made but there are difficulties with the legalities of the planning process as there are limits to what can be done under agricultural or Environment Agency permitted development. Environment Agency permitted development only applies to the watercourse so any projects either side of the main channel (such as reconnecting backwaters) will need planning permission even if they are small scale works. Reducing regulation would enable more efficient delivery of small scale projects. This needs elevating through Cumbria Strategic Flood Partnership (CSFP) and National Park Partnership and highlighting in the River Basin Management Plan consultation.

Consultations

The Marine Management Organisations are consulting on draft marine plans. A consultation for each region (including north-west) marine plans is currently open and will close on 6th April.

The consultation is available at:

www.gov.uk/government/news/have-your-say-on-marine-planning-in-england--2

See slide for other updates.

Discussions

Lake District National Park Authority research framework – Tim Duckmanton (LDNPA)

The National Park are producing a new management plan; there is a statutory duty to produce a plan every five years. The State of the Park report was produced in 2018 with input from lots of partners. This report highlighted the key issues and strategic challenges within the Lake District National Park and will inform the management plan. The State of the Park report highlighted some research gaps and led to the creation of the LDNP research framework. There will be other research questions that were not identified in the report and research needs will evolve over time. Therefore, Lois Manfield is working to coordinate the research framework. The first element of the work is to collate a 'wish list' of research questions. Some questions will be answerable with existing data and some will need new data collection. Lois will then look at opportunities and funding for addressing the questions. The research framework will feed into the next management plan but will also be an ongoing exercise beyond this timeframe (see slides for more information).

The Catchment Partnership discussed priority questions in small groups. The need for better baseline monitoring and understanding of the current condition so we can quantify future change was identified as a priority across all the groups. This was applied to biodiversity/state of nature, particularly outside of designated areas, woodlands, soils, water quality, rainfall and farming statistics. The impacts of specific threats to the environment was also highlighted as a priority, including emerging chemicals, overgrazing and tree diseases. The third area that all groups identified as a research priority was scenario modelling of the future of farming. Specific questions were around the financial viability of farming under different funding levels and mechanisms,

including loss of BPS and new Environmental Land Management payments, and the implications of this.

Any further questions or comments can be sent directly to Lois Manfield or sent to Vikki who will collate and send to Lois.

Catchment Partnership public engagement

At the last meeting, partners undertook an evaluation exercise of the West Cumbria Catchment Partnership. This highlighted that the partnership could be doing more to engage with the general public and specific interest groups (e.g. swimmers, flood action groups, anglers etc.). It was agreed that the main partnership meetings were not the most effective way of doing this as the agenda items are very broad and not always relevant to the general public. Smaller meetings or events and working groups were identified as the best approach for widening the audience. The Partnership should also be engaging with the public about the River Basin Management Plan consultation to get a wider range of inputs and encourage people to engage with their water environment.

Vikki Salas reminded partners of the points raised in the last meeting and initiated a discussion on how the Catchment Partnership could better engage with local communities and interest groups.

Kerry Morgan (National Trust) said that we can't go in with a specific agenda, we need a forum that allows people to come forward with their own concerns. We could attend events and ask people for three priority concerns for the Catchment Partnership to address. This could be done at some of the events that Kerry is organising through the Riverlands project. Kerry is looking to set up a focus group as part of Riverlands. This will provide a forum where we can listen to people's concerns. If issues are raised that aren't relevant to Riverlands/the Catchment Partnership, then they will be passed on to the relevant organisation. This demonstrates that all concerns are listened to but acknowledges there are limits to what we can address. The focus group will facilitate a community to come up with their own project, which they have ownership of.

Paul Barnes noted that there has been an erosion of trust since Storm Desmond and this is a key issue in how we engage with people.

Engaging young people should be a priority, there are a number of ways this could be done including social media, schools, youth groups and young farmers. It is better to go out to existing groups than try and create something new. Cumbria Youth Parliament already have youth councils and an existing support network so this would be a good place to start.

Ideally there would be more focus on nature, farming, water and land management on the national curriculum with agreed messages. This is a bigger issue than local engagement and would require national change but this could be elevated through the CSFP.

If a subject is not on the curriculum then it is difficult for schools to find the time for additional activities and visits, especially secondary schools. Rivers, flooding and environmental issues are on the curriculum so there is opportunity to engage with schools on this. Several organisations already do school visits (e.g. West Cumbria Rivers Trust, National Trust, Lake District National Park Authority). Farm visits can be paid for as part of a stewardship schemes and this can be quite profitable for the farmer.

Louisa Simpson-Brown (United Utilities) said that many school run STEM clubs (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths). The partners could co-develop a module on catchment science flooding and water quality to offer to schools.

Engagement for the RBMP consultation has quite a short timescale (April 2020) but improving public engagement will be an ongoing aim for the Catchment Partnership.

Action: Vikki to follow up with individuals and discuss how to take this forward.

River Basin Management Plan consultation:

The River Basin Management Plan consultation 'Challenges and Choices' is open until 24th April. Organisations and individuals were encouraged to respond but Vikki will collate a joint response from the Catchment Partnerships based on discussions had at this meeting.

There are nine specific challenges within the consultation 'challenge documents' (e.g. pollution from agriculture and rural areas, changes to water levels and flows). These were summarised on posters and the partners were given half an hour to comment on post it notes about how to improve delivery against these specific objectives.

In small groups partners discussed the key issues of facilitating delivery, improving partnership working and how to fund water environment improvements. The discussions were broad and varied and will be summarised in the West Cumbria Catchment Partnership response that will be circulated for comment before being submitted.

The key points to emerge from the discussions were:

- Significant improvement requires a step-change from Government both in policy and in funding, this will filter through all mechanisms of delivery (e.g. regulation, private investment, public behaviour).
- Public money should be for public goods, but the public need to have better understanding of the issues to increase willingness to pay for environmental improvement via taxes. The Government will only invest in things that are popular with the electorate.
- We need better natural capital accounting to fully understand benefits and encourage investment.
- Businesses should be taxed and polluter pays principle applied but there are complexities about whether the cost is passed onto the consumer.
- More enforcement of regulations is needed to reduce bad practice and pollution.
- Greater flexibility and coordination of funding sources and longer term funding would increase the ability of projects to deliver benefits.
- Reduced bureaucracy would facilitate project delivery.
- The U.K. needs to have clear and relevant targets, with better information about why we aren't reaching them and more enforcement action.
- The Catchment Partnership should have an action plan for each waterbody rather than just responding to what is failing.