



Summary of West Cumbria Catchment Partnership Meeting

1st July 2021

Online meeting

Attendees:

16 people attended the meeting:

Adam Briggs - NFU	Jan Darrall – Friends of the Lake District
Anya Kuliszewski – Love my Beach	Jo Ratcliffe – Environment Agency
Caitlin Pearson - West Cumbria Rivers Trust	John Gorst – United Utilities
Cath Johnson – Lake District National Park Authority	Laura Teasdale – Catchment Sensitive Farming
Dave Bechelli – Copeland Borough Council	Mel Fletcher – Natural England
David Kennedy – Environment Agency	Nick Haigh – National Trust
Hannah Haydock – National Trust	Steve Hardy – Nuclear Decommissioning Authority
Helen Reynard – Cumbria County Council	Vikki Salas - West Cumbria Rivers Trust

Working group updates

The project pipeline spreadsheet is still live. This hasn't been pushed this over the last year as there has been so much uncertainty around project delivery but now, as things start to settle down and there is more certainty about how projects will progress and the timescales, it would be really helpful if this could be updated, and kept up-to-date every three months or so. Having this list of projects and project ideas helps highlight what is happening and where extra funding or partnership working is needed to help make things happen.

The 'status' and 'comments' are the main columns that need updating unless there are any major changes to the scope of the project. New projects, or project ideas, can be added as a new row.

Project pipeline spreadsheet:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/15SKBeMte6kpiH_v5XimW8QM3NWQfmT-wNIndMFsl4Qk/edit#gid=1172685711

For projects that are being developed or delivered in partnership we have project working groups. The current working groups of the WCCP are:

- Cocker & Glenderamackin catchment restoration projects – led by West Cumbria Rivers Trust. Initially Natural Flood Management projects funded by the Environment Agency NFM programme, these projects have now expanded with Water Environment Grant and Green Recovery Challenge Funding to be holistic catchment restoration projects. Lots of delivery is ongoing including pond and wetland creation, leaky barriers and tree planting. We have a Catchment Partnership site visit on 13th July to see the NFM features at Whinlatter led by Annabelle, the Cocker Project Manager. Clair, the Project Manager for the Glenderamackin catchment is hosting site visits to see completed projects near

Threlkeld on 14th and 22nd July, get in touch with Clair@westcumbriarivertrust.org if you would like to join.

- Bootle – led by West Cumbria Rivers Trust.
A working group was established in 2017 to develop a NFM project. The project then received funding from the Environment Agency Natural Flood Management Programme and the working group, particularly the Parish Council, helped to steer the project development and delivery. As this funding has now come to an end, the working group is no longer active. Cumbria County Council have a funding allocation for flood defence work in Bootle in 2024/5; the working group can be revived to help steer this next phase of work, or to develop a funding bid.
- A66/Braithwaite – led by Highways England.
The A66/Braithwaite working group was investigating options for a flood alleviation scheme for both Braithwaite village and the A66 road, linked to options for NFM and river restoration in the Newlands Valley. As no viable option was found for the A66/Braithwaite scheme, the working group has been stopped. There is still a lot of potential in this area and an aspiration for a river restoration scheme for Newlands Beck. Currently, there is not an active working group but this is likely to be revisited in the future with a focus on Newlands Valley.
- Lower Derwent – Led by Allerdale Borough Council.
A single working group meeting for the Lower Derwent was held in April 2018. Michael Heaslip chaired this group as a Councillor for Allerdale Borough Council. As Michael is no longer a Councillor or member of the Catchment Partnership there have been no further working group meetings. There are lots of issues and interests in the lower Derwent, centred around Yearl weir. Resolving these issues will require long-term partnership working rather than a short term group to steer delivery. Currently, resourcing has prevented the hosts from chairing this group but there is an aspiration to restart this. Partner organisations are encouraged to volunteer to lead a lower Derwent working group.
- St. John's working group.
The St. John's working group met a couple of times, led by Natural England, but was paused during Covid. A project is now commencing in this catchment; United Utilities are funding a West Cumbria Rivers Trust Project Officer to work with farmers and landowners in St. John's in the Vale, downstream of Thirlmere reservoir, to improve the condition of St. John's Beck and increase catchment resilience. This has the same structure as the current compensatory measures projects in the Ehen and Irt catchments. A working group to help inform this project will be established.

There are a few new working groups being set up around new funding or initiatives.

- River Irt high status – There is currently a working group for the Irt compensatory measures project but this will be expanded to look at drawing in more funding for work to improve the condition of the river and Wastwater to 'high' ecological status under the Water Framework Directive. More details were provided by Jo Ratcliffe later in the meeting (see below).
- Waver/Wampool – A sub-group of the WCCP met last year to discuss the Waver/Wampool submission for the River Basin Management Plan catchment pages. The Waver/Wampool is a priority area on the Environment Agency local plan with Water Environment Improvement Fund money allocated this year. This group will be formalised into a working group to progress work in this area.
- Broughton Beck – Walkover surveys undertaken by the River Corridors Group in 2018 highlighted a number of issues on Broughton Beck including diffuse water pollution and barriers to fish passage. These

are impacting on the River Derwent and Bassenthwaite SAC. The Environment Agency and West Cumbria Rivers Trust are currently undertaking feasibility studies for easing the barriers to fish passage but this needs to be joined up with work to improve habitat upstream of the barriers. WCRT and the Environment Agency had an initial meeting and are developing a sub-catchment plan to prioritise action. A working group will be established to progress delivery in this catchment. Any partners with an interest in fisheries, farming, water quality or the Derwent SAC are encouraged to join the working group.

Partners are encouraged to suggest or set-up working groups to help with partnership development and delivery of projects.

Project updates

Environment Agency Flood Risk Management Schemes – David Kennedy, Environment Agency

The Environment Agency have received the appraisal for Wigton from the consultants and are currently going through it. This should be available soon and has recommendations for delivery.

The Egremont/Skirting Beck scheme is currently underway and going well.

There were some small delays to the capital works scheme for Flimby. The scheme has been passed to Cumbria Country Council to lead and delivery should start quite soon. The scheme includes additional funding for NFM, which WCRT are delivering, to extend the works already done through the Environment Agency NFM programme. This is one of the first projects to integrate NFM into capital grant funding.

Fish surveys – Vikki Salas, West Cumbria Rivers Trust

The salmon smolt trapping and tracking project on the River Derwent is currently in its second year. The project is collecting information on what happens to salmon smolts during their migration out to sea and is led by the University of Glasgow and Environment Agency, with multiple other partners. WCRT led on the smolt trapping in St. John's Beck. This spring, 165 tags were deployed on smolts, which are currently being tracked through the system. Over 900 fish were trapped on the first wet day after the period of dry weather at beginning of May, showing the smolt run is heavily impacted by flows. Last year, 100 fish were tagged and only 10 got to the lower Derwent. One salmon was recorded in the Irish Sea.

WCRT's program of electro-fishing surveys to assess fry numbers across the Derwent catchment is in its sixth year. The 2020 survey season went well with 162 sites surveyed and ~5,000 salmon and trout caught. The numbers are generally stable across the years; the Derwent is not seeing huge declines like some other river systems but the population sizes are still not huge.

The surveys are semi-quantitative 5-minute surveys. This is a rapid survey technique allowing a larger number of sites to be surveyed, but the data needs to be calibrated with the Environment Agency's more quantitative method to allow it to be put into National Classifications. This has proved difficult in the past. WCRT are now working on their own calibrations and contributing to a national effort by the Rivers Trust to improve calibration procedures and standardise techniques.

United Utilities Thirlmere Resilience project – John Gorst, United Utilities

The Thirlmere Resilience Project is taking a whole catchment approach to the management of the catchment upstream of Thirlmere Reservoir, from the blanket bog on the fell tops, down the steep slopes, to the rivers in the valley bottoms. Thirlmere Reservoir is now the sole water supply to the whole of Cumbria so needs to be more resilient.

The river channels have been heavily canalised with rock armouring. The adjoining fields are managed as in-bye land, despite being quite high and wet, because the historic in-bye land at the true valley bottom was flooded when the reservoir was formed. This management of both the land and watercourse has resulted in a lack of resilience including a high sediment load reaching the reservoir. A project on Wythburn Beck is about to commence to re-connect the watercourse to the floodplain and multiple paleo-channels by removing the rock armouring. This will slow the flow, allowing sediment to drop out, as well as improving habitat for fish and a range of other species. This work is being led by West Cumbria Rivers Trust and Dynamic Rivers consultancy. Similar assisted natural recovery of the river is planned for below the road.

There is also lots of work happening on the high fells. Detailed surveys of the peat are being undertaken by Cumbria Wildlife Trust Peat Partnership, looking at both the deep and shallow peat condition and its influence on water quality, climate change mitigation and biodiversity. Peat restoration work started last winter on Armbboth fell with peat restoration and a footpath upgrade, in partnership with the National Trust and Fix the Fells.

There are small pockets of heath vegetation left on the hillsides but these are mostly in inaccessible areas such as crag ledges. Working with John Muir Trust, the vegetation structure is being made more resilient, bringing in species such as montane willow and aspen to increase biodiversity.

The area is still an active Herdwick sheep farm. The contract shepherd, Matty Fearon, is doing an excellent job of farming and is heavily involved in the environmental work. A short film about how the farm is managed is in production, as an example of United Utilities Catchment Systems Thinking approach. The film will demonstrate how sustainable upland farming that delivers both agricultural produce and environmental benefits can be delivered.

John is hosting visits for different groups and is happy to show people the site to bring in new ideas and debates. There is potential to host a site visit for the Catchment Partnership in Autumn.

Natural Environment Investment Readiness – Vikki Salas, West Cumbria Rivers Trust

West Cumbria Rivers Trust submitted an application to the DEFRA Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund for funding to work up a project in the Glenderamackin & St. John's catchment to be 'investment ready'. The proposed model is for private investors to provide upfront funding for works that produce environmental benefit such as reducing flood risk or carbon sequestration. Beneficiaries then 'buy' these environmental 'services' over a number of years to pay back the investors.

WCRT have been offered part of the funding that was asked for and need to decide whether to take this forward. If so, partnership input will be key to the success of the project and WCRT will work with various partners and the existing Glenderamackin working group.

Cumbria Community Flood Resilience Innovation Programme – Helen Renyard, Cumbria County Council

See attached slides for full details.

The Flood Innovation Resilience programme is a 6-year project (2021 – 2027) to look at innovative methods of increasing the resilience of communities to flood risk. Cumbria has an initial allocation of £6.5 million but a full business case needs to be worked up by February 2022. The project will learn by doing around three key themes:

- Community resilience;
- Natural Flood Management;
- Blended finance – drawing in other funding sources such as ELMS alongside the core programme funding.

In the WCCP area the project will cover the Cocker catchment, specifically Lorton Valley and Crummock Water and will work closely with United Utilities and the local community around ongoing plans for Crummock Water after United Utilities cease to use it to supply drinking water.

River Irt target changes – Jo Ratcliffe, Environment Agency

See attached slides for full details.

The Environment Agency are developing a proposal to set the objective of a 'high' ecological status under the Water Framework Directive for the River Irt (including the upper and lower Irt, River Bleng and Wastwater). The driver for this is the population of freshwater pearl mussels, which is one of the most recoverable populations in the country.

Nationally, all waterbodies have the objective of reaching 'good' ecological status by 2027 and all SSSI waterbodies have the objective of reaching 'high' status, but as the Irt is already at 'good' status and is not a SSSI there is currently no imperative for funding. The higher target will provide a greater driver for funding and work in the catchment. All rivers in England and Wales failed to meet required chemical standards under the WFD in 2019. This reflects new substances being included and better detection rather than a worsening problem, and is not considered to impact the freshwater pearl mussels. Flow and abstractions will need to be considered as part of the ecological status.

The intention is that the objective will be part of the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) and therefore become a legally binding objective. The consultation on the RBMP is coming soon and there is a long process until this is published.

When the objective is adopted, a working group will be established. Some initial funding has been assigned from Natural Course for creating an action plan and there is potential for further funding through the Water Environment Improvement Fund (WEIF). This will build on the ongoing compensatory measures project funded by UU and delivered by WCRT and FBA.

Funding opportunities

The Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund will open for applications in September for new groups to start in April 2022. The funding is for facilitators to host groups of farmers to share best practice and link together for bigger and better outcomes for the environment. WCRT currently host two groups, in the Cocker and Crookhurst catchments, and are keen to bid into next round of funding for either the West Coast (centred on St. Bees) or the Waver/Wampool. Other partners are also encouraged to apply, using the Catchment Action Plans to identify priority areas. WCCP hosts can support applications with data etc. but need to know where people are planning to bid to ensure applications don't overlap or compete.

Woodland creation offer – DEFRA have recently launched the Woodland Creation Offer. This funding covers the capital and maintenance costs of establishing a new woodland but also pays landowners for the public benefits a woodland provides with rates for improving water quality, reducing flood risk, enhancing biodiversity and providing public access. It is a generous offer with good profit for landowners available. WCRT see this as a key delivery mechanism but need to better understand the detail of how the scheme works. Other partners expressed an interest in more detailed information on the scheme, this will be an agenda item at the next WCCP meeting.

Helen Reynard, Cumbria County Council, commented that the Woodland Creation Offer could be very relevant for the Innovative Flood Resilience Programme, which is looking at blending different sources of finance.

An application has been submitted for creation of a 'Cumbria Coastal Community Forest'. The application was put together by the Lake District National Park Authority and National Trust, on behalf of Barrow, Copeland and Allerdale Borough Council. A decision on whether the application is successful should be reached in July. The members present were not sure what opportunities this would bring for delivery, but if the application is successful it will be covered in more detail at the next meeting.

Farming in protected Landscapes – Cath Johnson – Lake District National Park Authority

This new funding opportunity is part of DEFRA's agricultural transition plans. It will provide funding for farmers in National Parks and AONBs for projects that support nature recovery, mitigate climate change impacts, enhance engagement of people with the landscape or support cultural heritage and the sense of place.

Within the WCCP area it is relevant for the Lake District National Park and the Solway AONB. The National Park have £1 mil funding available from July 2021 to 2024. The funding is open to all farmers/land managers, including public organisations and charities. Other organisations can apply on behalf of a landowner if they show they have collaborated with the farmers/group of farmers. There is a decision panel for larger projects (> £5,000) consisting of Natural England, a representative from the land management community and local specialists. The funding is currently open for applications but projects need to be completed within a financial year so any applications made soon will need to be delivered by March 2022.

More details are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/funding-for-farmers-in-protected-landscapes>
<https://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/caringfor/farming/farming-in-protected-landscapes>
<https://www.solwaycoastaonb.org.uk/2019/farming-in-protected-landscapes/>

Helen Reynard, Cumbria County Council commented that this source of funding could also be very helpful match funding for the Innovative Flood Resilience Programme.

Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) environmental grant opportunities – Steve Hardy

See attached slides for full details.

The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority is an arm's length Government body, responsible for planning the strategy for decommissioning nuclear assets. They then provide funding to businesses to carry out this work. The NDA have offices in West Cumbria and Cockermouth and their sites include Sellafield and Drigg low level waste depository.

Under the Energy Act, the NDA have a duty to support local communities and improve socio-economic conditions, including enhancing employment opportunities and increasing attractiveness of the areas around the sites. Therefore, the NDA provide grant funding for projects that benefit local communities. The focus has been on socio-economic projects but the remit has recently been broadened to include environmental improvement projects. There is £15 mil/year available across all the NDA areas, with specific focus on the Government's 'levelling up' agenda and the Social Value Act commitment to net zero and environmental sustainability. The aims of the grant funding are: resilient economies, thriving communities, sustainable incomes and sustainable growth. The value of nature is acknowledged within these themes.

There is a geographical limit to where the grant funding can be spent, reflecting the communities within which the NDA works. Within the WCCP area the funding could be awarded to projects in Whitehaven, Seascale, Keekle, Ehen catchment, Irt catchment and Calderbridge area, but would not be applicable to the Derwent, Cocker or Waver/Wampool.

The NDA own 4,500 Ha of land of which the majority is outside secured sites. They are managing this land to provide public benefit and are linked into the proposals for the Cumbrian Coastal Community Forest.

John Gorst, United Utilities – The Wild Ennerdale project is in the early stages of a beaver reintroduction consultation. If a beaver reintroduction were to go ahead it would have big benefits for the community through eco-tourism, is this a project that might be eligible for NDA grant funding?

Steve Hardy – Ennerdale Valley is at the limit of the geographical extent of the funding area. Any project would need to demonstrate benefits to communities suffering deprivation. For example, showing that people travel from Whitehaven to Ennerdale would help support an application. John can follow up with Steve as the beaver project progresses.

Vikki Salas, commented that this could be a good opportunity for work in the Irt catchment, linked to the 'high' status objective.

Caitlin Pearson, West Cumbria Rivers Trust - The Rivers Trust have recently published a national map of health and wellbeing datasets. The data includes Index of Multiple Deprivation and indices of physical and mental health conditions that are linked to access to green and blue space and air pollution. This sort of information is useful in targeting projects to have multiple benefits and informing funding bids:

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=c1c6f5268a3946eaac7cc6202268e474>

Medium Term Plan (MTP) and Water Environment Improvement Fund (WEIF) – Jo Ratcliffe, Environment Agency

See attached slides for full details.

The MTP is a 6-year programme of projects that we would like to fund from the WEIF. Partners can put forward any project that contributes to the 25-year plan objective of 'clean and plentiful water', improves a WFD outcomes or creates or enhances water dependent habitats. Projects can be submitted by filling in a project mandate form. Projects can be put forward for future years to show the sale of aspiration. The funding is allocated on an annual basis but an advanced programme of potential projects is helpful.

This year the Waver/Wampool area has an allocation of WEIF funding. It is a priority area on the Environment Agency local plans. There are lots of drivers for work in the area including multiple WFD failures. The Environment Agency have been undertaking remote sensing to identify and prioritise issues and there is now some funding to start delivery. Partners are encouraged to join the Waver/Wampool working group to steer and expand upon this work.

AOB and DONM

There was no other business raised.

The site visit to see Whinlatter NFM features is on 13th July 2021.

The next meeting will be September 2021 TBC.