

## **Workshop for landowners: Monday 28 April at 12.30 pm**

### **Notes from the Breakout Group A**

#### Grazing

- Lack of understanding of grazing land near the centre – many people expect it to be like a urban / country park and do not understand cows. On the positive side the cattle seem to give people a reason to not do things i.e., not drop litter and camp.
- Concern from Guy about the sustainability of the small graziers that graze the commons. While the university farm is mainly arable there maybe some links to be made with their graziers i.e. help with topping.
- Need for development of a proper Farmers Market, supported by the City Council to further develop the opportunities for local people to sell their produce.
- Colleges are interested in buying locally but sometimes the scale is not appropriate rather than asking for a bulk number of cuts it would be good to challenge the chefs to produce a conference meal from one cow.
- Sheep are being grazed this year but already had two deaths from dog attacks.
- Concern over water quality – one cow last year was found to have human parasite. Most likely due to misconnections.

#### Rowing, Punting and house boats

- Concern over the number of punts and the number of rowers, houseboats. Too much going on – Cam Conservators do not have enough powers.
- Conservators & City Council need to be more joined up.

#### Climate Change & growth

- More people using the river and adjacent open spaces.
- Day tourists put pressure on river through the City

#### Urban Misconnections

- Raised as something the colleges could do – check for misconnections
- Questions were raised about how to tackle the historic housing in the city. I was suggested that Anglian Water might like to become involved looking at groups of houses with residents to ascertain if there is a problem.

#### The Backs and associated drainage network.

- It was agreed that it would be good to have an integrated plan of the back and the associated drainage network. Suggested that the City would lead as they reviewing their Nature Conservation Strategy in 2014 – colleges would be willing to work with them.
- Guy to talk to Keith about developing the links.

## Bin Brook

- City Council could do more at Gough way re flooding of properties and ecology
- Flooded in 2001 and scheme for balancing pond drawn up – problem over relocation of Cambridge Water Main drain stopped the project.

## Notes from breakout group B

- All landowners recognise the importance of the water environment, with active management of land adjacent to water courses. Babraham Institute allows open access along its river, Sanger Centre has created riverside walks primarily for people using its site.
- Positive reaction to a co-ordinated response to mink control
- Control of invasive species (both plants and animals) is being undertaken on the Bourne Brook
- Invasive species such as Himalayan Balsam, Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed and Crassula Helmsii are present in different numbers in different locations
- Milton Country Park has had issues with blue/green algae, and experiences conflict of users between anglers and dog walkers.
- Erosion of river banks by dogs was identified (*could be addressed locally through simple means*)
- Over-shading is seen as an issue on the majority of watercourses (inc Lodes) but the public can become very attached to trees and complain if reasons for tree removal are not understood (*could be addressed locally through simple means*)
- There should be more tree thinning and vegetation management
- Lack of management of smaller water courses seen as an issue, very rarely have a “little and often” approach, occasional works may result in very disruptive actions taking place to the detriment of the river and short term gain for flood risk management
- Large structures (weirs primarily) present barriers to fish and prevent natural re-colonisation after drought or pollution events (*issue should be followed-up in a strategic way*)
- Could there be a fish pass for the weir at the Babraham Institute or could there be mats for eel passage. Fish passage on the River Granta should be looked at in greater detail. (*issue should be followed-up in a strategic way*)
- Siltation is also an issue in some locations, routine management such as weed control or desilting must be properly focussed (*issue should be followed-up in a strategic way*)

- Lode Mill side channel – low key river restoration undertaken by removing brick lining and replacing with gabions
- Lodes do not present much potential for in-channel restoration due to their low gradient and Man-made legacy. However, the marginal vegetation could be improved in some reaches (*could be addressed locally through simple means*)
- Illegal stocking of fish an issue (sturgeon reported to be in a lake!)
- Marshall's flight path an issue with open bodies of water, could this prevent wetlands in the Cambridge areas from being positively designed for wildlife?
- Archaeology costs have an impact on large projects viability, for example a wetland was dropped due to extensive archaeological investigation that would be required in order for it to secure planning consent.
- Could the EA's flow monitoring equipment be better designed so that it does not cause such a large back-up of water and so that it does not present a barrier to the upstream movement of fish (ie Babraham gauging station) (*issue should be followed-up in a strategic way*)
- Opportunities for improving the habitat potential of the stream at Wimpole could potentially be taken forward with the National Trust (*issue should be followed-up in a strategic way*)
- A landowner has asked the EA if impoundments/reservoir creation could be used to retain water higher up within the catchment in order to store water and assist in flood risk management. The EA were not too positive about exploring the idea. This idea was felt to be very worthy by the group and should be pursued when resources become available (*issue should be followed-up in a strategic way*)
- More works are required in the upper parts of the catchments to slow the flow and provide flood storage. This should be a holistic approach (*issue should be followed-up in a strategic way*)
- Is there over-deepening of the Cam? Could river restoration (replacement of gravel beds) be undertaken without the detailed and expensive topographical surveys?
- Co-ordinated action is required regarding flood plain reconnection, this was felt to be particularly beneficial to sites such as the Sanger Centre, Hinxton, who have their own flood storage wetland but it fills and high flow is received from upstream. Is there potential for re-connection of the Cam with its floodplain between Littlebury and Great Chesterford? (*issue should be followed-up in a strategic way*)
- Could LIDAR (radar mapping of floodplains) be used to identify parts of the catchment that are not best utilised for flood storage (EA rep stated that this may be an issue to further explore) (*issue should be followed-up in a strategic way*)
- Should there be a water storage strategy for agriculture? Russell Smith Farms were very open in reporting that water is their most important commodity which must be carefully used. They can see that climate change and restrictions on direct river abstractions are directing them to find long-term solutions to crop irrigation.

- There should be more engagement to find out which landowners / centres that are willing to provide land that could be utilised for flood risk management (*issue should be followed-up in a strategic way*)
- Access to accessible green space will become an increasing pressure with growth
- EA are sometimes seen as a barrier, holding people back through “red tape”
- There should be a number of walk over surveys and progressive mapping of the catchment to inform a strategic approach to flood risk management and river restoration (*issue should be followed-up in a strategic way*)
- The river is generally seen as an asset and the amenity value is very important to institutions, it is a thing of great beauty and an important resource for winter water storage
- There is a general feeling of lack of support and the feeling that certain parts of the river are neglected and there is a lack of ownership.
- Barriers to improving rivers include apparent lack of ability to plan long-term with regard to river management, flood risk management and river restoration, lack of engagement and education of the local population, increasing population around Cambridge, lack of a single co-ordinating body.
- Cambridge City Council control 23km of watercourses. SCDC have a legal duty to maintain nearly 200 miles of Award Watercourses. Positive management by these two authorities would have a far reaching affect (*NB practices have improved greatly from the routine maintenance that was conducted 15+ years ago, scope for further improvement no doubts exists*).