

RIVER LARK CATCHMENT PARTNERSHIP

Minutes of RLCP meeting held virtually on 25 February 2021 at 5.30pm

Present: Alexandra Baltrusch – BFER (AB)
Geoff Brighty – Board member Rivers Trust and Trustee of Norfolk Rivers Trust (GB)
Ian Campbell – BWMG (IC)
Will Cranstoun – RLCP Trustee, Suffolk Wildlife Trust (WC)
John Dumont – BWMG Volunteer (JD)
Nigel Elbourne – RLCP Mildenhall Representative (NE)
Catherine Emerson – RLCP Fornhams’ Representative (CE)
David Emerson – RLCP Fornhams’ Representative (DE)
Andrew Francis – Farm Director, Elveden Estates (AF)
Chris Gregory – RLCP Trustee (CG)
Chris Hainsworth - Senior Warden, Natural England (CH)
Josh Harris -All Saints Golf Club and Hotel (JH)
Andrew Hinchley – RLCP Trustee and Chair/ BWMG Chair (AH)
Steph Holland – RLCP Admin and Volunteer (SH)
David Hudson - RLCP Lark Villages Representative, BTFC (DH)
Melanie Lesser – Associate, BWMG volunteer (ML)
Joel MacEvoy-Swift – Volunteer (JM-S)
Jim Meadows – RLCP Trustee and Vice Chair LAPS (JM)
Rebecca Mundy – Chair of Pollution Group, Farm Adviser Norfolk & Suffolk for Natural
England (RM)
David Palmer – RLCP Trustee, RLCP Mildenhall Group (DP)
Rosie Perham – Ramblers’ Association (RP)
Glenn Smithson – Head of Restoration, LAPS (GS)
Jim Stephens – RLCP Trustee and Treasurer/BWMG (JS)
Richard Summers – Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership (RS)
Ron West – Bury Ramblers (RW)
Sam Westwood – CamEO and Catchment Engagement Manager, Anglian Water (SW)

In attendance: Alex Huggins – RLCP Minutes Secretary

Apologies: Will Dale, Chris Mahon, Jessie Leach, Jon Swift, Sam Hurst

1. Minutes of 2019/20 AGM and RLCP meeting of 26 November

2.1 Minutes of RLCP CIO 2019/20 AGM followed by RLCP meeting held virtually on 26th November 2019 were **approved** with the amendment that Andrew Francis be listed as attending.

2.2 Matters arising:

1. Pending. Information gathered for the report to Jo Churchill MP would be put on the shared drive.
1. Done. Chair had written to Andrew Francis and Rebecca Mundy (RM) would report later.
3. Done. RLCP now in direct negotiation with Sunnica (solar farm developer) to ensure adequate access in river.

4. Pending Chair and Jim Stephens (JS) decided to convene RLCP Trustees once the report had been presented to Jo Churchill.
5. Done.

2. BFER/River Activity Ecology, Conservation and Restoration

2.1 River Restoration

JS explained that river restoration materials would be paid for by BFER and would be delivered through Suffolk County Council and stored at Lackford Lakes. JS had started getting quotes for materials which, due to the pandemic, did not need to be in place until later in the year. Attendees noted the £5,000 WEIF grant for 2020/21 had been suspended due to Covid-19 and the activities would be carried over to the next financial year.

The chair said that all project paperwork (on shared Google drive) would comply with Environment Agency (EA) professional CPP standards and Chris Gregory (CG) **agreed** to review them. Attendees noted a volunteer would be needed to adapt these for each river restoration project and CG **agreed** to see if he could find a volunteer.

The chair said there was a possibility of volunteering taking place from 29 March and attendees noted a permit was in place for work at Flempton Bridge and RLCP was waiting for a permit for work further downstream between the confluence of Culford Stream and Lackford Lakes. The chair described the fish passage project led by the EA, which comprised more than 50% of RLCP volunteer days. The chair explained this project had stalled due to the pandemic, but that James Dyke of EA would re-start working on it next month. The chair said James Dyke was also looking at the relation between the aquifer and Cavenham Heath as part of assessing water level change there and this was also delayed.

2.2 MoRPh trial river stretch

Steph Holland (SH) reported that 20 markers 10 metres apart had been placed by GS and volunteers could start taking recordings near Flempton bridge. The chair added that this was Covid-flexible with individuals able to choose when to start. JS said MoRPh surveying over the next 3 months, followed by MoRPh surveying post river restoration work would constitute an excellent opportunity for learning about operations which could be applied to wider BFER work. The chair added MoRPh surveying would be recognised by the EA when considering river restoration standards.

2.3 River path surveying

Not discussed

3. Pollution Sub-group update

- Rebecca Mundy (RM) reported that two meetings had been held looking at river Lark pollution sources and remedies. RM said phosphate was one of the highest sources of pollution for the Lark catchment area, that this was a priority issue and would form the main element of the report to Jo Churchill. The sub-group had also looked at land use – soil, water, slurry, and livestock management, and there was a discussion about farmer engagement to reduce these with Andrew Francis (AF) saying that successful approaches were being implemented through farm advisors working within CamEO.
- Sam Westwood (SW) added that there were 6 phosphorus removal schemes forming part of the AW green recovery plan and at least 2 sites in the Lark catchment were being considered.

- Joel MacEvoy-Swift (JM-S) gave a presentation on Orthophosphates, high levels of which led to eutrophication. JM-S said he believed that generally 18-28% of phosphorus came from agriculture, with the rest coming from sewage treatment works.

4. RLCP report for Jo Churchill on pollution and drought issues

4.1 Geoff Brighty (GB) highlighted the following:

- Sam Hurst had completed a catchment appraisal.
- Drought and weather extremes had typically not been considered enough by EA when planning for the river basin.
- There would be a meeting to ascertain gaps between state of the environment and mitigations the following week.
- This would be an ideal case study to take forward.
- From this report there would be (a) a set of actions from the RLCP, (b) actions from partners, (c) actions from the local planning authority and (d) actions from Jo Churchill, MP.
- There was a good process in place and if all partners support and trust each other this could progress well.
- The report would be presented to Jo Churchill on 19 March and GB would be happy to report back to RLCP.

JM-S asked whether the meeting would be recorded and GB said he would ask.

The chair noted this detailed report would give the RLCP a good understanding as to where the Lark catchment is and the approaches needed to improve the situation.

5. RLCP Development and Growth

Training Report by the chair:

- when groups could meet outside, possibly after 29 March, the RLCP would use the open-air shelter at West Stow for training.
- 30 volunteers had been trained last Autumn.
- One of the inventors of MoRPh would formally work through the experience of the group for the first section.
- SH had written to volunteers asking for training requirements.
- Post-Covid, there was a need to revitalise local groups.

David Emerson (DE) reported that 3 new volunteers had been recruited that week in the Fornhams. The chair suggested a meeting to discuss getting volunteers together.

6. CIO – Drafting of Annual Report

JS asked Sam Westwood if the Annual Report written for a general audience could be sent to CamEO members. SW said it could and there were elements people could learn from. There was discussion about whether to have the AGM in April or defer to mid-year. CG and JS **agreed** to produce a draft Annual Report for the next RLCP meeting and to make it a more purposeful document.

7. Lark Abstraction Workshops and Study

Attendees noted there would be a full report at the next meeting and there had been a zoom meeting at the beginning of February which had given formal endorsement of the pilot abstraction project going ahead. From April the abstractors will interact with EA in a coordinated manner to manage their abstraction licences on a group basis. A further workshop will be held later in April, with wider stakeholders contributing, to explore wider strategic goals for the pilot.

8. CamEO

CamEO pages: SW thanked JS and the Chair for the contribution of Lark details to input into the CamEO pages of the next EA River Basin Plan (2021).

Future plans: SW would link RLCP volunteers with site managers at Fornhams and other places for information on effluent quality.

SW would organise an RLCP visit to Fornham all Saints treatment works.

EA was currently reviewing and looking at how it designated areas of water stress with East Anglia having been designated as non-water stressed until recently. SW said it would be good to have the RLCP response to that.

The new CamEO website will include the storymap – an online mapping portal. SH will be working with Jessie Leach and SW to input data from RLCP projects.

BFER training for GIS mapping will be coming soon.

The CamEO conference will be over two mornings on 13th and 14th April.

CE asked a question about effluent from Fornham STW and if detailed information is publicly available. Are there ways to disseminate the information locally. SW responded that it was not something that Anglian Water could invest in at the moment but they are aware of it.

9. Water Resources East

Update from JS

They have launched a massive programme to look at ecological progress. Local councils/NGOs/businesses administratively based on parish boundaries. Carbon management – tree planting. A robust presentation of priorities in the EofE for ecology to be legitimised. Dynamic planning tool to allow investors and stakeholders to collaborate and allow opportunities to be strengthened.

There is a BWMG webinar delivered by Robin on their website.

10. Update from Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership

RS told us that the partnership is now working collaboratively with English Heritage to complete a programme of repairs to historic fabric. A heritage interpretation plan and heritage interpretation panels are being developed for the Abbey Ruins, Abbot's Bridge, Abbey Gate and Norman Tower. Work is progressing quickly and English Heritage have increased the budget by 50% to £30K.

Telling the story of the Abbey. Already consulted with BWMG and RLCP – awaiting a response from AH

Libby Ranzetta is now a core member of the partnership and will be giving a talk with the Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership and she is the chair of the Abbey 1000 group.

11. AOB

BFER training report – JS asked if the Paths training counted towards volunteer hours. Answer was yes we can claim the hours, although it is managed through SCC.

Meeting ended at 19:00

ACTION LOG

2.1	Chris Gregory (CG) agreed to review project paperwork and to find a volunteer to adapt these for different projects	CG
5	The chair suggested a meeting to discuss getting volunteers together	Chair/local group representatives
6	CG and JS agreed to produce a draft Annual Report for the next RLCP meeting and to make it a more purposeful document.	CG/JS
8	SW would link RLCP volunteers with site managers at Fornhams and other places for information on effluent quality	SW
8	SW would organise an RLCP visit to Fornham all Saints treatment works	SW
8	RLCP to draft response to EA review of designation of areas of water stress	RLCP
10	AH to write to RS regarding Telling the Story of the Abbey	AH

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 22nd April 2021 at 5.30pm