



RLCP 2021-14

RIVER LARK CATCHMENT PARTNERSHIP

Minutes of RLCP CIO 2020/21 AGM followed by RLCP meeting held virtually on 25 November 2021 at 5.15pm

Present:

- Ian Campbell – BWMG IC
- Will Cranstoun – RLCP Trustee, Suffolk Wildlife Trust WC
- David Emerson – RLCP Fornhams’ Representative DE
- Andrew Francis – Lark Abstractors Group AF
- Chris Hainsworth - Senior Warden, Natural England CH
- Andrew Hinchley – RLCP Trustee and Chair/ BWMG AH
- Steph Holland – RLCP volunteer SH
- Bob Leonard – RLCP volunteer BL
- Jim Meadows – RLCP Trustee and Vice Chair LAPS JM
- Rebecca Mundy – Farm Adviser Norfolk & Suffolk for Natural England RM
- David Palmer – RLCP Trustee, LVA and RLCP Mildenhall Group DP
- Rosie Perham – Ramblers’ Association RP
- Robin Price – Water Resources East RP
- Gary Quilter - West Suffolk Council Open Spaces GQ
- Libby Ranzetta – BWMG, Chalk Aquifer Alliance LR
- Glenn Smithson - RLCP, LAPS GS
- Jim Stephens – RLCP Trustee and Treasurer/BWMG JS
- Sam Westwood – Catchment Engagement Manager, Anglian Water SW
- Ron West – Bury Ramblers RW

In attendance: Alex Huggins – RLCP Admin

Apologies: Chris Gregory, Nigel Elbourne, Claire Dickson, Graham Showell, Jessie Leach, Richard Summers

AGM for 2020-2021

1. Minutes of 2019/20 AGM

Minutes from the RLCP AGM of 26 November 2020 were **approved**.

2. Report on activity 01/12/2019 – 30/11/2020

Trustees **approved** the Report (RLCP 21-06) which had been submitted to the Charity Commission.



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3. Summary of Accounts 2020/21

Trustees noted the summary of accounts (RLCP 21-05) had been discussed at an earlier meeting and had been submitted to the Charity Commission. Trustees **approved** the Summary of Accounts 2020/21.

4. RLCP Trustees

Trustees noted Chris Gregory intended to retire as a Trustee but would remain until new Trustees were recruited.

Jim Stephens stood down as Trustee but said he would be willing to stand again and was unanimously re-elected as a Trustee.

Attendees noted the constitution said Trustees needed to be rotated and Trustees **agreed** they needed to be more proactive in recruiting new Trustees and would put out a message on Facebook and the website. They also noted they should aim to ensure at least some Trustees take an active role in RLCP (i.e envisage an ongoing balance in active/non active trustees) and should more than four would-be trustees apply, then current Trustees would need to select.

Will Cranstoun, Chris Gregory, Andrew Hinchley, James Meadows, David Palmer all continued as existing trustees.

5. Any Other Business

Trustees discussed the format for the next AGM of RLCP and **agreed** it should take the form of a stand-alone meeting and would take place late April/early May 2022.

At this point the AGM was formally closed and the meeting moved onto the main agenda.

Regular Meeting Agenda [NOTE: due to other commitments, the later agenda items noted below were prioritised for the benefit of those speakers who had to leave early]

AH welcomed Robin Price from Water Resources East (WRE) to the meeting.

7. Citizen Science Development – Lark Observatory

Attendees noted the paper 'Lark Observatory: position paper' written by LR and AH had previously been circulated.

LR explained The Lark Observatory project would be perfectly placed to take advantage of the resources and expertise available through the CaST Co demonstrator project funded through Ofwat (to be run by the Rivers Trust). JS thanked LR for the paper and confirmed the RLCP support this citizen science initiative.

SW said he liked the idea and that it dovetailed with the Catchment monitoring cooperative and asked would there be an opportunity to partner with higher education, such as Cranfield University? SW also suggested equipment could be borrowed rather than bought and added he could support with that.



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AF asked what might be done with the data and where would data be held? And what would the frequency and position of the sampling points be?

LR replied it was all under consideration and the first thing to do would be to divide the catchment into distinct reaches covering all the River Lark and its tributaries, where sampling points could be identified as/when required.

AF said landowners may be demonstrating the quality of water as it came through their land in a few years and this could be linked to this project.

LR answered that could be very interesting and the plan was to store data on a website as they wanted to add to knowledge base and make it open and accessible.

AF noted that data could have value for landowners as it would be doing the monitoring for them.

AH added the Catchment cooperative would develop shareable resources for data so this project could integrate with that in the next year or so.

JS added, in response to SW's question, that Cranfield University was engaged with supporting the Lark Abstractors Group and funding was available to help with water resources which emphasized citizen science and good links needed to be developed between the different initiatives. JS added this could be a good opportunity for RLCP volunteers. AH added around 15-20 RLCP members had already volunteered as citizen scientists.

8. CamEO

Trustees received the following report from JL who could not attend the meeting.

EU Interreg Water for Tomorrow:

- The Rivers Trust and the Environment Agency, through the Water Resources Communication and Engagement Fund (EU Interreg Water for Tomorrow Project and EA Priority Catchment), have funded two projects in the CamEO catchment: in the Lark and the Granta.
- In the Lark, the project will continue based on the Lark abstraction pilot, and will consist of: RLCP assisting the Lark River Abstractors group to constitute and data systems, collection and analysis, creating virtual pilots of water management strategies. Creating a catchment water balance tool. Delivering pollution alleviation action plan created by multiple catchment stakeholder organisations and, CaBA Citizen Science water monitoring.
- In the wider Water for Tomorrow project, the UK partners are The Rivers Trust (Lead Partner), WRE and EA (there are two French partner pilot areas: CABBALR and BRGM partners). The wider Water for Tomorrow project is currently drawing up visualisation tools for water resources across CamEO based on different sectors. There are also models being drawn for the Broadland catchment and East Suffolk catchment, the two other pilot areas. These will be shared in engagement workshops as soon as they are ready.



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- Please contact jessie.leach@therivertrust.org for any further questions about Water for Tomorrow.

SW provided the following updates:

- The CamEO Catchment Cooperative project would commence in February 2022 and the aim was to define standards for their citizen science which could then be used on decision-making processes.
- CamEO had funded the buffet meal for the restoration work showcase taking place on 5 December where they would present on the Water for Tomorrow project.
- River restoration scheme update – Jacksons had been appointed to work with local landowners to carry out site visits and walkovers and create detailed restoration plans.
- Riverfly – advanced riverfly training had been run and in 2022 riverfly training would be expanded to cover tributaries and this would be supported through CamEO and Anglian Water (AW).
- Attendees noted Ian Hawkins was the local riverfly testing coordinator and had been in touch concerning the drop in volunteer numbers. SW said it would be useful to have an idea of how much riverfly testing had been done so he had an overview and could target appropriately moving forward.
- It was **agreed** to have a separate sub-meeting to discuss riverfly monitoring in light of Covid-19 and status of CSOs.

6. Water Resources East (WRE)

Attendees received a presentation from Robin Price (RP), CEO, who provided a brief background on WRE, what it was up to, what had changed and what was new. RP highlighted the following:

- There was a seven point overarching regional strategy for Eastern England.
- Challenge was increasing with restoring and enhancing the environment.
- the single most important driver for WRE was to meet environmental needs – we're running out of water.
- 183 member organisations and collaboration was working well.
- The regional plan consisted of 4 elements:
 - demand management
 - large infrastructure options
 - local non-water company and
 - small water company infrastructure projects

RP focussed on the Environmental Vision which was to improve the resilience of chalk streams and the WRE had figures and understood the flow requirements so could work on reducing abstraction boreholes. They were also working with HR Wallingford and looking at interventions for land use and making a difference through reconnecting rivers to floodplains, planting trees etc. WRE were committed to testing this in the river Lark as well the rivers Cam and Stiffkey starting in 2022 in collaboration with EA.



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SW and LR left the meeting 6.30pm.

WC asked if WRE were aware of wet farming practices and was that featuring in future thoughts? RP replied the WRE were very interested in that and were contributing to work in the Broads and asked if much wet farming practice was taking place in West Suffolk?

WC answered it was being used in the northern parts of the county and it would be worth talking to SWT's Head of Conservation and agreed to put him in touch with RP.

JS thanked RP for his presentation and asked for WRE's help in aligning the River Lark catchment Water for Tomorrow water resources project with the sister Cam catchment project. The Lark project includes ascertaining an accurate hydrological understanding of base flow conditions and relating that to EA groundwater modelling particularly for drought conditions. JS added the river Lark catchment would be a good catchment model given the agricultural water demand and it's contained linear nature.

RP answered WRE could help and pointed out that Lindsay Hargreaves, chair of the Lark Abstractors' group, was the NFU representative on WRE's board and that Dr Mhari Barnes, WRE project manager, worked across all catchments and had previously worked at NFU (Dr Barnes' contact details were shared in the chat).

RP left the meeting 6.38pm

[Note: the agenda then reverted to the published order]

1. Apologies

See above

2. Matters arising from meeting held on 16 September 2021 (RLCP 2021-12)

JS – presentation deferred to the next meeting.

3. Introduction of new SWT (Suffolk Wildlife Trust) river officer Alice Wickman

Alice Wickman had not been able to attend the meeting

4. BFER/RIVER ACTIVITY ECOLOGY, CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION

GS highlighted the following:

- Two very similar projects had been completed – one at Fullers Mill and one at West Stow.
- The Fullers Mill project mimicked what had already been installed but was done at minimal cost as it was more rough and ready.
- RLCP and Bury Trout club volunteers had collaborated at West Stow and measures put in place were working well and would be monitored.
- GS wanted to start work at the Flempton site early in 2022.



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- The fish passage project was in the balance with a meeting taking place early in 2022 and a decision in the next 6 months.

AF left meeting 6.45pm

5. Volunteer update

SH provided an update on training completed since September meeting for the following:

- MoRPh training
- Advanced first aid
- Water Safety and first aid
- Advanced restoration training

Re BFER volunteering – SH said Suffolk County Council had been in touch regarding starting the river paths surveying and maintenance activity and a refresher course was available. [Note: at January 6th 2022 this still has not occurred]

AH added the Community Wood project in Fornham All Saints was currently for resolution within the AW legal department.

SH added she would shortly be emailing all volunteers thanking them for all their work this year and mentioning opportunities. Attendees noted there were lots of new photographs on the RLCP website.

9. Pollution Group Update

SH reported as follows:

- The group had met at the end of October 2021. As Becks Mundy has been seconded to an air quality role for six months, SH had taken over as Chair of this group and they would be meeting again the following week.
- Turbid water had been noticed at Fullers Mill and the sewage group were investigating.
- Pools and Streams – Data had been received from Freshwater Habitat Trust and there was pollution across the board.
- It had been decided for this group to meet bi-monthly alternating with the citizen science meeting.

River Lark Action Plan Summary

- The Action Plan would be reviewed every 3 months
- Rebecca Pow, Environment Secretary would visit the river Lark in Spring 2022
- NFU/Jo Churchill would make farm visits in March 2022
- AW were committed to remove more phosphate than contractually agreed at Fornham STW.



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- EA had loaned a sonde for the river Lark from May – October 2021 and the data had shown no significant sewage spill so the EA had included that spills were limited to winter.
- RLCP citizen science plans were evolving
- Action 6 was to reduce phosphate pollution to 0.25mg/litre
- Action 7 – agricultural pollution constituted 40% of phosphate pollution and no farms surveyed had gone ahead with schemes and it was very disappointing that Becks Mundy had been seconded to another role.

IC asked why were there separate pollution and sewage groups as there was a crossover?

AH replied there had been many different pollution areas to look at in one group, but this could be reviewed. AH added that sewage required more mathematical analysis and was observing a changing situation.

10. Sewage group update

Discussions were ongoing with Tony Whittingham on chairing the Sewage group. [NOTE: Discussions were terminated in December without agreement reached on scope and objectives appropriate for a Partnership group. Tony will seek to pursue his concerns on sewage independently. The RLCP sewage group will be merged with the existing RLCP pollution group.]

11. Environment Bill

Attendees noted this was ongoing and AH highlighted the following:

- A number of significant extensions were made to the sewage clauses in the new Environment Bill towards the end of the parliamentary timetable, based on Philip Dunne's Private Members Bill.
- At the final stage the Lords re-introduced as amendments some additional key clauses
- A final revision resulted, although not in the original form, which RLCP had supported.
- Philip Dunne's campaign group is now moving on to new parliamentary activity to reduce sewage pollution

12. River Lark Showcase Event Sunday 5 December

Attendees noted there had been a good response and a new sign made by SH would be unveiled at the event.

13. Planning

Richard Summers (RS) was unable to be present.



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14. REPORT FROM ABBEY OF ST EDMUND HERITAGE PARTNERSHIP

RS was unable to be present.

15. Date of next meeting - Thursday February 17, 5.30pm, to take place virtually

Further dates: Thursday April 21, 5.30pm, Thursday June 16, 5.30pm, Thursday September 15, 5.30pm and Thursday November 17, 5.30pm

16 AOB

WC said as Alice Wickman from SWT would be attending RLCP meetings in the future, he would not be attending meetings but he was happy to remain as Trustee.

Attendees noted details for wet farming in the Great Fen project were as follows:

www.greatfen.org.uk

The meeting ended at 7.17pm

ACTION LOG

8	It was agreed to have a separate sub-meeting to discuss riverfly monitoring in light of Covid-19 and status of CSOs.	SW/IH/ AH
6	WC agreed to put SWT's Head of Conservation in touch with RP.	WC