



RLCP Bi-Annual Meeting Notes

Thursday 9th November 2023, 6.30pm via Zoom

1. Attending:

Andrew Hinchley – chair (AH)	Glenn Smithson (GS)
Steph Holland (SH)	Peter Lawrence (PL)
Caroline Chamberlain (CC)	Therese Laker (TL)
Graham Showell (GSh)	Gary Quilter (GQ)
Mariana Sandifer (MS)	Noma Borde (NB)
John Findlay (JF)	Cady Rosenbaum (CR)
Lindsey Hargreaves (LH)	Gary Pizzey (GP)
Jim Stephens (JS)	Grant Vicat - Minute taker (GV)

1. Apologies: John Sayer, Will Cranstoun, Rebecca Carter, Pat Needham, Linda Pennock, Ian and Jacque Campbell, Joanna Van Kleeck, Richard Summers.

Introductions: Therese Laker and Peter Lawrence introduced themselves.

2. Matters arising from minutes of previous meeting – 27th April 2023. There were none.

3. RLCP update: SH gave an update on progress, beginning with a presentation showing all that had been achieved since 27th April 2023 – a very busy 6 months. There have been:

72 hours spent on restoration

229 hours worked by Citizen Science volunteers

73 hours spent training volunteers

5 new volunteers joining

4 Eco events attended

5 Webinars hosted

We have also been finalists in the Bury Free Press Green/Environmental Business Category awards 2023

We hosted a social event at Fullers Mill

GS added:

Undertook restoration at Tollgate covering a few hundred metres of barren river using flow detectors. Gathered sediment and gravel and 2 trolleys mainly in the stretch between the Co-op and the golf course. Thanks to volunteers we covered 42 miles. This year we shall install more pre-planted coir rolls. Fish are moving in now. Further downstream communication has been patchy. The last tranche was good all round – “well chuffed!”

Citizen Science

MS has trained two volunteers and they have all been regularly carrying out flow monitoring on the Linnet at Ickworth. We collaborated with Steve Lane from CaSTCo for advice and to borrow equipment. Morph surveying has been very difficult due to dense nettles etc although SH and Peter Lack have managed to cover some of the Tollgate reach. Hanna checkers are being used for regular testing alongside our regular Lovibond equipment.

MS gave the following results using graph:

A logger has been installed on the River Linnet since February. The lowest temperature was 7°C and the highest was 27.1°C in June. This should be about 17°C. There have been fluctuations throughout the period, showing a large range of 20°C. From May to August the water level decreases, with the highest level being in May. Discharge measurements proved to be impracticable. The lower discharge occurred in the summer and 3 volunteers showed increasingly closer results.

SH reported that volunteers have been training to do kick sampling to investigate samples and identify different groups of invertebrates. The weather has slowed down our progress. RLCP have hosted several walkover tours of the Lark with various partners, including Norfolk Rivers Trust, CaSTCo, the Environment Agency and Natural England. The walkover in July with Charles Rangeley-Wilson was followed by his talk at St Edmundsbury Cathedral. We also hosted talks from Robin

Price from Anglian Water at the Cathedral and an online talk from Professor Kate Heppell from the Chiltern Chalk Stream Trust, who returned for a visit at the end of the Summer.

RLCP attended the Bury Green Fair and delivered several presentations as well as manning a stall. We also had a stall at the Youth Climate Action Forum at West Suffolk College, where Steph got to speak to keynote speaker Megan McCubbin about the work we do.

SH showed pictures of all of the above and some other achievements by RLCP and our volunteers. Two of our new volunteers, Noma and Cady have been creating GIS maps for us along with Mariana.

CaSTCo: MS has been looking at types of monitoring with a view to addressing problems in hypothesis and location. We have been developing our Collaborative Monitoring Plan with Steve Lane and our other partners at CaSTCo, and have started work on developing a data storage platform with our partners on the River Wensum and Norfolk Rivers Trust.

JF commented on very good progress in getting data available and assessed.

Trustees: AH informed us that Professor William (Bill) Sutherland of Cambridge University has just become a trustee. We are being strongly advised by the NCVO (The National Council for Voluntary Organisations) to raise the number of trustees. Bill is helping to promote this. CC pointed out that anyone at the meeting could become a trustee. AH said that trustees are only committed to attending 4 meetings a year. AH continued while JS's computer froze: Jim will talk about the formal side of how the stakeholder system operates. What human resources will be funded? The NCVO will work with us on governance and aspects of trusteeship.

4. Flagship:

We need to identify an area of river where we can make a major difference. GS said the Environment Agency has run studies on a failing stretch of the Lark over the last 5 years, so it's now or never. Dynamic Rivers are working with them, looking at natural solutions, bearing in mind the Lark is a level flat river. All landowners are currently being contacted. Currently the river is gaining diffuse pollution – silt and sedimentation from run-off – with no process to remove this material from the channel. AH: There are 3 main areas of interest: a large-scale restoration project for a target critical area of the Lark, an urban regeneration project near the Abbey ruins and No Man's Meadow in collaboration with BWMG, the Abbey of St Edmunds Heritage Partnership and West Suffolk Council and continuing and expanding our ongoing restoration and citizen science projects. We would like to modify the riverbed through the Crankles and Abbey Gardens, but this is probably prohibitively

expensive. We want to reconnect the Lark with its flood plain in No Man's Meadows. Citizen Science should be integral where possible to the overall Flagship. We hope to expand our monitoring and assessment methodologies.

JS talked about the national chalk stream flagship showing a catchment-based approach strategy on behalf of Defra which is supported by the Government. There are 3 essential goals:

- Reduce abstractions
- Improve water quality
- Reduce pollution impacting on habitats

The Lark Flagship project is an Anglian Water project. AW have also supported extensive restoration work on the River Stiffkey and are aiming at bringing it up to Flagship status. There are around 12 chalk streams in England where the Flagship initiative will restore them as much as possible to their previous condition..

In 2022 AW has commissioned the Norfolk Rivers Trust to deliver a Lark Catchment plan by December 2024, being delivered by Sharon Reeves of NRT. AW have negotiated an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with us in 2022. AW have funded a governance review from NCVO who have completed a basic review of our achievements and reported in October 2023. Full Flagship partnership has been agreed with AW from now until the end of the AW standard five year cycle (AMP8) finishing in 2030. A grant has been awarded to fund the RLCP Flagship. The first grant is from the AW GRP (Get Rivers Positive) grant scheme and will fund most of the work by SH and GS for flagship until December 2024. Most significantly we have successfully got the Environment Agency involved in our progress meetings. We need an RLCP flagship Project Manager. We are looking very closely at professional resources and remunerated resources. We are pushing the Lark Water Forum to engage in Flagship with the next meeting being on 1st December.

AH thanked JS.

5. Environment Agency update: JF There is a training event at the end of November for Outfall Safari. The weather has caused real problems over the last two months, but he has been working with our citizen scientists and giving feedback. Hengrave is still stubbornly free of shrimp, which is the cause of some concern. The problem seems to emanate from Tollgate where it is starting to recover, but suggests drought conditions and pollutants are the cause.

AH thanked JF, citizen science officer for the EA in East Anglia for his work and ability to contribute so much to our Lark projects.

SH asked about the monitoring of the Kennett. JF said EA have a new student who is aiming to do a thesis related to their site at Red Lodge Bridge. GSh said he regularly

drives over Red Lodge Bridge and would be happy to monitor it. JS said the Kennett is not really within our catchment but it would be great if anybody with an interest in the Kennett added to our survey. AH Pointed out that Flagship doesn't exclude other interests.

All longer-term abstraction is now managed by Water Resources East, Anglian Water and Environment Agency. The Government now requires all chalk streams to be a priority. Significant abstraction reduction and also some specific flow augmentation schemes are planned this AMP (2020-2025). The Lark AMP8 overview (2025-2030) has 27 discrete lines or activities submitted for AMP8. Phosphate removal technology at Fornham will result in phosphate coming down to 0.25mg/l, Mildenhall to 1mg/l and Stanningfield to 0.25mg/l by 2025-30, all basically good news.

6. CamEO update: JS reported that the main development is the stakeholder element, which is still in its initial stages. There has been a noble effort to get CamEO more actively represented by its plethora of stakeholders. We represent about 17% of the CamEO area. CamEO is recognised by Defra. SH said that groups from Cambridge are envious of our Flagship status. They would like a catchment plan. They are looking to us and the Granta as examples. JS pointed out that it is a requirement that Flagship status groups share information and data with other groups.

7. AOB: SH There is a Lark Landowners meeting being held on 10th November and Norfolk Rivers Trust is hosting and paying for lunch. This is part of an initiative to develop farm clusters, also supported by Natural England.

AH ended the meeting, thanking all for their attendance.