**Tyne Catchment Partnership Meeting**

**Thursday 9th October 2014, 2pm**

**Newton & Bywell Community Hall**

**Apologies**

Derek Hilton-Brown (Newcastle City Council), Mary Weatherby (Environment Agency), Eva Diran (Environment Agency), Hugh Clear-Hill (Northumberland County Council), Will Browne-Swinburne (Tyne Riparian Owners & Occupiers Association)

**Present**

Susan Mackirdy & Abi Mansley (Tyne Rivers Trust), Sarah Tooze (North Pennines AONB Partnership), Lynne Dunleavy (Northumbria Regional Flood & Coastal Committee), Peter Bell (Gateshead Council), Michelle Hogg (South Tyneside Council), Khevin Lungtoo (Groundwork), Phil Hartley (Newcastle City Council), Tony Baines (Northumbrian Water), Jim Cokill (Durham Wildlife Trust & Three Rivers LNP)

**Welcome**

As there were a few new faces at the meeting, Susan outlined the background to the Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) Tyne Catchment Partnership and today’s meeting. The partnership builds on the publication of the Tyne Catchment Plan in 2012 in which many organisations were involved, as well as a joint Northumbrian Rivers – Tyne Forum meeting.

The CaBA initiative for the Tyne is hosted by Tyne Rivers Trust and is focused on river improvement issues and water quality issues. There had been a partnership meeting held in early May.

At that meeting the question of whether a formal partnership for the Tyne is needed, as opposed to a communications network, was widely discussed. There are many existing organisations and partnerships, for example the Rural Diffuse Pollution Network which operates in a wider area. The recommendation from the partners in May was not to have an official ‘structure’ or steering group, but to meet as needed, with that decision to be reviewed at regular intervals.

Since that meeting, Tyne Rivers Trust has focused on updating / gap analysis for the Tyne Catchment Plan so that some clear strategic priorities emerge for consideration by the Partnership, as well as other projects (see below).

This meeting had been called because the Environment Agency asked Catchment Partnerships to identify project ideas for potential funding in 2015/16 financial year. The criteria set for the potential funding, particularly the ‘urban’ focus, meant that some organisations who would normally be at the partnership meeting preferred to input thoughts individually. Although Defra had asked the Environment Agency to ensure they didn’t get partnerships’ hopes up, because the funding was not confirmed, the Tyne partnership group had decided they would still like to meet. It was agreed that it is a useful exercise to have steered priorities and to be more informed about projects should any funding opportunities towards the year end become available.

**Update since May’s meeting**

Abi summarised the notes from May’s meeting – outlining the proposals for a partnership structure and the suggested topics for working groups / delivery groups. The concluding discussion had been for the time being to :

a) look into repeating the annual forum, perhaps extending it to include the Tees & the Wear,

b) share relevant information / communications as needed,

c) prioritise quick wins / partnership funding bids in the short term if they became available

d) carry out an update of the Tyne Catchment Plan and gap analysis to inform future priorities, and

d) seize the opportunity (including Defra funding) to apply the Evidence & Measures methodology to the Ouseburn.

Khevin (Groundwork) supported the decision not to have a formal partnership at this stage, adding that the group would naturally evolve and would feel as and when to hold meetings etc. Lynne added that she is starting work with many communities in the area and wanted to keep all the partners in the loop.

Since May progress has carried on with keeping the Tyne Catchment Plan up to date and some ‘gap analysis’ on where there are key issues that no project or partnership is addressing. Abi has made a lot of progress on this, but the results of this are not yet ready to share but will be presented at a future meeting.

Abi outlined the thinking behind the Evidence and Measures Approach which is to be applied to the Ouseburn in 2014 / 15, with the aim of sharing the learning / methodology and replicating it on other complicated waterbodies such as the Don or the Team in the future. The Evidence & Measures Approach is all about using detailed existing data (sometimes historical) to really get to the bottom of what the problems are in a catchment, and pin-point where. After collecting together all the evidence (which can include past studies / photos as well as data), some Evidence Tables are drawn up. These are presented at an initial workshop so that key stakeholders can look closer at the problems and reach consensus. Then at a second workshop, measures (actions) can be agreed and programmed. The approach has had success in other catchments in the Eden (the Peterill) and near Manchester (Moston Brook) – A4 summary case study papers are available should anybody wish for more information. For example, the approach can really pin-point if and where there is a misconnection issue to run a more effective, targeted campaign – or a similar focus on flooding or pollution problems. The Ouseburn project also links well to the [Blue-Green Cities](http://www.bluegreencities.ac.uk/bluegreencities/index.aspx) initiative with Newcastle as a demonstration city.

**Funding & projects**

The potential funding criteria were reviewed. The partnership had a number of queries.

* What does significant balance to urban projects mean? This has been a key problem for contaminated sediments in the estuary because the sources of the problems are outside urban areas. Making the argument to link to problem to the root cause has been challenging without evidence. Having a whole catchment approach is a better way to deal with such issues.
* The funding criteria stymie a partnership wishing to make strategic catchment decisions – for example a 1year constraint makes tackling long-term problems impossible.
* There was a query about whether Flood Defence Grant in Aid funding could be used to top-up.
* There was a query about how the success of any implemented project would be monitored and measured. Khevin outlined work previously done with around 150 businesses in Newcastle and Durham, where the evaluation ended up being the numbers of businesses engaged with and the legacy of spill kits / correct vehicle wash-off areas. It is often difficult to demonstrate an immediate improvement in water quality.
* There was a query as to whether education-based projects were acceptable.
* There was a query as to whether the funding would accept a staged approach.
* **Susan** undertook to feed these concerns and queries back to the EA. Also the partnership and its actions are not solely reliant on DEFRA funding. Khevin recommended an approach of, for example, using the funding to build up an evidence base and a Green Infrastructure Plan (e.g. for the Ouseburn), and apply for European Regional Development Funding for the longer-term.

Abi outlined the analysis of all the projects in the Waterbody Action Plans (WAP) that seemed to fit the funding criteria – which may not be a definitive list. In particular the group discussed:

* Black Burn habitat improvements to create habitat and flood protection above the A1 and on the Team Valley Trading Estate: this is a link to the Living Waterways project – some work has been done but there will be more to do.
* All the proposals in the A1 area or relating to the A1 road runoff are complicated because of the road widening / realignment project currently underway. The 1-year timescale then becomes more challenging.
* There would be negotiations relating to introducing SuDS on the Team Valley Trading Estate, which would also involve the planning process etc.
* Lamesley Pastures was discussed, which in the WAP is described as the creation of a managed wetland with significant partner interest in such a scheme (Team). There would be benefits of flood alleviation and biodiversity enhancements. The challenge would be land acquisition or management agreements with landowners. The site is in the queue for flood defence Grant in Aid funding. Soft engineering works would only need a small budget but the overall project is a much bigger one.
* The Ouseburn was noted again with potential for a GI plan, links to the Blue-Green Cities initiative, and the range of problems in this waterbody
* Brierdene Burn – proposed fencing of part of the waterbody to prevent cattle poaching and willow spilling to limit bank erosion. Tony Baines reported that NWL are currently doing work in partnership with the EA in this area, relating to flow studies etc. There is also a [Friends Of Brierdene Burn](http://www.friendsofbrierdene.org.uk/) group.
* There was a query about the mudflats proposals for the main Tyne and on the Staithes. The problem in that area is the absence of high tide roosts and conflict through access – what is needed is a river bank project / bank treatment.
* News sent separately from Richard Pow of the Forestry Commission reported that the woodlands advisors will be out over the winter, preparing woodland creation schemes for the NELMS applications as soon as that scheme starts in early 2015. However, very few areas that had been prioritised within the original ‘Woodlands for Water’ mapping exercise were within the Tyne catchment.

The partnership queried some of the indicative capital costings that had been included in the Waterbody Action Plans. Also that some of the projects seemed to be rather vague and so it was difficult to be informed about their timescale and cost.

**What might be missing? What are our priorities?**

The partnership gave the following steer on priorities:

1. Misconnections, for example on the River Don. Would need an informed approach to where the target areas are. This would link to the [Yellow Fish campaign](http://www.nwt.org.uk/discover-learn/people-engagement-projects/living-waterways/yellow-fish-campaign). With the 1year constraint having landowner permission on practical work sites is going to be very challenging.
2. Shibdon Meadow (links to the Land of Oak and Iron LPS, the Tyne Catchment Plan and to Gateshead Council’s adopted GI Plan). Discussions around the tidal flap and the neighbouring factory. There is a feasibility study already written by Waterfowl & Wetlands Trust. It was queried if there is a strong enough link from the proposed measures to the WFD.
3. Two other locations which have synergy with the GI Plan are the River Team and the Dunston Staithes.
4. Anything which impacts on pollution (which had been a major concern raised in the Tyne Catchment Plan), e.g. Industrial Estate Pollution Prevention Campaigns. This would reach out to many businesses and industry, for approximately £30k, and ties in with flooding from the waste water system. Building on previous work with the catering industry. This links to NWL’s [Dwaine Pipe campaign](https://www.nwl.co.uk/your-home/learn-about-water/Dwaine-Pipe.aspx) – any application for match funding would be subject to NWL’s internal assessment and processes.
5. Bank protection in the West Allen / Nent area – which would be relatively low-cost work, the areas are already known, the projects have been costed (they were part of a recent bid to the LEP). It would be great to see physical action on the ground rather than studies and reports. The EA and Coal Authority’s current work is showing that point source pollution (from the former mines) are only a small part of the problem, there are also diffuse sources from the former spoil heaps and sediments yet to tackle. However, using the criteria here, it would be difficult to convincingly argue that spending all the funding in this part of the catchment addresses urban problems.
6. Yet where a project is not well worked up, a study may be required to outline options or to better inform the cost. In which case it would be better to focus on just one area.
7. It was discussed whether we should recommend an urban : rural split for the funding or focus on 1 big impact urban project
8. Road runoff would also be a good issue to tackle.
9. Tackling one discrete element in a waterbody like the Team may be possible in the timescale and within budget – otherwise the waterbody is so complex it could be overwhelming.
10. Working with communities on flooding issues also has a link to diffuse pollution. There are costed out projects relating to the Haltwhistle Burn which are missing from the WAPs.
11. It would be good to identify projects with multiple benefits.
12. Projects that have potential to achieve more through leveraging in additional funding e.g. [SITA enriching nature](http://www.sitatrust.org.uk/nature-funding) (although this would not be confirmed until June so reduces the delivery time) or [BIFFA Award](http://www.biffa-award.org/main-grants-scheme)

**Summary**

In summary:

*It would be good to have a balance of some practical projects*

*Taking opportunities to leverage in other funding is advised*

*Our process to decide how projects are put forward needs to be transparent*

It was agreed that in future the Tyne Catchment Partnership needs to put thought into funding; this would be vital when the gap analysis work is complete. The partnership agreed that these discussions around particular projects for 2015/16 should continue when there is more certainty about the funding, but that good progress had been made in identifying potential candidates. **Susan / Abi** will go back to the EA and identify those projects which are already worked up in enough detail with accurate costings. However, any missing projects which partners have worked up costings for, **all please** send that information through to Abi.

**News**

Environment Agency consultations start on 10th October :

* The draft River Basin Management Plan (consultation open for 6 months)
* The draft Flood Risk Management Plan (consultation open for 3 months).

By running the consultations together it is a good idea to look at both documents together during the first 3 months of the consultation process. Both documents influence the focus for the 2015 / 2021 (6 years) so it is a real opportunity to have a say about the future.

**Any Other Business**

NWL have just launched the [Water Rangers](https://www.nwl.co.uk/your-home/environment/water-rangers.aspx) project – recruiting volunteers to be the first point of contact. **Action Tony Baines** circulate among the partners.

Many partners wished to exchange contact information with Khevin. **Action Abi** circulate his email address in the first instance.