

Lower Wye Valley Catchments NFM & GI Project Summary Jun '19

Project outline and outcomes

Farm management advice

The Wye & Usk Foundation (WUF) have completed ten farm advice visits across the Angidy catchment. Confidential plans are being finalised for farmers and shared with the AONB Unit. Grant funded capital work has been signed up and although we are prioritising need, as a pilot project focus has been on trying to demonstrate a variety of land management interventions. Work is set to include riparian fencing, farm yard infrastructure (to separate clean/dirty water), cross contour hedgerows and woodland linkage, fencing to assist rotational grazing, wet meadow advice and management, leaky ditch barriers and maize under-sowing trials.

Farmers have also been supported through the online application process to Glastir small grants where appropriate options have been identified through the scheme, and where there are opportunities to fit this with farmer's ongoing business needs.

MCC access project research, development and GI strategy

Atkins water management consultancy have completed their report with proposals for Chapel Hill Road/Limekiln Brook. This follows their modelling and investigation into surface water run-off and culvert blocking due to rapid response of the catchment (water source, pathway, impacts). The Limekiln Brook has proved to be a very complex study, with considerable ground water flows and springs, the catchment is also in a young state which presents a high erosion potential. The steep gradient of the "gorge" also provides the brook considerable energy contributing to the hydraulic erosion of Chapel Hill Lane and sediment movement to the culvert pinch point in Tintern.

Negotiations are in place for Atkins to carry out a walkover study of four unclassified county roads to establish causes of the significant degradation to these routes, suggest potential solutions and guide the next steps.

Best practice/info sharing events

The NFM & GI Project has held or contributed to ten events since October 2018; most recently this has included a farming advice evening in partnership with Farming Connect and WUF, attended by 20 farmers. The main feedback was regarding future funding and the need for financial support to implement environmental, green infrastructure improvements while not impacting on the business.

We have also worked with volunteer groups and held guided walks promoting the project and natural flood management opportunities. We will be arranging a NFM seminar in November which Pickering Slow the Flow project staff have agreed to attend and other speakers are being considered from established NFM projects.

Pilot NFM work

Discussions regarding opportunities in Natural Resources Wales (NRW) landholding are ongoing. Liaison is required between NRW (contractors and site management staff), MCC staff (ordinary watercourse consent) and how to meet ongoing maintenance requirements.

Invasive weed mapping and control

Locations of Japanese knotweed (JK) are being recorded and mapped throughout the project area; permissions to spray within NRW managed land are being pursued and agreed with private landowners. There is significant JK through the Angidy catchment and there are further areas to survey by early August. WUF will carry out spraying operations in September (this has proved to be the most effective time of year) once landowner permissions have been secured.

American Skunk cabbage (ASC) has been identified on the Whitebrook catchment. ASC is a terrestrial, semi-aquatic perennial plant native to western North America and is one of a growing number of species being recognised as a threat at a national level. ASC can grow to 1.5m in height and has large leathery leaves which dominate native vegetation. ASC has formed a dense colony at a private site identified in Whitebrook. The AONB have investigated the most effective method of control and this will be sprayed with glyphosate by WUF and monitored.

We will be working with AONB volunteers and NRW on a Himalayan Balsam (HB) pulling event within Colonels Park, Whitebrook in July. The Narth volunteer group are keen to control HB within Manor Wood but in order to lead the task AONB staff/volunteer group leaders require First Aid (+F) qualification to satisfy NRW permission requirements for working on their land. Sporadic records of HB are being gathered from site visits and the public throughout the project area, but a coordinated long-term approach - such as working with NRW in July to eradicate from a specific site - is required for effective control rather than ad hoc 'pulling' across random sites. We will provide feedback to the new Wales Resilient Ecological Network who are devising a new "collaborative framework to help public and private bodies and community groups to work together to tackle the impacts of invasive species".



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Funded by
Welsh Government

The Lower Wye Valley Catchments Natural Flood Management & Green Infrastructure Project is funded by Natural Resources Wales and the Wye Valley AONB Partnership.