

# Monmouthshire

## Local Access Forum

### AGENDA ITEM: 5

**SUBJECT: LOWER WYE VALLEY CATCHMENTS NATURAL FLOOD MANAGEMENT AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT**  
**MEETING: MONMOUTHSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**  
**DATE: 19 NOVEMBER 2019**

#### 1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To update the Local Access Forum on progress on the Lower Wye Valley Catchments Natural Flood Management (NFM) and Green Infrastructure (GI) Project being delivered by the Wye Valley AONB unit.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATION:

- 2.1 For the Forum's information.

#### 3. BACKGROUND:

- 3.1 As reported to the last meeting funding by NRW and the Wye Valley AONB Partnership has enabled the delivery of the Lower Wye Valley Catchments NFM & GI project, funded until December 2019. This project takes a catchment approach in 54km<sup>2</sup> of the Wye Valley AONB, focussing on 4 Wye tributaries between Penallt and St Arvans. The project aims to develop practical sustainable solutions addressing land management, water run-off, access and invasive species through an integrated approach.
- 3.2 A key focus is on resolving where surface water run-off and flooding impact on people's ability to access and enjoy the countryside. The project is supported by a steering group comprising representatives of National Farmers Union Wales, Gwent Wildlife Trust, Natural Resources Wales, Monmouthshire Meadows, Woodland Trust, Wye Valley AONB and Monmouthshire County Council (Countryside Access, Green Infrastructure, Highways and Flood Management).
- 3.3 One outcome of the Lower Wye Valley Catchments NFM & GI project, is to investigate complex, specific and long standing access issues in relation to surface water run-off and land management. The intention is to draw together all the information gathered and take the first steps towards forming an overall strategy with a view to seeking further specific funding to address issues.
- 3.4 A brief project update (taken from the October steering group minutes) is appended and the project officer Chris Radford will provide an update to the meeting.

#### 4. AUTHOR:

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**Lower Wye Valley Catchments Project: Project Update October 2019  
(from Steering Group minutes)**

- A. Farm management advice (Angidy catchment)
- i. Wye & Usk Foundation (WUF) have completed eleven farm visits and reports in the catchment. Focus for the remaining two months of the project is to ensure agreed capital works are completed, signed off and invoiced through the project budget. A key element to the success of the farm advice through the catchment has been building trust and developing relations with the farmers and the need to strike a balance between proposing land management works and considering business needs of the farm.
- B. Pilot projects to investigate solutions to long standing access issues
- i. Second consultant report completed for unclassified highway issues at Tintern Rd, Glynwood Rd, Horse Way and Robin's Way near Whitebrook (First report was opportunity mapping in the Limekiln Brook catchment). Report proposals have identified, located and mapped potential track-based measures including cross drains, bunds, swales and path reconstruction, resurface and regrading. These measures would look to reduce the volume and speed of water currently adding to surface erosion and discharging at speed from these routes, blocking culverts and entering watercourses. Suggestion in the report has been made for Tintern Road to be used as a trial site where proactive works could reduce damage in the long term and test the implementation of measures. Having now established works that could improve highway condition, the remaining budget will be used to cost out measures should further funding become available, with the aim of helping to remove water from the highways, reduce impact and/or push to drains or areas it can infiltrate. Chapel Hill Road will be the priority for costing works, followed by Tintern Road.
  - ii. Green Infrastructure Strategy: the final piece of work through this area of the project is to draw together all the information gathered and take the first steps towards forming a strategy. The intention is to map all rights of ways/promoted routes/unclassified highways/NFM measures/other data derived from the project to form the basis of a workshop to help develop the GI Strategy. This work will be useful for future funding bids. NRW would be a key partner in any future work.
- C. Best practice/info sharing events
- i. 18 events delivered to date including volunteer days, Monmouth show, talks, guided walks, JAC tour and Farming Connect event. Additional events still in the planning including field visit with Wyedean School Geography Group and leaky dam site visits. Also hoping to hold a 'thank you' event inviting the Angidy catchment farmers visited by WUF, once all visits/capital grant work completed.
  - ii. Wye Valley NFM seminar: Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> November to raise awareness and hear from established projects to discover what is possible, successes, opportunities & challenges.
- D. Pilot NFM work
- i. Leaky ditch barriers installed on Limekiln Brook which worked successfully during recent high rainfall event. Consent agreed for leaky dams to be installed within a woodland dingle on the Anghidi Fawr, excellent site with lots of potential & could be

a site to use for future interventions. Operations team from WUF to carry out works, hoping to arrange a group site visit/s when work complete & depending on timescales. CR meeting with a PhD student carrying out a case study on the Trothy and who is more widely exploring “Land manager’s perceptions and preferences for landscapes, and the impact of this on tree planting for NFM”. Although clearly beyond the scope of this project, interest is growing in how different NFM measures slow and store floodwater, sediment and nutrients, helping to prove effectiveness of interventions/projects/reduced flood risk/biodiversity/funding value. CR trying to visit a Woodland Trust/Forest Research trial site in Abergavenny which had some of the earliest leaky dams installed in 2005 and which have been monitored to date.

- ii. Ty Mawr (GWT site) leaky dam prep work done. Consent needs to be finalised, site visit to be arranged to progress this.
- iii. Leaky dam opportunities in NRW woodland can only be moved forward through a management agreement.

**E. Invasive weed mapping & control**

- i. Significant Japanese knotweed (JK) has been treated throughout project area this Autumn with full budget for this allocated to contractors. Lots of JK in Angidy valley; from surveys can often trace back to bankside earthworks (contaminated soil/gravel movement). This work has also complemented previous JK control carried out by AONB in Tintern. Skunk cabbage (SC) site also treated. Additional SC sites identified but budget already exhausted. Awareness regarding SC appears to be rising nationally.
- ii. The Narth community volunteer group (with support from CR) have carried out significant work on Himalayan balsam (HB) this year including surveying, and then control/pulling on three days (8<sup>th</sup> Aug, 5<sup>th</sup> Sep & 30<sup>th</sup> Sep) which was required due to this plants effective & extended flowering season. This work has been valuable showing how coordinating work in a small prioritised catchment alongside committed volunteers taking local ownership can prove effective to eliminate the plant locally. However, this has involved significant officer time and high volunteer input. Some areas are also inaccessible to volunteers due to steep banks, adding to volunteer frustration. Without major long term funding local site management such as this appears to be the only option at present, with extent of the plant becoming unmanageable in many areas.
- iii. CR looking to electronically map location & extent of SC, JK & HB through project area from surveys and records provided from volunteers etc. training for staff.



Ariennir gan  
**Lywodraeth Cymru**  
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