



MEETING PURPOSE:	<b>Briefing from Maggie Shelton, Hampshire &amp; Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust on the Test and Itchen River Headwaters Landscape Partnership Scheme (Watercress &amp; Winterbournes)</b>
DATE:	13 <sup>th</sup> August 2018
VENUE:	George & Dragon, Hurstbourne Tarrant
PRESENT:	Maggie Shelton, around 20 residents from Hurstbourne Tarrant, Stoke and St Mary Bourne, including a representative from Vitacress
APOLOGIES:	N/A

## **1. Background**

- Watercress and Winterbournes is a new Heritage Lottery funded project aimed at protecting and celebrating the seven headwaters of the Test and Itchen rivers, which include the Bourne Rivulet
- The landscape partnership scheme is being co-ordinated by Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust on behalf of a partnership of organisations (see link below for details)
- Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has approved the first stage application for the scheme and has given a grant of £269,400 to allow the partnership to progress with and develop its plans over the next 18 months. The detailed stage 2 application will be submitted in October 2019, following which HLF will make a final decision on the remaining £1.9 million grant requested
- The Scheme will also deliver a range of projects aimed at improving people's access and information about the headwater streams and initiatives which will celebrate the local headwater heritage
- More information: <https://www.hiwwt.org.uk/watercress-and-winterbournes>
- Project Blog: <https://www.hiwwt.org.uk/blog/maggie-shelton>
- Maggie Shelton contact details: [Maggie.Shelton@hiwwt.org.uk](mailto:Maggie.Shelton@hiwwt.org.uk) , 07741 572366, 01489 774428

## **2. The Meeting**

- Maggie Shelton provided a brief overview of the proposed project and opened up the floor to attendees to express their interests, views and knowledge of the Bourne and Swift
- The Hurstbourne Tarrant attendees were invited to provide feedback after the meeting and this is summarised below

## **3. Summary of post-meeting feedback from HBT attendees**

### **3.1 Positive, supportive views on the project**

- 'Would be beneficial and part of the Grand Plan to be able to help the River Swift recovery after the re-grading work has been done'
- 'In general the project looks quite interesting and, given the prospect of lottery funding, could have the financial backing to accomplish some useful work/research into the ecology of winterbournes'
- 'It seems a worthwhile project and deserves at least us considering how and to what level we could support it'

- 'A good all round review of the potential project and the more local possibilities (including education and involvement visits to the schools and scouts etc)'
- 'Good to see Vitacress expressing interest and also already part of a 'Bourne initiative' perhaps that could form the Bourne valley organisation blue print?'
- 'The idea of a partnership aimed at safeguarding the 'health' of chalk streams is good in principle'

### 3.2 Concerns

- 'Whilst supportive of environmental and wildlife improvements, we must not delay with the re-grading work as part of flood mitigation'
- 'My main concern from the meeting is "who is going to drive this project" ?'
- 'It's likely there will be some areas of potential local conflict that would need to be resolved: work on the water course v. local land-owning interests; study/survey/measurement v. local permission for access'
- 'What seems lacking at the moment is clarity as to what the primary goal is and why. It is trying to be all things to all people'. No hard facts were presented to support this assertion, but it certainly sounds credible and if correct is a matter of real concern to all who recognises chalk streams as being something special'

### 3.3 Suggestions on specific projects/activities you would like to see happening

- 'I would like to see the parts of the river that aren't used by animals utilised as part of the flowers and insects programme. Planting where necessary and able'
- 'It would be useful to have a range of suggestions, from simple local surveys that we could reasonably achieve ourselves, to perhaps larger and more general topics where we may need some outside assistance'
- 'At the easier level we could measure the nitrate levels at various places in the Bourne from the time it rises to its decline. I don't know if Ph levels are also of any relevance. We could list the flora in and around the water course when the Bourne is dry and when running (may need help with identification of species). We could log the historic dates when flow commences and ends (Trevor Wheeler may have records in this respect) and these could be compared to rainfall levels in each year. We could survey the insect species in the watercourse'
- 'The obvious general topic is that of flooding in the locality when the Bourne rises and a good deal of work has already been done and is on-going. (Although this is an important local subject I think we should try to avoid it becoming the main activity in respect of our response to the project). We could survey and log the memories of those who have lived here most of their lives regarding the Bourne and how it has changed over the last 70 years or so. (We also have older records/photos of flooding in the Historical Society archive)'
- 'I think landowners will support small scale improvements, but maybe not full field flooding'
- 'The question of Victorian rubbish in the river bed in parts of HBT was raised. A local project could be to line the area of contamination with willow faggots and planted up (under the guidance of the trust). That would hold back the rubbish and increase wildlife?'
- Underpinning piece is the hydrology of this area is important for which my gathered data of the map of the Swift's headwaters during the floods together with photos of the streams and pools should be useful. I've also several years of well measurements and Trevor Wheeler, of course has many more together with the local rainfalls'

- 'A simple plan should be created for the HbT section of the river catchment, including the Netherton valley, setting out aims, tangible objectives, what constitutes good practice and how to promote it, would be a helpful contribution to the overall goal'
- 'First step should be to gain a good understanding of what is actually known about the way in which the Test has become 'less resilient', what are the presumed causes, and how they can be ameliorated, e.g. by different land management regimes and control of road runoff. Then:
  - Draw up a land use and ownership plan of the HbT part of the catchment
  - Draw up (if not already done) a flora and fauna plan of the catchment, or at least the valley bottoms, distinguishing between different river channel plant types and their impact on water quality
  - Identify point sources of pollution, e.g. road runoff, septic tanks
  - As far as practicable, learn about current land management practices, particularly use of pesticides (inc) herbicides
  - Develop, and record, a clear understanding of the groundwater and surface water regimes based on historical records and anecdotal evidence
  - Arrange for regular river water testing at upper and lower parish boundaries, preferably at the beginning and end of each flow period
  - Then: with the help of Partnership resources and the EA, shared knowledge from other communities and consultation with land owners and users, draw up goals for water quality and practicable recommendations for associated land and river management
  - Seek funding to support implementation of key measures
  - Monitor changes in land management and water quality and in surface and groundwater characteristics'
- 'Who? The HBeT Wildlife Group would probably be best placed to head up such a programme?'

### **3.4 Other comments, questions or offers of help**

- 'I would very much like to take up some training so I can learn and contribute in some way to the project'
- 'I think the amount of help will depend on the eventual level of individual interest shown. It would be useful to publicise the existence of the project more fully on a local basis. I'm assuming the Parish Council will be discussing it and forming a view. Following that it should be promoted in the Parish Magazine and on the village website and if it gets off the ground then regular reports of activities given in both media to keep the interest going'
- 'Willing to help on the greater committee when set up, but also particularly help with any studies'
- 'Lack of awareness of the consequences of land and river management, action or inaction, is probably the most significant reason for loss of resilience as far as the upper catchments and winterbournes are concerned'

### **4. Next Steps**

- It has been suggested that at the next meeting of the HbeeT Wildlife Group, we seek to agree how our group relates to this project and specific projects/areas of interest that we would wish to be involved in. We would then meet with Maggie Shelton to explore how to progress.

**Actions:**

Circulate notes to HBT attendees and HbeeT members for review/comment (26.08.2018)

Feedback any further comments to MT by 29.08.2018

Post notes and accompanying background documents on HBT website and promote (30.08.2018)

Update Maggie Shelton

Next meeting of HbeeT Wildlife Group – Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2018, 5.30pm at The George & Dragon

MT

All

MT/DB/ME

MT

All