

Minutes of Upper Itchen Initiative Meeting

10am, 26th January 2012

The Wool Pack Inn, Totford, Nr Alresford

Present:

Chairman: Graham Roberts (GR) Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
Gail Taylor (GT) University of Southampton
Rue Ekins (RE) Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
Martin de Retuerto (MdR) Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
Ben Rushbrook (BR) Project Officer, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
Mark Baring (MBAR) Riparian owner – son of Lord Ashburton
Simon Ffennel (SF) Riparian owner
Chris Jeffes (CJ) Alresford Salads
Charles Barter (CB) Watercress Company
Ollie Bedford (OB) Watercress Company
Kerry Evans(KE) Environment Agency
Tim Sykes (TS) Environment Agency
Tom Davis (TD) T&I / Wessex Rivers Trust
Jinti Gifford (JG) Natural England
Gwen Isaacs (GI) University of Southampton (Minutes)

1. Apologies

Roger Harrison (RH) Riparian owner
Martin Burton (MB) Independent Consultant
Steve Rothwell (SR) Vitacress Salads/ Vitacress Conservation Trust
Tim Nevard (TN) VCT
Rose Timlett (RT) WWF UK
Pete Shaw(PS) University of Southampton
Charlotte Rose (CR) Natural England
Tom Amery (TA) Watercress Company

2. Introductions

Graham Roberts introduced himself as did all attendees at the meeting.

2a. Minutes from the Previous Meeting on 4th October 2011

On page 2 'Addington Park' should have been 'Avington Park'.
On page 4 'TD would lead on this' should have been 'TS would lead on this'.
On page 4 'GR asked TS if there could be some response on the feasibility study by the next meeting' should have been 'GR asked CR if there could be some response on the feasibility study by the next meeting'.

MBAR asked if flow figures could be emailed to the group.

[ACTION Tim Sykes \(TS\) – to circulate flow figures to the UII group.](#)

3. Cormorant Update

Three key areas where the birds are a problem; Ovington stretch below The Bush, below Eastern Road bridge and Abbotsworthy.

MdR said that the lakes near Winnall also have a problem. Fish surveys have revealed high predation where restoration has been carried out. TS had been talking to a fishing consultant about these lakes and will mention this problem to him.

[ACTION Tim Sykes \(TS\) – to talk to consultant about the Cormorant problems on the lakes near Winnall and report the outcome to Simon Ffennell](#)

The meeting talked about issues with obtaining licences to shoot the cormorants. The cormorants would need to be observed every morning for 2 weeks. Tony Chambers, the owner of Alresford Pond, may have submitted figures on Cormorant counts.

[ACTION Jinti Gifford \(JG\) – to check processes around obtaining licences](#)

GT said that counting the cormorants and carrying out a literature review could be part of an Under Graduate project.

4. Environment Agency Update

KE reported that she has continued to collect data on Gammarus numbers on the Upper Itchen.

[ACTION Kerry Evans \(KE\) – to email the results of her work on Gammarus numbers to the Ull group](#)

TS talked about the Review of Consents process. Phosphate and suspended solids are the areas where changes have been made. The process should be complete, including sign off by the EA, by December 2012. The consents will be in place by December 2012 not spring 2012 (though it is hoped that the actual levels that people will be expected to achieve will be agreed much earlier than this).

TS explained that the Government has set the standards which may mean that the desired outcomes may not be totally met by applying these standards. GR thanked TS and KE for their efforts in this area.

TS reported that we were heading for a drought this summer so river management was very important.

5. Natural England Update

JG reported that Programme clinics for 2012-2014 would be held at the end of January 2012. Integrated site assessments programme is proceeding with SSSI and HLS being part of the assessment.

Expressions of Interest for WFD have been completed. Confirmation expected by March 2012. Collaboration projects were happening with the EA and Alresford Pond. GeoData were under contract for the River Restoration Strategy which was expected 2012/2013.

John Renney and Charlotte Rose have been in talks re Crayfish.

There had been a recruitment process to find a replacement for Nigel Thomas-Childs. The new recruit should be invited to attend the next Ull meeting.

[ACTION Gwen Isaacs \(GI\) – to invite Nigel Thomas-Childs's replacement to the next Ull meeting](#)

Rodney Calvert could be invited to the next meeting if the UII group agreed that this would be useful.

6. Alresford Pond

GR reported that a meeting had been held with David Sear, TS and KE.

TS said that PS has a student who is examining phosphates in the Itchen. David Sear is going to get a student to look at sedimentation but there's a shortfall of funding of about £5K to £7K over 3 years.

GR reported that he had spoken to Rob Murdoch of Environ who would do analysis of the Pond for £3K. GR would obtain the spec and circulate it to the group.

PS had emailed an update on this – "I have at least one postgraduate student who has expressed interest in conducting her research project on restoration of ponds in chalk systems - project selections will be made over the coming weeks".

[ACTION Graham Roberts \(GR\) – to circulate the specification of the analysis required of Alresford Pond to the UII group](#)

TD said that analysis of organic compounds should be included. CB said they had a record of what was applied but not what was discharged.

7. Southampton University

GR gave an update from PS – "Phosphorus PhD: Arthur Leung has now started and is scoping the work at present. He is updating his literature review to bring in work published since his MSc research and expand the range and context, and is going over analytical aspects so we can plan where, how often, and how we could/should be collecting samples and deploying field instruments. In addition to the analyses that Arthur has previously conducted, we have new apparatus that could add depth and breadth to his work. For the UIG, it is important to note that (1) this work will take place in headwater of the Itchen and the Test, so Arthur's effort will have to be balanced across the two systems, and (2) the value of the work stands to be maximised with co-operation and perhaps contributions from UIG members and other stakeholders and interested parties. Willingness to permit access for sample collection and/or deployment of field instruments will contribute much to this work. We have also mooted to idea of engaging riparian owners etc. as a sampling team to gather water samples to permit high resolution sample collection. I would be grateful if you could table this idea and record who may be willing and able to do this for us. Having someone able to gather samples near to or at an EA gauging station would be particularly useful. I've proposed a postgraduate research project on P in chalk rivers so we may be able to get additional input to the PhD work this summer and add value to the work."

Roger Harrison explained after the meeting (that he missed) that they would readily provide access and also assist with the sampling provided it is sufficiently straightforward for amateurs.

8. Grazing Project Update

RE gave an update. As of this year, there is assisted land management on 6 sites in the Itchen Valley. An HLS agreement had just been completed with St. Cross Farm. GR said that all members of the Ull group were welcome to come and look at some of the sites.

9. Whiteclaw Crayfish Update

BR said that the main focus since last Autumn had been monitoring and reporting the effects of the Upper Itchen augmentation schemes. The daytime behaviour of crayfish was still being investigated. The work would be presented to CEFAS in Weymouth. There were a number of follow up projects starting in the summer. A student from Leeds would be involved.

BR said that they were still looking for a sites that are not over grazed, not stocked with fish and do not have to high agricultural inputs. TD suggested BR contact Fonthill and Derbyshire Wye for advice. Warren Slaney is the contact.

BR asked the group to email him any ideas of ideal sites for translocation. He asked if any records of non-native crayfish could be emailed to him.

10. AOB

TS reported that the Government has initiated a review into habitat regulations and the impact of these upon businesses. The review is open for public examination as part of The Red Tape Challenge. TS urged the group to look up the Red Tape Challenge website and find out how to make a representation. The group could also look up the DEFRA website.

MBAR asked if there were any conclusions from the Candover/Arle scheme. BR replied that there would be a report to the EA by the end of February 2012.

[ACTION Tim Sykes \(TS\) – to find out if the Candover/Arle report would be a public document.](#)

SF asked whether Alex Poynter was doing a Ranunculus survey this year. GR replied yes.

11. Date of Next Meeting

May 9th (Wednesday) 2012. Venue to be decided but MBAR said he may be able to host this next meeting.

