

<h1>Meeting Notes</h1>		Meeting: Water Environment Governance Group	
Attendees: Richard Powell (Chair), Melissa Lockwood, Mike Jeffries, Anna Gerring, Mike Madine, Clare Deasy, Kim Wallis, Stephen Thompson, Laura Kennedy		Date: 11/10/22	Location: MS Teams
Apologies: Graham Dale		Distribution: Attendees and Apologies	
Note: A full set of documents is available in the Water Environment Governance Group SharePoint Site https://nwgcloud.sharepoint.com/sites/TD0273/dcs/			
No.	Agenda Item and Notes		
1	Review of Actions One action from the previous meeting regarding access to SharePoint. CD has not received notice of any issues from the group. RP advised his access was still variable but that the action can be closed. If any issues to arise, let CD know.		
2	Water Environment Team Update <u>Year 3 delivery</u> CD presented an update for Y3 (see slide pack): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 66.3km forecast against a target of 58km, with 9.5km carried over from Y2. • 22 projects in delivery. • Some projects depend upon a water quality baseline from WINEP, therefore the ODI sign off will take place in Y5 when the WINEP requirement has been completed. <u>Candidate project form</u> ST shared that the candidate project form has been updated in layout and set out the reasons for the change. ST is happy to share the updated template and run through the changes if anyone requires this.		

	<p><u>Target driven approach to bluespaces</u></p> <p>ST presented the proposed updated approach, delivering across waterbody, operational catchment or an otherwise defined project area to be defined within the project rather than at purely pre-defined sites. Improvements meeting the scheme criteria could be defined broadly across an area, and candidate maps could highlight key areas for focus. Risks and opportunities associated with the proposed approach were shared in the slide pack. ST invited queries on the approach.</p> <p>AG – would the approach involve mapping and then co-designing broader approaches? ST advised the approach would allow this. A target could be set if the broader area meets NWG criteria. It would help to identify priority areas in the region.</p> <p>MM – it is felt that this approach carries more risk as in-project opportunities may not come to fruition, but also more opportunities for working in partnership. It will be necessary to try to balance these risks and opportunities. Suggested to try the approach and see how it develops.</p> <p>RP – felt there are potentially big opportunities and also some risks. There could be more confusion regarding funding streams and clarity to help manage the Ofwat ODI. There would also be a need to consider the customer aspect if it would be less apparent where improvements have been made. Agree to try the approach but make as clear as possible.</p> <p>ST – with approval of the principle being given, an example project will be brought to the group to provide clarity.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Project Approvals</p> <p>Two projects were shared with WEGG for approval. Candidate project forms were shared in advance.</p> <p><u>Abberton</u></p> <p>KW presented details of the project, which would deliver 3.9km over Y3 and Y4 in partnership with Essex Wildlife Trust. The project builds on baseline and statutory duties to provide access to NWG sites. Improvements would include a bat hide and roost, pond works to help great crested newts, bird boxes, duck nesting tube, willow clearance in front of hides and disabled access improvements to a viewing mound. Baseline funding would be £62k, with a request for just over £10k from bluespaces.</p> <p>RP – would scrub planting also help butterflies and moths? KW advised this would be the case.</p> <p>MJ – very encouraging amount of activity and very supportive of disabled access improvements. Could access be expanded to the hides? KW advised that the hides were already accessible. MJ also flagged that ‘improving’ existing ponds for great crested newts can sometimes be at the detriment of other organisms present and encouraged the creation of new ponds rather than improving existing if possible. KW recognised this and advised that was the rationale behind adding further ponds.</p> <p>All supported the project.</p> <p>DECISION: WEGG agreed to approve the Abberton Year 3/4 project.</p>

	<p><u>Destination Tweed</u></p> <p>ST presented the project based upon the creation of a new 100 mile shared-use route from the source of the Tweed to the sea. It would deliver 16.1km over Y4 and Y5. The project would focus upon bluespaces in north Northumberland and the request is for £20k per annum. Activities would include community engagement and education, as well as conservation action such as pollinator habitat creation and INNS removal. Match funding would be provided for staff time, materials and tools. There is also the opportunity to extend the partnership over a longer period and greater length of water environment.</p> <p>AG – really like the project and feel it could act as a blueprint for building on lots of projects across a priority stretch of river, following the broader approach discussed earlier in the meeting. Query regarding deliverability as the project is very large and was originally intended to begin Summer 2022. Is there potential for slippage affecting delivery in the years specified and would this be a problem if so? ST advised the initial project was to target 50% of the available bluespaces in the area and that the bluespaces funding is quite a significant contributor which should help boost deliverability. ST felt confident the target was achievable.</p> <p>MJ – very supportive of focus on small details that will make a difference for local people. Query regarding planning permission issues and whether any such issues are already known in the project area. ST advised that 80% of the trail already exists but will be improved, so there is less challenge around planning for these sections. Project engagement and dialogue including land owners has also been ongoing for a number of years to help mitigate any opposition.</p> <p>ML – would different areas be targeted, or all of the mapped sections be undertaken at once? ST advised that the map shows bluespaces across the full route, with the project selecting parts of these to meet the target. ML felt the project would be a good opportunity to support tourism in the area.</p> <p>RP – very supportive of the project. Need to ensure that the things delivered by NWG that wouldn't have otherwise been delivered can easily be identified. RP queried whether there were any water quality aspects as the benefit table was blank for this section. ST advised there are water quality improvements in the wider project but not directly in the Northumberland section included for bluespaces at the moment.</p> <p>DECISION: WEGG agreed to approve the Destination Tweed Year 4/5 project.</p>
4	<p>PR24 Update and Water Forum Involvement</p> <p>CD shared an update on work being undertaken in PR24 linking with the pledge NWG made in the April 22 Rivers and Coasts Report to improve 500km of bluespaces by 2030. Options to achieve this are being considered via the inclusion of the bluespaces work in the AMP8 WINEP, and also as a backup option through the inclusion of a bespoke ODI. Ofwat would prefer companies to have less bespoke ODIs as part of PR24. The EA are supportive of the inclusion of bluespaces in WINEP as non-statutory work under the 25 Year Environment Plan driver. The Option Development Report to be completed will include an option to deliver 252km to meet the pledge, and a do nothing option. The North East Catchment Hub could potentially play a role in managing delivery.</p> <p>CD queried what the NW / ESW split should be if included in WINEP. Previous split was based upon cost drivers, but with no ODI reward, would a 50:50 split be more appropriate? ML supportive of anything to simplify the approach – felt it would be interesting to see Ofwat's reaction to the size of the WINEP programme emerging due to the number of statutory actions included.</p> <p>RP felt it would be important that the WINEP wasn't watered down to deliver bluespaces ODI work – important the WINEP still delivers the important work it needs to.</p>

	<p>CD advised that the biggest risk to including bluespaces in WINEP would be that non-statutory actions were removed given the size of the overall programme, although bluespaces projects will be assessed for benefit in their own right in terms of option development. It is felt the projects are something customers very much support but it is recognised that there are significant affordability challenges. NWG will make the best case possible, keeping the ODI option open. The team will seek to keep the good governance aspects, such as using the WEGG as independent assurance of the measure.</p> <p>RP – the final approach to PR24 and WINEP is still developing so it would be good to keep options as open as possible. There may be opportunities for individuals or the WEGG to help lobby where NWG can't, potentially through the Water Forum, if required.</p> <p>Regarding the Water Forum, CD queried the engagement the bluespaces project should have and whether they should be engaging more widely. ML suggested this could be something for when the WINEP process becomes clearer, and RP advised that it is a period of flux for the Water Forum and sub-groups also. It will be important to not allow the scheme and its positive impacts to be lost. It was confirmed that there is no specific action for further engagement with the Water Forum at the moment – RP will discuss the matter with Melanie to keep it on the radar.</p>
5	<p>Approval of Revised ToR</p> <p>The revised ToR has been shared for feedback. GD had requested to see changes highlighted but CD advised that the document had been rewritten as a whole as the previous document was from the feasibility study.</p> <p>All supported the document.</p> <p>DECISION: WEGG agreed to approve the revised ToR.</p>
6	<p>Confirm Dates and Times of Future Meetings</p> <p>Invites have now been sent for 2023 and 2024, with meetings in January, March, May and October to better align with project cycles.</p>
7	<p>AOB</p> <p>MM – would the group like to have a site visit to some of the projects being worked on or delivered? Agreed that this was a good idea, potentially for next Spring (May 2023 meeting?) and in the northern area.</p> <p>ACTION: CD and the WE Team to look at potential locations for a WEGG field visit and share with the group.</p> <p>ST – for WEGG members in the northern area, ST can recommend some projects to visit on other occasions to suit members, including RSPB Geltsdale and Northumberland Rivers Trust wetlands projects. ST – Further projects are currently being worked on and a request for approval via email may follow after the next internal steering group meeting.</p>