



ESSEX RIVERS HUB

Catchment Partnership Meeting Minutes

Monday 10th June 2024

9:30 – 12:30

In person meeting at County Hall, Market Road, Chelmsford,
CM1 1QH [Visit us | Essex County Council](#)

Present: Helen Dangerfield (ESRT), Clemmie Moule (ESRT), Luke Farnish (ESRT), Alison Debney (ZSL), Matt Butcher (EA), Emma Gray (NEFC), Paul Hodgekin (HEAT), Gary Hodgetts (Anglian Water), Helen Jacobs (ESW), Lindsay Panton (HEAT/HFLAG), Nicola Shearer (EA), Lucy Shepherd (ECC), David Smart (Essex Waterways), Nicky Spurr (ECC), Darren Tansley (EWT), Andrew Warwick (Natural England)

Apologies: Becky Baines (Braintree Council), James Champkin (Anglian Water), Jeremy Dagley (EWT), Jess Duckenfield (ESRT), Thomas Harris (ESW), Paul Hogger (HEAT), Susan Mackirdy (NWL), David Overton (Natural England), Archie Ruggles-Brise (ESRT), Mandi Savage (Natural England), Andy Went (ESRT), Amanda Wilkin (Braintree Council), Matt Wilson (National Trust), Rob Wise (NFU)

1. Arrival, tea and coffee

Meeting commenced around 9:45am

2. Introductions and partner updates

- Essex Wildlife Trust: Mink eradication well underway, over 80 smart rafts are now deployed. Darren Tansley thanked the NEFC who have been a useful partner in placing out these rafts. The EWT are linking with the London water vole strategy for water vole protection.
- Essex County Council: Local nature recovery strategy; consultation due to begin soon. Likely consultation by the public at the end of July, by experts imminently. Two WRF bids have been given in by ECC. One project to review leaky dams across Essex to review and improve existing leaky dams and learn more about how to best design dams in the future, looking at 5 dam schemes across the county. The other is a smaller development bid for monitoring of how new developments have affected waterbodies in the counties. This project is looking at options beyond the statutory requirements currently in place.
- Anglian Water: Live datamap is now online. Farmer training grant is now open (1/2 cost of a training course for a person from a holding if the training is to do with soil/water). Event funding is also available. Colne farm innovation grant coming in, with money available for farmers innovating in this region.
- Zoological Society of London: Transforming the Thames, (see section 5). Eel migration work on going as citizen science work. A WFD bid was put in for their Essex native oyster restoration project.
- Essex Waterways: Management of public vs. ecology. Huge growth currently in paddle sports. Involved with Essex Wildlife Trust.
- North Essex Farm Cluster: 18,000ha of land pledged to the cluster currently in about 75 holdings. Delivering 3 main projects currently; Pant improvements, deer control and flood

assistance in the upper Pant. They are also involved in education and training as well as signposting and getting farmers to get involved in ecological work and funding opportunities.

- Essex Suffolk Water: MSD project around soil. Monitoring biodiversity gains and soil ecology to understand the benefits of current work. Branch out funding, Blue Spaces funding and other pots available.
- Hadleigh Environmental Action Team: Working with the EA on monitoring and there is a new scheme on a 4ha site. Since storm Babbette there has been a lot of controversy around the river levels and management and HEAT are doing their best to manage this.
- Natural England: Nothing of note.
- Environment Agency: Annual refresh of medium term plan is upcoming. Then looking for project ideas etc. for funding the 2025/26 season. Always happy to discuss project funding and will support where possible. Thames regional flood and coastal committee have had NFM funds and the Anglian EA are now planning to ringfence £1.5-2 million for East Anglian organisations to apply for NFM funding in a similar manner. They are also working on the Chelmsford Flood Scheme. Investigations occurring on this for benefits and opportunities and there is a large number of landowners involved in discussions as a part of this. The EA are now looking to fill a post to co-ordinate this work.

3. Previous Meeting Recap by Helen from ESRT

- Essex Fish Migration Roadmap
- Rachel and ZSL to join (actioned in this meeting), Rachel to join in the future to share blackwater partnership views
- Sharing of current schemes and funding
- Big Give campaign & Essex RiverWatch

All actions actioned or good progress made.

4. Bluespaces presentation by Clemmie from ESRT

This is an Essex and Suffolk Water (part of Northumbrian Water Group) funding opportunity. Increasing public access to 'Bluespaces' (rivers, saltmarsh, bogs, ponds and more). Funding projects from 2020-2025 so projects finished beyond March 2025 cannot be financed. Funding is open to any relevant group and can be used for overheads or delivery costs. The funding amount is unlimited but there are guidelines on the general amount given. Northumbrian Water Group aim to improve 500km of bluespaces and are on track for 250km by 2025. Although the project is focused around access, the funding helps support biodiversity and river health too. The funded projects can be almost any type of restoration or improvement project, watch the drone video of a recent example [Rewilding the Rom - Thames21](#). Many projects are match funded. To apply contact Clemmie.moule@essexsuffolkriverstrust.org. The attached powerpoint includes further information, some example projects and more detail on the fund application process.

5. Transforming the Thames presentation by Alison from ZSL

12 organisations are working collaboratively to recover the coastal ecosystem of the greater Thames estuary from the Medway to the Orwell. ZSL co-ordinate the project which is planned to finish by next year in its current form. Additional funding being secured to ensure the future of the project's work. The working groups within the project are: *Active Restoration, Barrier Restoration, Policy and Finance*. Co-creation and engagement being sought over the next few years. Stakeholder mapping etc. is in progress to shape the

development of the current plan as well as prioritisation work of key habitats and species involved. A large meeting was held online recently identifying the barriers to delivery of the project, societal, regulatory, ecological and physical.

6. Big Give/Essex RiverWatch

The Essex RiverWatch raised a total of £6,826.66 through the Big Give Green Match Fund, in large part thanks to the generous match funding provided by ECC and Essex Waterways, both of which donated their full pledge amount. Anglian Water also made a very generous donation of £2000. There were 38 donations total. Notable is that gift aid greatly increased the total, particularly when donators were reminded about this via email.

The webpage for the Essex RiverWatch is nearing completion and members of the ERH will have a short consultation period (via email) to request changes and make comments before it is shared more broadly with the public. Most surveys will be starting from July. Partner organisations are encouraged to come forward with any assistance with finding participants as well as further funding opportunities both internally and externally, all of which can be set to RiverWatch@essexsuffolkriverstrust.org

7. Interactive Session by Clemmie from ESRT

The results of the interactive session are in separate documentation. The current vision and plan has received some edits and updates so all partners are happy with the direction of the ERH.

WEIF aims and regulations were discussed as well as the fact that this financial year, 3 more ERH meetings are planned. By Winter the catchment plan and storymap are to be published with the February meeting being used to propose future work. A wider progress review will be made in 2027 and planned work is to be achieved by 2030. There is ongoing analysis of the representation within the catchment. An online portal of 'Anglian Rivers Hub Project Planning Tool' is under development to make the work being done in the catchment easily visible to the public and partners.

Today's session was a chance for partners to participate in defining aims and objectives during the 2025-2030 period.

The group discussed changes to shorten the current vision statement, raising concerns around the use of Essex excluding the Stour Catchment and the possibility of including Suffolk in the ERW. There is a need to ensure clarity around what is covered by the ERW in the Combined Essex Catchment and to reflect this in the programme. There was also some discussion around the exact wording to ensure clarity, being generally happy with the changes made.

The group then split into 3 to discuss the aims in more detail. The final results of this have been compiled by the ESRT and can be found in supplementary documentation.

8. The meeting concluded at 12:30pm

Meeting Actions

	Action	Owner	Completed by next ERH meeting?
1	ESRT to send out the ERW website and all partners to give feedback	ESRT + All	Y
2	Ensure further clarity on what areas (the combined Essex catchment) are covered by the ERW and how to portray this	ESRT + All	Parked
3	Rachel and Alison to join the future partnership meetings	ESRT	Y
4	Feedback from the workshop is to be collated and sent out to partners then incorporated into the catchment plan	Clemmie Moule	Y
5	Share further details on 1 year left for funding scheme, big or small projects that will achieve water quality, biodiversity, or habitat benefits.	Tom Harris	Pending from March meeting
6	Target – have a Catchment Plan draft ready for review including a WFD analysis and an area profiling	ESRT	Y