



ESSEX RIVERS HUB
Catchment Partnership Meeting Agenda

Thursday 28th March 2024
10:00 – 12:00

Online meeting via Microsoft Teams

Attendees: Helen Dangerfield (ESRT), Clemmie Moule (ESRT), Luke Farnish (ESRT), Jess Duckenfield (ESRT), Helen Jacobs (Northumbrian Water), Matt Butcher (EA), Alex Moore da Luz (National Landscapes), Becky Baines (Braintree District Council), Ben Mott (Essex Wildlife Trust), Darren Tansley (Essex Wildlife Trust), Katherine Short (Anglian Water), Lindsay Panton (HEAT & HFLAG), Nicola Shearer (EA), Terri Dawson (Wilderness Foundation UK), Matt Wilson (National Trust), Nicky Spurr (Essex County Council), Thomas Harris (Northumbrian Water), Mandi Savage (Natural England).

1. Introductions: Clementine Moule has recently joined ESRT as the Blue Spaces Delivery manager and will be taking the lead on running the Essex Rivers Hub moving forwards. You can reach Clemmie at clemmie.moule@essexsuffolkriverstrust.org

2. Essex Riverwatch update

- Update presentation delivered by Luke Farnish who is now leading the project (see attached)
- HEAT is part of the pilot testing.
- The Big Give – we are aiming to raise £10,000 in match funding between 18th – 25 April. Comms plan details to be shared with partners prior to launch.

3. Wilderness Foundation UK

- Presentation delivered by Terri Dawson to introduce plans for River School initiative and give background on the organisation that is centred around environment, education, and therapy. (See attached).
- Suggestions for potential sites: Museum of Power Langford, Sanford Mill, HEAT – Hadleigh, Flatford Mill Field Studies Council.
- For further suggestions please contact terri@wildernessfoundation.org.uk

4. Partner Updates

Nicola Shearer (EA)

- Essex Fish Migration Roadmap at Easterford Mill updates for continuing into the next financial year to be shared with Northumbrian Water, Essex Wildlife Trust and Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust at end of this meeting. **Action for Nicola Shearer to send.**
- A couple of reports published recently about the impact of water quality on seagrass in -our coasts and estuaries. Suggestion for Rachel (Head of Marine and Coastal Recovery at Essex Wildlife Trust) and Olwen (TtT Project Officer at ZSL) to attend the next ERH meeting to discuss the Transforming the Thames Project and potential for us to work together on seagrass projects. **Action for ESRT to invite Rachel and Olwen to the next meeting.**

Matt Butcher (EA)

- EA is still going through the business plan for a flood scheme for Chelmsford. Flood Team want nature-based solutions to form a central party of this scheme. For all catchments



upstream of Chelmsford the plan is to get some work done to identify potential opportunities from NFM interventions to land management changes. Catchments to be mapped out with hotspots and opportunities and that have a flood risk benefit.

Mandi Savage (Natural England)

- CSF programme losing staff and not getting replacements due to a cut in funding.
- Capital Grants scheme very busy at the moment, a lot of landowners wanting to make improvements.

Thomas Harris (Northumbrian water)

- Nitrates in Chelmer and Blackwater have gradually been getting worse since 2017. However, due to very wet weather this year the nitrate load has reduced. Better nitrogen efficiency from crops in the ground.
- Going into spring things are still really wet so farmers are still waiting to get going, delays in fertilising / cultivation etc. However, no major known issues so far, pesticide products are now much safer for water and legislation is starting to have an impact.
- Field to Tap projects coming along nicely in the Blackwater and Chelmer
- 1 year left for funding scheme, big or small projects that will achieve water quality, biodiversity, or habitat benefits. **Action for Tom to email to partners with further details.**

Alex Moore da Luz (National Landscapes)

- Scrape and footdrain projects on the border of Essex completed this financial year, improving habitats for wintering wading birds.
- Will be doing more INNS control this year, but capacity is reduced so concentrating on identified nature recovery core zones, River Brett – Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam.
- New land at Stratford St. Mary, potential for habitat creation and river restoration.

Darren Tansley (Essex Wildlife Trust)

- Darren will be doing some mental health river walks in the summer.
- Still working on lost ponds of Essex project. 16,500 ponds mapped so far.
- Pond assessors training day with North Essex Farm Cluster on 11th May
- Mink eradication project contract signed. Mink now declared not breeding in Norfolk/Suffolk and now targeting Essex, huge project covering much of England.
- Noted a lot of dead otters this year, please inform EWT if any are spotted.

Helen Jacobs (Northumbrian Water)

- Recently published new environment strategy.
- Branch Out funding still available, focussed on INNS projects, open until the end of April.
- Big focus on biosecurity next year.

Nicky Spurr (Essex County Council)

- Water strategy launch (further details below)
- Local Nature Recovery strategy is in the very final stages of drafting and will be going out for consultation, no date yet.
- Forrest for the Nation application submitted.

Info about the water strategy for Essex and interactive water explorer website

<https://www.essexclimate.org.uk/water-strategy-for-essex>

The Strategy document itself is found here: <https://www.essex.gov.uk/running-council/plans-and-strategies/water-strategy-essex>

Also see www.essexwateryourfuture.co.uk

The Spring Climate Summit and launch event can be viewed in full here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78B52uKEHtU>

5. Blackwater Restoration Plans and Fluvial Audit presentation by ESRT

- Brief update from Luke Farnish covering the Blackwater fluvial audit (see attached presentation)
- Two project workshops coming up, 2nd of May and October date tbc.
- If anyone has any historic data for the catchment, please pass this on to Luke luke.farnish@essexsuffolkriverstrust.org
- First workshop invitations will be sent out soon, let Luke know if there are any key people you think should be invited. Keen to engage new landowners as well as the usual crowd.

The next ERH meeting will be held in late May, ESRT will be in contact soon to arrange a date.

Meeting Actions

	Action	Owner	Completed by next ERH meeting?
1	Essex Fish Migration Roadmap at Easterford Mill updates for continuing into the next financial year to be shared with Northumbrian Water, Essex Wildlife Trust and Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust at end of this meeting.	Nicola Shearer	
2	Suggestion for Rachel (Head of Marine and Coastal Recovery at Essex Wildlife Trust) and Olwen (TtT Project Officer at ZSL) to attend the next ERH meeting to discuss the Transforming the Thames Project and potential for us to work together on seagrass projects.	ESRT	
3	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	
4	Comms plan details of The Big Give to be sent out to all partners prior to the launch on the 18 th April.	ESRT	
5	Essex Riverwatch, The Big Give – all partners to help promote the scheme where appropriate.	All	