

# North York Moors National Park Authority

21 March 2016

## Update on Catchment Partnerships – Derwent and Esk & Coastal Streams

### 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update Members about the North York Moors National Park Authority's involvement with Catchment Partnerships including update on progress, current projects and future work planned in both the Derwent and Esk & Coastal Streams catchments.

### 2. Background to the Catchment Based Approach / Catchment Partnerships

- 2.1 In 2013 Defra rolled out the Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) across the UK promoting collaborative working to protect and improve precious water environments, with particular focus on sharing the knowledge, skills and expertise of local people. This collaborative approach should result in multiple benefits including improvements to water quality, enhanced biodiversity, reduced flood risk, resilience to climate change and greater community engagement with their local river. More than 1,500 organisations are engaged with CaBA, working in more than 100 catchments across England and Wales.
- 2.2 There are four Catchment Partnerships covering the North York Moors and these are the Esk & Coastal Streams; Derwent; Tees; and Swale, Ure, Nidd & Upper Ouse. This report will focus on the two which the North York Moors National Park Authority (NYMNP) has had most involvement with and which provide greatest geographic coverage of the area, namely the Esk & Coastal Streams and Derwent Catchment Partnerships. Working through the CaBA provides a key mechanism for the NYMNP to address Water Framework Directive (WFD) status of its water bodies, which is one of the National Park Family Indicators.

### 3. The importance of the Esk & Coastal Streams Catchment

- 3.1 The Esk is a "Biodiversity Action Plan priority river habitat", due to the presence of a number of Annex II Habitats Directive species: freshwater pearl mussel, Atlantic salmon, bullhead, brook lamprey and otter. The river also supports populations of brown/sea trout and European eel. All these species are UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority species.
- 3.2 The Esk is one of only two nationally recognised salmon rivers in Yorkshire but salmon and sea trout numbers crashed in the 1970s and continued to remain low. The Esk also supports the only population of freshwater pearl mussels in Yorkshire (classified as endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species) which require pristine water quality and a healthy population of Atlantic salmon and trout to complete their lifecycle.
- 3.3 A number of coastal streams that drain directly to the sea are also part of the Esk & Coastal Streams Catchment area; these include the Sandsend and Staithes sub-catchment to the north of Whitby and the Robin Hood's Bay sub-catchment. The coastal waterbodies are at risk from diffuse pollution and resulting poor water quality. The North York Moors coast is an important tourist destination, with five designated bathing water beaches (Staithes, Robin Hood's Bay, Runswick Bay, Sandsend and Whitby). Much of the coastline is designated as the North Yorkshire and Cleveland Heritage Coast and the area is important for its Jurassic geology.

3.4 The river network consists of 24 water bodies, of which only 41% percent currently meet the Water Framework Directive target of Good Ecological Status. Water bodies are failing for a variety of reasons including downstream issues such as barriers to migratory fish and other physical modification, but diffuse pollution from rural areas is a significant problem within the catchment.

#### **4. Formation of the Esk & Coastal Streams Catchment Partnership**

4.1 In 2012 the Esk & Coastal Streams Catchment was selected as a pilot catchment and awarded £5,000 from Defra to develop a Catchment Action Plan to support the delivery of WFD objectives through a CaBA. In May 2012 a launch event was held to introduce the CaBA and bring local interest groups together to develop an action plan for the Esk. Some 48 local stakeholders attended including: angling clubs, Catchment Sensitive Farming, Durham University, the Environment Agency, Esk Energy, land owners/managers, the National Farmers Union, NYCC Highways, the North York Moors National Park Authority, the River Esk Action Committee, Upper Esk Wildlife Group, Yorkshire Water, and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. A steering group was established and the Esk Catchment Action Plan was developed.

4.2 The Yorkshire Esk Rivers Trust (YERT) was established in 2013, and YERT and the NYMNPA were appointed as joint hosts for the Esk & Coastal Streams Catchment in November 2013. In March 2014 53 local stakeholders/interest groups attended a prioritisation workshop to refine the Catchment Action Plan. The River Esk 3 Year Action Plan was produced which sets out a wide range of projects from river habitat improvements, addressing barriers to fish migration, fisheries monitoring, to wider community engagement initiatives.

4.3 In October 2014 YERT and NYMNPA officially formed the Esk & Coastal Streams Catchment Partnership (ECSCP) to pool knowledge and resources to improve and safeguard the River Esk and Coastal Streams' valuable ecosystems. A memorandum of understanding was produced between YERT and NYMNPA to establish ways of working and joint approaches to funding sources. A Catchment Partnership Officer was appointed in October 2014.

4.4 ECSCP has the support of partner organisations including Catchment Sensitive Farming, Durham University, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Yorkshire Water, and the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, together with local angling clubs, fishermen and land owners/managers, all of whom are members of the steering group which meets two to three times a year.

#### **5. Funding of the Esk & Coastal Streams Catchment Partnership**

5.1 The hosting role and project officer costs have been funded primarily by Defra (2012/213 £5,000, 2013/2014 £11,800, 2014/2015 £15,000, 2015/2016 £15,000). This has been supplemented by contributions from the NYMNPA (£10,500) and via an external funding bid to the Postcode Community Trust (£10,000). A further £31,000 from Defra was obtained to deliver the 2015/16 Glaisdale Beck Restoration Project.

#### **6. Achievements/Projects of the Esk & Coastal Streams Catchment Partnership**

6.1 **Discovering the Esk** - In March 2015, YERT on behalf of the ECSCP received £10,000 from the People's Postcode Lottery (through the Postcode Community Trust) to deliver Discovering the Esk. Discovering the Esk brings local people together to learn about and care for the catchment through four education and community monitoring initiatives:

- Salmon in the Classroom project (currently being delivered at Sleights Primary School) which educates local children about the importance of river ecosystems.
- Young Angler Initiative which teaches young people how to fish and helps them develop their personal and social skills as well as a passion for the outdoors. Nine young anglers learnt to fish in 2015 thanks to the dedication of local angling club volunteers.
- Riverfly Monitoring initiative through which twenty local volunteers have been trained up in the nationally recognised sampling methodology established by the Riverfly Partnership. The current volunteers are now monitoring 30 sites across the catchment to assess the water quality and detect signs of pollution.
- Adopt a Stream which is a new initiative recruiting 'Guardians of the Esk'. This community monitoring scheme ensures that key interests are being checked regularly including; wildlife, barriers to migratory fish, non-native invasive species, water pollution and litter.

6.2 **Glaisdale Beck Restoration Project** - In 2015 Defra awarded £31,000 to ECSCP to deliver the Glaisdale Beck Restoration Project, to undertake habitat improvement work and address diffuse pollution from agriculture. A wide range of restoration work is being delivered by the Catchment Partnership Officer including 2,481 metres of fencing to prevent livestock accessing the beck, provision of stock watering points (five drinking bays and two cattle pasture pumps), two crossing points improved, and 100 trees will be planted. Eight volunteer task days have helped to deliver this work.

## 7. **Future work for the Esk & Coastal Streams Catchment Partnership**

7.1 ECSCP has recently submitted funding applications to the Postcode Community Trust for £19,500 for Discovering the Esk – Phase 2, which would expand on the current initiatives and deliver a River Festival.

7.2 Officers are also working with Morrison Utility Services and Yorkshire Water to develop a small habitat improvement project in the Lealholm and Aislaby area.

7.3 YERT is developing a long term funding strategy to secure the future of the Trust and the continued activity of the Catchment Partnership

## 8. **The Importance of the Derwent Catchment**

8.1 The Derwent Catchment is an area of strategic importance, particularly in terms of nature conservation and its role as a vital source of drinking water for more than two million people across Yorkshire. The catchment has one of the highest numbers of designated areas in England and Wales, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserves (NNR), the North York Moors National Park (NYMNP), the Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Special Protection Areas for birds (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and a Ramsar site.

8.2 Whilst the section of the River Derwent that is designated as SSSI, SAC, SPA and Ramsar site is outside the NYMNP boundary, the headwaters of the Derwent and its tributary the River Rye, rise in the internationally important moorlands of the National Park. The Upper Rye and Upper Derwent sub-catchments (within the National Park boundary) encompass a wide range of habitats, including open moorland habitats, hay meadows, freshwater habitats, fen and swamp communities, and native and ancient woodland. These support a large number of priority species. The Upper Derwent would provide vital spawning habitat for river lamprey and other migratory fish species such as Atlantic salmon, but barriers to migration, such as weirs are currently preventing them reaching suitable spawning grounds.

8.3 The River Derwent is a UK BAP priority river habitat due to its diverse flora and fauna and the wide range of priority species that inhabit it. The river network consists of 70 water bodies, of which only 14 percent currently meet the WFD target of 'Good Ecological Status'. This is the result of a diverse range of issues including barriers to fish migration, land management practices causing sedimentation and nutrient input, and phosphate and ammonia pollution from waste water.

## 9. **Development of the Yorkshire Derwent Catchment Partnership**

9.1 A number of the issues on the Derwent such as sedimentation, barriers to fish migration and invasive non-native species require a catchment-scale approach to achieve real success. With many existing initiatives and partnerships already in place working to deliver improvements within the catchment, there is a need for a catchment-scale partnership to provide a strategic overview and ensure a coordinated approach.

9.2 An interim steering group for the Yorkshire Derwent Catchment Partnership (YDCP) was established in 2013, supported by CaBA funding and hosted by the East Yorkshire Rivers Trust, with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust as co-hosts. Membership of the partnership includes: Country Land and Business Association, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, East Yorkshire Rivers Trust, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, National Farmers Union, Natural England, NYMNPA, North Yorkshire County Council, Ryedale District Council, Scarborough Borough Council and the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.

9.3 In January 2015 the NYMNPA, on behalf of the interim steering group commissioned a piece of work to develop a vision, objectives and a strategic framework for the development of a catchment and landscape-scale partnership, and contributed up to £5,000 towards the costs. This engagement work included three participative workshops with stakeholders representing 30 organisations and two landowners, with input from a wider network of stakeholders including Parish Councils, through online surveys.

9.4 To build on this initial engagement work and formally establish the YDCP the interim steering group commissioned a second piece of work in November 2015 with £15,000 from Defra's Catchment Partnership Action Fund matched by £2,000 from the NYMNPA. This work is now well underway and by the end of the contract will have provided the secretariat for the interim steering group, produced a summary document to facilitate buy-in to the Partnership Board and a draft strategy for the YDCP, established the governance and structure of the YDCP, invited membership of the Partnership Board, made links with other Catchment Partnerships and relevant initiatives, identified sources of funding to maintain the YDCP and for the development of projects, and developed publicity material for a number of websites to raise awareness of the YDCP.

## 10. **Projects of the Yorkshire Derwent Catchment Partnership within the National Park**

10.1 **River Sefh Project** – In April Defra awarded £31,000 to the YDCP to undertake habitat improvements on the River Sefh. The project involves the NYMNPA, Environment Agency, East Yorkshire Rivers Trust and the Wild Trout Trust. The NYMNPA played a key role in organising a demonstration day for local landowners and organisations to raise awareness of simple low-cost measures such as bank stabilisation, woody debris dams, fencing and buffer strips to reduce the amount of sediment getting into the river. Following this event, the project has been working with a number of individual landowners to implement similar measures on their own land.

Works undertaken so far include fencing, creating concrete sleeper river crossings and installing spring-fed water troughs to prevent livestock accessing the watercourse. A woodland at the head of the watercourse has been identified as a site for PAWS (Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site) restoration work in 2016. In addition, in 2015 the NYMNP undertook a further programme of Himalayan Balsam control just below Seph Mouth, making it the 8<sup>th</sup> year of concerted eradication effort targeted at this invasive non-native species along the Seph.

- 10.2 **Rye Sub-Catchment Project** – Under the umbrella of the YDCP a subset of partners are developing a Landscape Partnership bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund focused on the Rye Sub-Catchment. The NYMNP and Howardian Hills AONB, supported by partners including Natural England and Environment Agency, are leading on this work and the aim is to submit a Stage 1 application by 1 June 2016. The objectives of this Landscape Partnership bid will be to improve water quality by reducing sedimentation and nutrient inputs, moderate river level fluctuations by encouraging natural flood management, enhance biodiversity, especially key indicator species such as Alcatheo bat, white-clawed crayfish and salmon by improving habitat quality and connectivity, and further develop local understanding of and pride in the area's natural heritage. The cultural heritage of the Rye, particularly linked to the river, will be a secondary but important theme.

## 11. **Next steps for the Yorkshire Derwent Catchment Partnership**

- 11.1 Once the Partnership Board is in place it will need to ratify its vision and strategy. The YDCP can then be launched and increase engagement with stakeholders, land owners/managers and local communities. It is anticipated that delivery at a catchment-scale will be coordinated by the Delivery Group but much of the work of the partnership will be delivered through groups at the sub-catchment level; these are the Rye, Upper Derwent, Middle Derwent and Lower Derwent and are aligned with the River Derwent operational catchments for the River Basin Management Plan.
- 11.2 The YDCP represents a principal mechanism for delivering key objectives of the National Park Management Plan within the Upper Derwent and Rye Sub-Catchments, as well as an important opportunity to work at a catchment scale to benefit key species and habitats and pilot a whole-catchment approach to natural flood risk management.

## 12. **Conclusion**

- 12.1 Both the Yorkshire Derwent and Esk & Coastal Streams Catchment Partnerships are already delivering important work on the ground, contributing to a range of National Park priorities such as improving water quality, protecting and enhancing habitats and wildlife, and engaging local communities. One of the main strengths of the Catchment-Based Approach lies in bringing partner organisations together to align priorities and coordinate work, maximising value from resources and ensuring multiple benefits are achieved; this coordinated and integrated approach is crucial to levering in external funding. Looking forward, these Catchment Partnerships can provide a key mechanism for delivering National Park priorities and levering in external funding. Members will need to weigh up the value of continued commitment to these partnerships along with other work areas when deciding priorities for the new Business Plan.

## 13. **Financial and Staffing Implications**

- 13.1 There are no resource implications arising *directly* from this paper. Members will need to decide as part of the Business Plan process what level of core resource the Authority should put into this area of work.

14. **Contribution to National Park Management Plan for both Partnerships**

14.1 The work of the Catchment Partnerships will contribute directly and significantly to a number of Management Plan policies including habitat connectivity and wildlife (E11, E12, E13, E14, E16, E18), soil protection and water quality (E31, E42, E46), and rivers (E43, E44). It will also help deliver a range of others including those for education (U13, U14), tourism (B25) and recreation (C2).

15. **Legal Implications**

15.1 Capital elements of the projects will be delivered under the Authority State Aids to Agriculture notification.

16. **Recommendation**

16.1 That Members note the report.

Contact Officers:

Alex Cripps (for the Esk)

Catchment Partnership Officer

Esk & Coastal Streams Catchment Partnership

Tel: 01439 772700

and

Jenny Craven (for the Derwent)

Natural Environment Team Leader, North York Moors National Park Authority

Derwent Catchment Partnership

Tel: 01439 772700

**Background papers to this Report**

**File ref**

None