



Meeting of CVPC River Char Working Party 29th January 2020 at Becklands Farm

Notes

Present: Ian Rees, Dorset AONB Countryside Officer ~
CVPC Councillors: Hilary Joyce, Kit Vaughan, Sylvia
Creed-Castle, Tara Hansford, Andrew Carey

Chair: Kit

Kit outlined the intention of the meeting:

- to talk through admin and process issues connected to the River Char Community Project.
- get advice and suggestions from Ian on identifying a consultant to work on Phase 1 of the Project.

Ian explained the financial background. AONB will pay CVPC in arrears, so CVPC must spend the money first and submit a claim with a brief report (including the consultant's report) by 30th October 2020. Kate Townsend is the admin contact at AONB on the grant/finance side.

He also explained what the AONB's role could be. Normally AONB could do the consultancy part of the work (for example, Ian did the work on the [River Asker Community Project](#)) but they are overstretched so, in practice, the work needs to go out to as consultant.

[On the R. Asker project, Nick Gray managed the volunteers, Tim Bowden led on landowner engagement and Ian Rees managed the project.]

Ian said that he had done a presentation to the Parish Council on the R. Asker project, at a meeting where app. 30 other guests were present. He suggested something similar for CVPC.

Timing is an issue for us (we have others presenting at the next two council meetings. Ian cannot be at the CVPC Public Meeting on 21st March). It was agreed that **Ian will send a static display about the R. Asker project to the CVPC Public Meeting and try to get a member of the Asker Community Group to attend as well.** We will talk about the River Char project (already featured in *Char Chat*) and ask residents to sign-up for updates if they are interested. Ian feels that if we could get 30 or so people to register interest that would be very encouraging and he could do a presentation to them and others mid-way through the project (Summer 2020).

Hilary also suggested asking people for their River Char stories/memories/history on 21st March.

Ian said that, on the R. Asker project, three organisations had done/were doing talks to the interested community:

[Dorset Wildlife Trust](#)

[Westcountry Rivers Trust](#)

[Wild Trout Trust](#)

Kit reported that all the farmers/landowners he had spoken to were keen to get the Char redesignated as a Catchment Sensitive Area and stressed that we should work to try to make that happen.

On possible consultants, Ian suggested:

[Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group Southwest](#) (Tom Bowden)

[Dorset Wildlife Trust](#) (Nick Gray/Amanda Broome)

[Westcountry Rivers Trust](#) (Scott West)

Dave Dixon (Bridport Council / former AONB Regional Coordinator)

[Frome, Piddle & West Dorset Fisheries Association](#) (Dominic Stubbings)

He suggested that we could use more than one of them in different roles (e.g. community engagement / fish knowledge)

Ian promised to have an initial conversation with FWAG and DWT.

Kit will update the Terms of Reference and develop a Work Plan and project timeline, then **Kit** and **Tara** will contact all the above groups/people to discuss the consultancy work.

Hilary will contact neighbouring Parish Councils to tell them about the River Char Community project.

Kit suggested and it was agreed that the stages of this Phase 1 of the Project (and, therefore, key elements of the Phase 1 report) should be:

- Describe the catchment area (with mapping).
- Identify relevant issues like land management, invasive species, discharges (septic tanks) etc.
- Identify what we already know about the health of the river, and any gaps in that knowledge.
- Look at the physical structure of the river (weirs, etc.)
- Consider issues related to current and future flooding.
- Identify the key stakeholders in the catchment.
- Spell out the implications of improving the health of the river for biodiversity, tourism, fish stocks, etc.

Ian encouraged us to draw on the generic conclusions of the [River Asker project report](#) to avoid reinventing the wheel.

Agreed Action Points in red above.

Related Documents

All the documents mentioned here and at the previous meeting are available at:

www.charvalley.org/river-char-project