

**Evenlode Catchment Partnership (ECP) News 10 September 2016**

The ECP Steering Group has been pretty busy since the last newsletter in March of this year, so some of the items here will have in brief. I hope I'll soon be able to have more details of all projects mentioned on the WO Evenlode webpage.



1. I'll start with some good news on funding:

- Wild Oxfordshire (WO) have received some EA funding to support their role as the Evenlode catchment 'host' for another year. Thanks to all who expressed their support for WO continuing this role.
- We have been awarded funding from The Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE2) and Cotswolds Rivers Trust to contribute to a river and habitat restoration and project Pudlicote on the river Evenlode.
- The Thames RFCC (Regional Flood & Coastal Committee) have awarded the EA and ECP £50,000 p.a. for a Natural Flood Management (NFM) project in the catchment (see item 2).
- The EA have allocated the ECP £30,000 towards a water quality and NFM project to be delivered this autumn in the Littlestock Brook area, near Milton under Wychwood.
- A successful bid was submitted for >£4,000 to the latest tranche of funding under the Thames Water-supported Rivers & Wetlands Community Days Project. This funding will contribute towards the development of a new network of Wychwoods Water Watch volunteers, providing equipment and training for ecological monitoring, particularly in the area of the NFM project (see item 3).

2. **£250K secured to slow the flow in the Evenlode**

The Environment Programme Team, working in partnership with members of the ECP steering group, has been successful in securing £250K of Local Levy funding from the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) for a 5 year Natural Flood Management project. The funds will support a Project Officer and the delivery of numerous small-scale 'slow the flow' interventions in the Evenlode catchment. The works will include creating temporary water retention ponds in field corners, storing more flood water on grassland areas, installing woody debris in-channel to create leaky dams and planting of trees to slow run off from farmland and stop sediment entering watercourses. The project has also secured £30k of Water Framework Directive (WFD) GiA funding which will allow the integration of WFD objectives, such as water quality and habitat improvements, with Natural Flood Management (NFM) trials.

The project will be delivered through the Evenlode Catchment Partnership hosted by 'Wild Oxfordshire', of which we are a key partner. Many organisations are represented on the Partnership including the Cotswolds Rivers Trust, The Wychwood Project, landowners small and large from Parish Councils to Blenheim Palace estates, Natural England, West Oxfordshire District Council, BBO Wildlife Trust, Sylva woodland foundation and the Upper Thames Fisheries Consultative.

Initial focus is on the Littlestock Brook and Coldwell Brook which drain into the middle section of the River Evenlode near to the three Wychwood communities. The project will progress to develop more strategic floodplain enhancements on the main Evenlode. It is hoped this trial throughout a

headwater tributary of the Thames Basin will help all parties learn about the outcomes as well as the development and delivery of NFM at a landscape scale, and the contribution that it could make to helping protect localised communities.



Contact: Jo Old, Evenlode Catchment Coordinator, Environment Programme Team ([joanne.old@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:joanne.old@environment-agency.gov.uk))

### **3. Wychwood Water Watch Network**

This project aims to engage, train and support a new environmental stewardship network of community groups, schools and riverside-based companies. They will take part in a programme of testing and monitoring of the ecological conditions of water bodies in the Evenlode Natural Flood Management project area. Surveys will take the form of simple phosphate and nitrate testing, regular riverfly monitoring and river walkovers recording invasive and key native species. All the information collected will help spot trends and impacts that need addressing as well as increasing public awareness and understanding of the issues and actions being taken. The network of trained volunteers will be supported by the ECP to share their skills and knowledge more widely through the local communities.

We have a Riverfly Monitoring training session booked on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2017 as part of this development. Please contact [hilary@wildoxfordshire.org.uk](mailto:hilary@wildoxfordshire.org.uk) to book.

### **4. Additional Volunteering Opportunities**

As part of the Thames WaterBlitz I would like a well organised person to help coordinate testing across the Evenlode catchment. You would be

### **5. Past Events**

#### **Secret Creatures of the Evenlode**

On 21<sup>st</sup> July parents and children celebrated the start of the summer holidays at Combe Mill with a hunt for some of the hidden creatures that live in and around the river Evenlode. Experts from [Oxfordshire](#) and North Bucks Bat Groups, and [Oxfordshire Mammal Group](#), joined Combe Mill volunteers and 26 locals for a 'meet the expert' session followed by a guided walk across Combe meadows.

While the visitors were busy discovering mini-beasts in the pond, members of the bat group set-up special survey equipment as dusk descended. Before the event little was known about what species of bats were using the site, but the evening surveys revealed a possible Brown long-eared roost, Soprano and Common pipistrelles, Daubenton's, probable Natterer's, Noctule and Barbastelle bats. We were particularly thrilled with the record of the Barbastelle (*Barbastellus barbastellus*) which is one of the UK's rarer bats which we have few records for in the county. Bats are an important indicator of the quality of habitat and we hope to be able to do more surveys with the bat group in other parts of the catchment.

### **Canoes and Bats at Charlbury**

A small group from the ECP teamed up with members of Oxfordshire Bat Group and Charlbury Canoe Club to hold a test-run of a water-borne bat transect. Rivers and wetlands are a rich source of food for bats, particularly Daubenton's bats, and it was a good opportunity to introduce members of the canoe club to another aspect of river wildlife.



### **6. Up-coming Events**

- **Friday 16th September: The next bat and mammal event at Combe**, when the earlier sunset will allow children to take part on a bat walk. Starts at 7:30 pm. Contact [bookings@combemill.org](mailto:bookings@combemill.org) to book a place on this event. For live streaming of images from the river by Combe Mill follow this link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cViuY8FOt4c> to see what Steve Page, one of the Directors of Combe Mill Society, has achieved using a raspberry-pi to build a web-cam.
- **Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> October Thames Water Blitz**: Register at <https://freshwaterwatch.thewaterhub.org/blitz> for your free kits to take part in this autumn's Thames Water Blitz. If you have tested sites previously in the Evenlode please do repeat tests at the same places, so we get continuity of records. We've secured funding from Garfield Weston to help with the Water Blitz which has enabled us to supply standardised testing kits, with the original colour cards and calibration beakers supplied as they were for the first blitz in autumn 2015.
- **Friday 14<sup>th</sup> & Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October River Quality Hackathon**: