



Isbourne Catchment Group – AGM Minutes from Tuesday 13th December 2022 5pm Winchcombe Museum.

ICG Group Members Present - Jem Williamson, Richard Wakeford, Sue Morris, Andy Thomas & Annette Dawson

Others Present – Wendy Bufton WCC, Josie Lynch Uni of Worcester, Mark Connelly Cotswold AONB, David Lesser GCC & Martyn Cross Wychavon DC.

ICG Web members – Ros Davies, Pippa Bowyer, Bob & Chris Carruthers & Jim Goddard

Apologies - received from Brian Smith EA, Lucy Clark Uni Glos and Tristan Bailey and were recorded with the Secretary.

Agenda

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies received - Jem Williamson.
2. The Minutes from the last AGM on 30th November 2021 were approved.
3. Chairs Report – Jem Williamson talked through the report inserted below.
4. Local Update – Wendy Bufton Natural Flood Management Project Officer Worcestershire County Council gave a presentational report on the considerable progress to date. This included a detailed description of the 150 interventions now installed along the Beesmoor Brook, Charlton Abbots, Sudeley Castle, Farmcote tributary, Didbrook, Laverton Hill & Hoo Farms, Laverton Village and Woodlands & Orchard Farms near Stancombe Lane, Winchcombe. More work is planned at the Isbourne Trading Estate & GWR near Winchcombe plus a second tributary at Didbrook and Wormington in 2023, see full presentation attached. Josie Lynch from the University of Worcester presented her PhD Project using mapping and drones for the strategic identification of NFM sites.
Discussions and comments raised during and after the presentations included:
 - Was there a risk to the work & funding for the ICG now that the NFM project was being extended across Worcestershire. WB confirmed that ICG was the largest, most successful project and would continue with the potential for additional resources to support delivery.
 - Was the project using modelling for the interventions being installed. WB stated that due to their small size, modelling was not required but would delay the installations should modelling be used. However, JS will be using drones to fly over those areas identified for interventions going forward to establish if greater capacities could be installed and will repeat the fly after construction to assess their success.
 - Was any monitoring being carried out – Yes, there are 3 EA river gauges at Toddington, Sedgeberrow & Hinton on the Green used by the EA for flood warning with an additional 2 gauges at Winchcombe and Toddington installed under the ICG project for additional river levels to be accessed.
 - It was noted that at last year's AGM 129 interventions had been achieved and now a further 21 (larger scale) interventions have been delivered, totalling 150 across the catchment; a great step forward. The audience welcomed the on-going work and looked forward to further works as opportunities arose with landowners.

The Chair thanked Wendy & Josie for such comprehensive updates.

5. Appointments for coming year were voted and agreed.
Chair – Jem Williamson
Vice-Chair - Richard Wakeford
Secretary - Annette Dawson

6. Richard Wakeford updated the group on the Winchcombe Green Town project and tree planting initiative being supported by FWAG, and the chair thanked Richard for organising use of Winchcombe Museum.
7. AOB – The group felt that greater local media publicity was now needed to hail the success of the project so far and help encourage further take up across the area.

AGM - Chairs Report from Item 3 above.

Whilst it is reassuring that world leaders continue to gather at events such as COP 27 and issue promises of future action, it is groups like ours that will ultimately make a difference. There is no single solution to the challenges that we face but cumulatively actions of local communities will have an impact; from reducing fossil fuel consumption, recycling more, being precious about our natural environment and making positive interventions to put right the often-unintended consequences of previous generations.

I recently had the opportunity to visit the Unlocking the Severn project which demonstrated how our Victorian forebears had unintentionally damaged access to the spawning grounds of the Twaite Shad by building weirs and locks on the Severn in order to regulate the flow and promote trade. This project aims to rectify the damage and given that otters are now regularly sighted under Worcester bridge is I think proof that they are having an impact.

For the Isbourne Catchment Group, the focus has been on natural flood management, and the delivery team, Wendy Bufton from WCC, ably supported by Brian Smith from the Environment Agency, will update upon their works since last autumn shortly.

However, there have always been perceived wider benefits such as water quality and wildlife habitat and more recently more synergies between what the ICG have been practising for several years and wider initiatives in the local area.

Specifically, I would like to draw your attention to the following as there may be mutual benefits and learning from our activities

- Winchcombe Green Town whose aim is to encourage a green focus in and around Winchcombe and to find and implement local solutions that will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve the ecology and speed up the transition of Winchcombe to a more sustainable town <https://www.winchcombe.co.uk/winchcombe-green-town/>
- Windrush Against Sewage Pollution whose simple mantra is that rivers are for wildlife and people not sewage pollution <https://www.windrushwasp.org/>
- Biodiversity Net Gain Gloucestershire with strategic advice from Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust <https://www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/biodiversity-net-gain-and-biodiversity-offsetting>

The Environment Agency have also been busy in other ways including at Hinton-on-the-Green where they have undertaken significant bank stabilisation and improvement works to ensure that the Hinton gauge continues to work effectively; an important tool for measuring the effectiveness of our long-term interventions.

So, to conclude, I would like to

- thank our partners for the works delivered
- pose the question whether the ICG should encourage engagement with some of the more recent groupings with whom we clearly have synergies
- and finally continue to ask members and partners to help us reach out to landowners yet to engage, for the benefit of everyone in the catchment.

Jem Williamson ICG Chair