

East Suffolk Catchment Partnership Newsletter

November 2015

We appointed our first project officer, Mary Norden, in July 2015. Since then, she has been working tirelessly to implement the East Suffolk Watershed Initiative programme (ESWI). This is an ambitious set of projects, selected by the Catchment Partnership and funded by the £31k Catchment Partnership Action Fund, designed to address two of the big issues affecting our rivers in East Suffolk; contamination by sediment runoff and loss of habitat diversity as a result of historic river engineering and drainage operations.

In the Deben headwaters, we are working with the Holistic Water Management Project and Catchment Sensitive Farming; talking to landowners about creating small, field scale, features like leaky ponds and berms. These are designed to hold onto storm runoff and release it slowly over a number of hours or days providing the dual benefit of reducing downstream flood peaks and capturing suspended sediments.

So far, seven landowners have expressed an interest in the project and the Environment Agency's flood model shows that this is enough to significantly reduce the impact of downstream flooding in Debenham. We hope to start work on the smaller features early this spring.



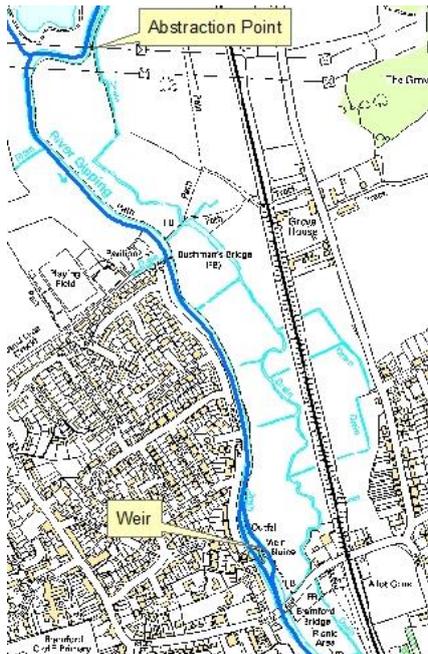
Potential site for temporary flood water pond upstream of Debenham



Otter prints on newly restored back channel at Easton

Further downriver at Easton we have been working with landowners to improve in-channel and bankside habitats. In October we restored almost 1km of silted up backwater channel near Easton and we plan to fund similar works early next year at Ufford. We will be returning to Easton in the spring to install 'large woody debris' structures in the river and the water levels and improvements will be assessed over the next few months. Water Framework Directive investigations show that the Deben currently suffers from reduced fish populations. These works will help maintain stocks by providing valuable fish refuges and nursery areas. The new channels will also create habitats for invertebrates and mammals, such as water voles and otters, and by reconnecting the river to its floodplain, we hope to improve river hydrology. The Environment Agency and Suffolk Wildlife Trusts input were key in

the success of these projects.



Bramford Meadows location plan



We have joined forces with the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, the Bramford Open Spaces Group and the East Suffolk IDB, to restore old backwaters and a length of original meandering river channel at **Bramford Meadows on the River Gipping**. The old meandering channel has been isolated from the river and has silted up over the years. Ideally, we would like to fully restore the original channel, but existing permit restrictions and the presence of utility service mains mean that, for the present, we will have to make do with just a portion of the winter flow. Despite this, the project, which is scheduled to start in January 2016, is expected to provide valuable additional fish and wildlife habitats. Bramford Meadows is a popular local nature reserve and picnic site and the project will benefit large numbers of residents.

Agricultural runoff is a particular problem in the Sandlings area of Suffolk. The combination of light soils and intensive farming means that during most winters, large quantities of soil is washed off the fields and onto our roads and into our streams and rivers.



Agricultural runoff in the Suffolk Sandlings

We are working with FWAG and directly with a number of landowners in the most vulnerable areas to draw up whole Farm Management Plans and to construct a number of silt traps and ponds to reduce sediment contamination. We are hoping to start construction on the first silt traps shortly after Christmas.

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