

# Improving the water environment workshop



Environment  
Agency

Fielder Centre, Hatfield – 14 July 2008

## Attendees:

Andrew Bott, River Beane Restoration Association  
Martin Jee, researcher for Oliver Heald MP  
Jane Gardiner, Ver Valley Society  
Philip Greswell, Ramblers Association, Hertfordshire and North Middlesex area  
Roger Hands, Dacorum Environmental Forum Water Group, Chair of the  
Tim Hill, Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust  
Cllr Bob Horrocks, North Mymms Parish Council  
Tony Last, Friends of the River Mimram  
Tony Langford, Friends of the River Mimram / Tewin Fly Fishing Club  
Claire Martin, Lee Valley Regional Park Authority  
Andrew Sangster, Association of North Thames Amenity Societies  
Daniel Stubbs, Thames Water Utilities Ltd  
Don Street, Friends of the River Mimram  
Mrs Claire Taylor, North Mymms District Green Belt Society  
Andy Webb, Ver Valley Society  
Simon Wightman, Lee Valley Regional Park Authority

## Environment Agency staff present:

Debbie Jones, Environment Manager, Chair of Area Planning Group  
Jessie Grant, North East Area co-ordinator (until August 2008)  
Colette Sales, North East Area co-ordinator (from August 2008)  
Alistair Wilson, Water Resources  
Phil Belfield, Fisheries  
Sarah Scott, Biodiversity  
Adam Malin, Agriculture  
Jenny Thomas, Groundwater  
Ruth Shaw, Environment Management Water Quality  
Esther van Lith, Communications (until August 2008)

## Questions and comments raised at the workshop:

Questions were addressed during the discussions and all comments have been passed to Myles Thomas, Water Framework Directive Programme Manager for the Thames River Basin, for consideration.

- Do we have any base cases to compare to or aim for, such as chalk streams or rivers that have not been modified or overly abstracted?
- The planning dates for urban infrastructure as they currently stand in the plan are not sufficiently long term. This should be a much longer process, closer to 50 years.
- What are the benefits to new development?
- There are already a great number of issues to deal with regarding existing homes and developed areas, let alone new development.
- Has the possibility of transferring water from other areas to water stressed areas been looked at?
- How confident are we about data availability, particularly in relation to low flows?
- What about no-flow regimes? People are being asked to cut back significantly on their water use.
- If the homes that are currently unoccupied were occupied again, how would this influence water demand in the River Basin District?
- Will there be figures available on whole catchments i.e. species throughout the catchment?
- How will water be supplied to the area in the future?
- If we want to improve the water quality for our rivers, do we need to find a way to turn back the clock? Some of the issues that come to mind are over-abstraction and bromate pollution.
- When will the River Ver restoration plan be carried out and completed?
- River restoration and improved storage capacity in case of high river levels?
- Some of the river restoration work would remove the presence of still water. Does consultation with users of this feature take place?
- Water meadows are an important habitat which depend upon a high water table and can sustain a wide diversity of plants. This should be taken into consideration when looking for locations for housing development.
- Where will the funding of measures, both for confident and aspirational measures, come from?
- How will the plan be managed? After publication of the plan, who will oversee the implementation of the measures?

**Comments raised during the interactive session:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Waterbody ID</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Measures</b>	<b>Sectors</b>
River Ver	GB106039029920	Invasive species including Himalayan Balsam and Japanese knotweed (Lower Ver).	n/a	n/a
River Ver	GB106039029920	The widening of the M1 and M25 causing run-off issues. Maintenance issues for "settling ponds" and also pipes taking polluted water into them. Need for resources to allow ongoing management of wetland to maintain favourable conditions.	Many existing wetlands have potential to deliver increased biodiversity if funding and resources were available for works. Diversify below water structures in water bodies to create refuges for fish.	n/a
River Ver	GB106039029920	Low flows/abstraction.	Closure of Kensworth Lynch pumping station at the head of the Valley. Possible increased use of Markyate sewerage treatment works to increase flow in the upper Ver if decrease in abstraction is impossible (all water is currently transported).	n/a
River Ver	GB106039029920	Culverting at Markyate - nowhere for water to flow. Need to consider scale of catchment and ecological indicators e.g. otters may use up to 26 miles of river corridor. Wildfowl may use different water bodies for different life needs. It is important to provide suitable waters for roosting, feeding and moulting.	De-culverting at Markyate. Opportunity for de-culverting at the industrial estate. Clarify what is the main river. Dacorum Borough Council to possibly use land drainage powers.	Environment Agency (EA), Local authorities and landowner.
River Colne	GB106039029850	No thought given in planning for water disposal, only supply.	New housing developments require proper consideration for water dispersal (i) runoff (ii) sewage/effluent. This is currently not the case.	EA should have a larger contribution or say at planning stage.

				Water companies and planning authorities.
River Ver	GB106039029920	Recognition of 'source' area (River Ver) as a proper river/watercourse (Kensworth Lynch, Corner Farm; Markyate). Not recognised as such currently.	Wetlands require ongoing appropriate management if they are to retain their favourable status. Resources and funding needed to carry out works. Ensure wetlands are accessible to local communities by providing appropriate facilities (Quality of life).	n/a
River Ver	GB106039029920	State of 'river' Mill Leat through Verulamium park.	Naturalise channel, cut back over hanging trees.	EA, SADC, English Heritage and landowners.
River Chess	GB106039029860	The potential funding by new developers of Hemel Hempstead in Partnership with BWB.	Berkhampstead sewage works has been retained, upgraded and discharges into a lined wetland which discharges into the Canal. Can the new development at Hemel Hempstead (17,000 properties) justify a new modest sewage works to the East of Hemel Hempstead rather than send/export water to Maple Cross?	n/a
River Beane	GB106038040110	Beane at Stevenage. There is an issue with varying abstraction down stream. DA3 FA4 FA22 and FA27. Authorities concerning water are too fragmented. There is no single, joined-up water strategy.		n/a

River Mimram	GB106038033270	Mimram abstraction - water needs to come back into the system at the top of the reach. Alternative sewage treatment works FA3, FA4, FA22 and FA27.	Re-stocking the River Mimram with Trout and Grayling after periods of drought. Rivers and waterway bridges should be labelled with waterway's names which is a good, cheap proposal. Re-rationalise water resources. Mimram - general question of adequacy of environmental assessment. Should monitoring be a measure?	n/a
Upper Lee	n/a	Sustainability issues.	Import water. Variable metering.	n/a
Upper Lee	n/a	Local sewage effluent works (Beane).	Re-siting abstraction Boreholes (Mimram and Beane).	n/a
Upper Lee	n/a	Recognise the value of the chalk streams.	Ensure wetlands are accessible to local communities by providing facilities (quality of life).	n/a
Upper Lee	n/a	Increase the amount of fish refuge within water bodies to reduce predation.	Need to consider catchment-scale ecological indicators e.g. otters may use up to 26 miles of river corridor. Wildfowl may use different water bodies for different life needs. It is Important to provide suitable waters for roosting, feeding and moulting. Need to ensure all are provided for.	n/a
Upper Lee	n/a	Many existing wetlands have the potential to deliver increased biodiversity if funding/resources were available for works. Wetlands require ongoing appropriate management if they are to retain their favourable status.	Resources and funding are needed to carry out these works.	n/a

London	n/a	Flashy flows on tributaries such as the Turnfood Brook.	Addressing causes vs. managing what we have.	n/a
London	n/a	"Naturalisation" of Flood Relief Channel	Investigation of the effect on flows in channels such as the Old River Lea.	n/a
London	n/a	Important to influence Local Development Frameworks (LDF).	Riverside development leads to lots of bankside habitat e.g. footpaths on both banks of the navigation.	n/a
London	n/a	Low flow in rivers.	Return water to river close to source i.e. better sewage treatment locally rather than piping to a main sewage treatment works. Construct new sewage treatment works for growth areas FA27.	n/a
London	n/a	Wetland enhancement on land of low nature conservation value.	Obvious habitat enhancement benefit, but possible water storage/drought alleviation role.	n/a
London	n/a	Early engagement in LDF work, particularly Area Action Plans to identify areas for river restoration, flood mitigation and habitat creation.	Improve access to and along watercourses to raise awareness and promote the recreational potential of water.	n/a