

Press release: River transfer project gives local communities more say

A project designed to give local organisations and communities more say over the management of local watercourses has entered a new phase with the launch of public drop-ins in four pilot areas throughout October 2017.

The project is exploring the potential to re-designate several sections of selected 'Main Rivers' as 'Ordinary Watercourses,' (a process known as 'de-maining') where – in agreement with the Environment Agency – partners such as Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) or Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs) are keen to take on the lead role of local watercourses.

The project is piloting these changes in 5 locations. 4 of these locations are now approaching the consultation stage of the process and drop-in events will be held in:

- areas of Norfolk and Suffolk
- Stour Marshes in Kent,
- The Isle of Axholme in the East Midlands
- South Forty Foot Catchment in Lincolnshire

The final pilot at Wormbrook and Allensmore Brook in the West Midlands will be running to a different timeline.

The project aims to bring significant benefits to local communities, allowing those who know the layout of their land to take control of their local watercourses, and could help pave the way for further de-maining opportunities throughout England.

For the Environment Agency, the project will also ensure resources are prioritised where the greatest impact on reducing flood risk can be achieved.

Rachael Hill, Flood and Coastal Risk Manager for the Environment Agency, said:

We are working with local organisations to strengthen local decision-making. Internal Drainage Boards and Lead Local Flood Authorities are very much on the ground in communities so giving them responsibility over their own watercourses is a win-win situation that will ensure that the right people are managing the right watercourses in the right places.

We welcome the launch of the community drop-in sessions and we look forward to working together on this project to benefit people and the environment.

Innes Thomson, Chief Executive of the Association of Drainage Authorities

(ADA), added:

This is an unmissable opportunity for local communities to have their say on how they would like to see their local watercourses managed in the best way to make use of the funds available, whilst improving the quality of those watercourses, the environment and community wellbeing associated with healthy, maintained rivers and streams.

The drop-in sessions are an ideal way to find out more about the plans, help allay possible concerns and, very importantly, to provide support for these trials so please do try and find time to come to one of them.

Gaining local support for the transfer of watercourses through engagement and consultation is essential for the success of the project. The public drop-ins will be an opportunity for local communities and interested parties to ask questions and influence the proposals.

This will be followed by a formal consultation on GOV.UK currently scheduled for December 2017 which will seek further views on the proposals. If there are no objections, changes to the watercourse will take place in July 2018.

Drop-in sessions:

East Midlands:

Date	Time	Location
26 October	2pm-5pm	Haxey Chapel- Stephen Jones Community Hall, DN9 2LA
31 October	10am-1pm	Coronation Hall, DN9 1RL

Lincolnshire:

Date	Time	Location
9 October	1pm-6pm	Rippingale Village Hall, PE10 0TA
11 October	1pm-6pm	Billingborough Village Hall, NG34 0QH
18 October	1pm-6pm	Helpringham Memorial Hall, NG34 0RJ

Norfolk and Suffolk:

Date	Time	Location
16 October	2pm-7pm	Kettlestone Village Hall, NR21 0AU
19 October	2pm-7pm	Dereham Memorial Hall Meeting Room, NR19 1AD
24 October	2pm-7pm	Halesworth Methodist Church, IP19 8LR
26 October	2pm-7pm	Wymondham Central Hall, NR18 0QB
27 October	3pm-7pm	Hunstanton Community Centre, PE36 5BW
31 October	2pm-7pm	Sea Palling and Waxham Village Hall, NR12 0US

Stour Marshes:

Date	Time	Location
4 October	2pm-7pm	Minster Village Hall, CT12 4BU
19 October	2pm-7pm	Little Chart Village Hall, TN27 0QB
25 October	2pm-7pm	Great Mongeham Parish Hall, CT14 9LL

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Sustainable use of the subsurface

Explore activities that occur beneath the ground and how they interact using the Sustainable use of the subsurface viewer.

Form: Active farmer certificate – 2017

Updated: Page unarchived

Details

This is the certificate that some farmers may need to send to the Rural Payments Agency to confirm their active farmer status.

There is also the latest guidance for accountants about how to fill in the form, which includes an annex that sets out some of the processes they need to follow.

Farmers need to take the form, the guidance and any relevant financial documents to their accountant.

For more information about the 'active farmer rule', read the latest Basic Payment Scheme rules.

News story: Asian hornet outbreak contained in Devon

A recent outbreak of Asian hornets has been successfully contained by bee inspectors who promptly tracked down and destroyed their nest in Devon.

The hornets were first discovered in the Woolacombe area in September, but the National Bee Unit moved swiftly to find the nest and remove it.

No further live Asian hornets have been seen since the nest was treated with pesticide and removed earlier this month.

Nicola Spence, Defra Deputy Director for Plant and Bee Health, said:

I am pleased our well-established protocol to contain Asian hornets has worked so effectively in Devon.

We remain vigilant, however, and will continue to monitor the situation and encourage people to look out for any Asian hornet nests.

Members of the public are a vital tool in spotting Asian hornets and we urge people to report any potential sightings through the Asian hornet app or online.

This included a two mile surveillance zone in Devon, with bee inspectors scouring the area to track the hornets and the nest. The Animal and Plant Health Agency also opened a local control centre to coordinate the response between the various agencies and teams involved.

Asian hornets pose no greater risk to human health than a bee, though they are a threat to honey bee colonies.

The hornet prey on honeybees, disrupting the ecological role which they provide and damaging commercial beekeeping activities. This is why Defra takes quick action to identify and destroy their nests.

The species arrived in France in 2004 and is now common across large areas of Europe. It was discovered for the first time in the British Isles in Jersey, Alderney and Gloucestershire last summer.

Asian hornets can be confused with their larger native European hornet counterparts; the Asian hornet abdomen is almost entirely dark while the European hornet's abdomen is largely yellow.

It is possible Asian hornets could reappear in the UK and members of the

public alongside the nation's beekeepers are urged to report any suspected sightings.

- The 'Asian hornet watch' app is available to download from the Apple and Android app stores.
- Members of the public can also report sightings by email to alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk with a photo or on the Non-native Species Secretariat website.
- Details on the appearance of an Asian hornet can be found on the Bee Base guide or the non-native species identification guide.