

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMY AND REGENERATION

CONNECTING THE CULM PROJECT

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Graeme Barnell
Responsible Officer: Mrs Jenny Clifford, Head of Planning and Regeneration

Reason for Report: To inform members of progress with the Connecting the Culm Project

RECOMMENDATION: That the contents of the report be noted

Financial Implications: The Council has committed £33k from Government capacity funding for the Culm Garden Village as match funding to undertake a whole river catchment study of the River Culm. The whole river catchment study is considered an important part of the evidence base for that project. And will support strategic planning for the Culm Garden Village development.

Legal Implications: There are no legal implications for the Council as the project is being managed by Devon County Council as the local partner and accountable body.

Risk Assessment: The project has its own risk assessment which forms part of the detailed project business plans. No direct risks to the Council have been identified.

Equality Impact Assessment: The project has its own equality impact assessment which forms part of the detailed project business plans

Impact on Climate Change: The project will be modelling the effect of climate change on the Culm Catchment. One of the purposes of the project is to help mitigate against extreme weather events, both extreme rainfall, and extreme drought, and the knock effects on biodiversity. The project focuses on introducing natural flood management rather than hard engineering solutions.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The project will support the corporate objectives of:

- Facilitating the housing growth that Mid Devon needs
- Planning and enhancing the built environment
- Protecting the natural environment

1.0 Introduction

At the meeting of the Economy Policy Development Group on the 13th June, members asked that:

- a) An update on this project be brought to the next meeting including a timetable showing the key steps involved and that all Members in the Culm catchment area be copied into this whether or not they were on this Group.

- b) The Economic Development Team Leader collate a list of Members' concerns so that evidence could be brought to the attention of the relevant authorities.

2.0 Update on the Connecting the Culm Project

The Connecting the Culm project effectively started on the 1st July with the appointment of the Project Manager, Steven Johnson. He will be giving regular updates on the project and his July briefing is attached as annex 1 for reference. In summary, each of the work packages making up the project have been procured and project activities will be starting in the next couple of weeks once inception meetings have taken place.

3.0 Timetable of key outputs and milestones

At the last Economy PDG members asked for more details on the activities and timescales for the project. For the purpose of procuring specialist support to undertake the various elements of the project, the project activities have been divided into seven lots.

Lot 1 – ‘Co-creation Specialist’ – This includes the community engagement elements of the projects. This will involve workshops and events with community and specialist stakeholders to understand the local context and engage with residents on local flooding and climate change with the purpose of developing with landowners and communities ('co-creation') appropriate nature based solutions for potential flooding events.

Lot 1 - Key Output and Milestones	Timescale
1. Develop Stakeholder Engagement Plan and peer review	Jul-Dec 2019
2. Co-Adapt 'Adaptive Pathways' seminar (UK)	Jul 2019
3. Working with 900 people across Culm catchment	Jul 2019 -Jun 2022
4. Education programme as part of co-creation	Jan 2020 – Sep 2021
5. Involving people in nature based/natural process solution interventions	Aug 2020-Jul2022
6. Involving 100 people in volunteer monitoring including establishing the projects 'River Watch' scheme.	Oct 2021-Jun 2022
7. Contributing to the production to the 25-year Blueprint for the Culm and Co-creation manual	Jul 2019 -Jun 2022

Lot 2 – Whole catchment study of the River Culm and its tributaries and associated waterways – including detailed hydrological and hydraulic modelling of different rainfall scenarios based on projected changes to the climate taking into account the current understanding of climate change, and modelling the effect of changes in agricultural practice and housing developments. It will also demonstrate where interventions are best placed to have the greatest effect in reducing peak water flows.

Lot 1 - Key Output and Milestones	Timescale
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1. Contract Awarded & Work Commences	July 2019
2. Co-Adapt 'Adaptation Pathways' seminar	July 2019
3. Co-Adapt Transition Roadmaps and Spatial Planning seminar	Oct 2019
4. Detailed modelling	July 2019 – Mar 2020
5. Long-term Spatial Vision for the Culm	Nov 2019–(Sept 2020)
6. Contract Complete	Mar 2020

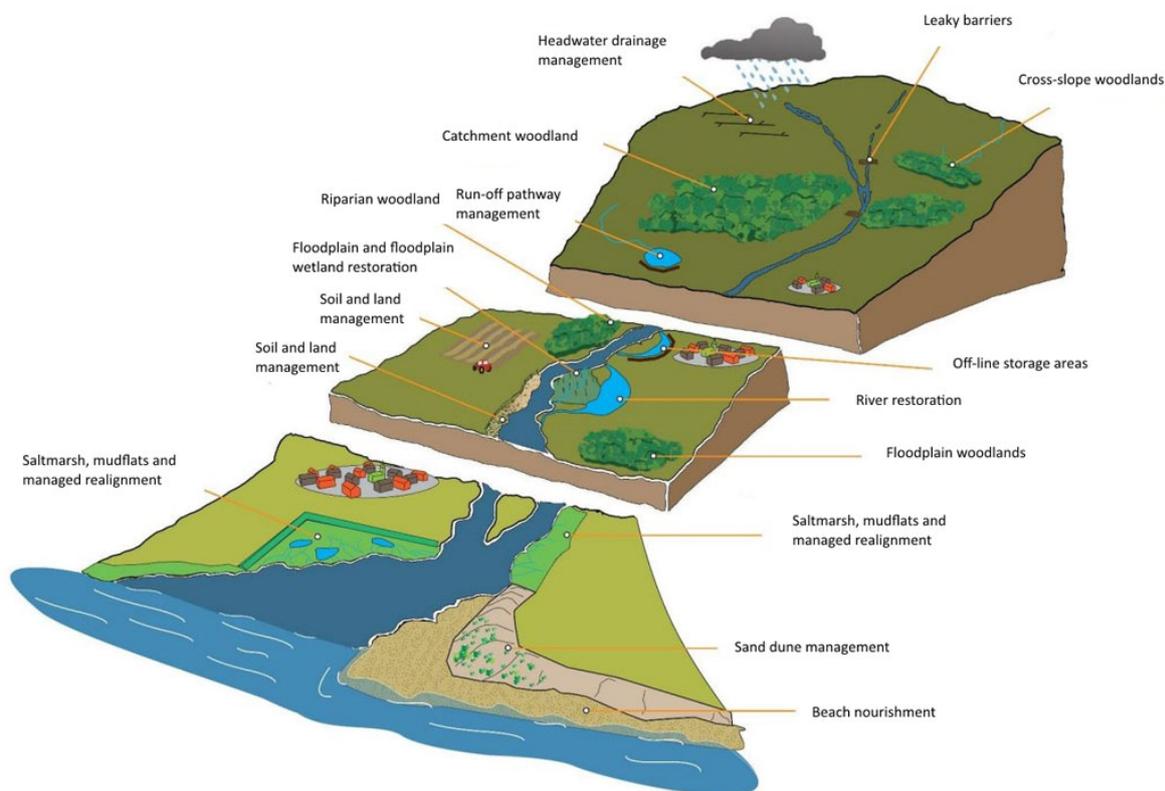
Lot 3 – Hydrological Monitoring – to provide baseline and ongoing monitoring of hydraulic change, soil infiltration and storage, sediment and water quality, effects of low flow and effects on groundwater levels.

Lot 3- Key Outputs and Milestones	Timescale
1. Extent of contract	Sep 2019 – Jun 2022
2. Review existing data collection, monitoring techniques and active monitoring stations on the Culm and collect and analyse historic data.	Sep 2019 – Dec 2019
3. Install additional baseline monitoring stations at key points if required	by end of 2019
4. Develop a monitoring regime for the Culm 5. Work directly with EA specialists and with Project Partners in Co-Adapt in developing the monitoring regime 6. Design monitoring systems that match the outcomes that the CTC project seeks, specific to the Culm catchment and to the emerging needs of the project as the project develops.	by Oct 2020
7. Install monitoring systems once these have been agreed.	Oct 2020 - Feb 2022.
8. Work with the Project Team to Recruit and train 100 volunteers for the CTC "River Watch" scheme	Start Oct 2021
9. Contribute towards the evaluation of the project and the development of Toolkits, on-line resources and other forms of dissemination	ongoing throughout contract

Lot 4 – Co-creation Evaluation Work – evaluation of the success of community engagement and 'co-creation' of nature based solutions

Lot 4 – Key Outputs and Milestones	Timescale
1. Develop evaluation plan and methodology with project team	Jul-Dec 2019
2. Co-Adapt 'Adaptation Pathways' seminar	July 2019
3. Establish a baseline to assess current levels of community engagement across the Culm catchment in terms of flooding and climate change.	Jul-Dec 2019
4. Undertake on-going evaluation and monitoring of key audiences/ stakeholders through project events and activities	Jan 2020-Jun 2022
5. Yr1 evaluation report with recommendations	Dec 2019
6. Yr 2 evaluation report with recommendations	Dec 2020
7. Yr 3 evaluation report with recommendations	Dec 2021
8. Final evaluation report	Jun 2022

Lot 5 – Nature Based Solutions Specialist – to work with landowners and community stakeholders to identify appropriate interventions for natural flood management in the three demonstration areas, including individually or in combination interventions such as tree planting, leaky dams, attenuation features, woodland management, mire restoration, and floodplain reconnection.



Examples of Natural Flood Management Interventions

Lot 5 - Key Outputs & Milestones	Timescale
1. Engaging landowners across the Culm catchment	Jul 2019 - Jun 2022
2. Feed into Whole Catchment Study & modelling	Jul 2019 - Mar 2020
3. Co-Adapt 'Adaptive Pathways' seminar (UK)	Jul 2019
4. Co-Adapt Transition Roadmaps and Spatial Planning seminar (EU)	Oct 2019
5. Initial nature based/natural process solutions options appraisal	Jul 2019 -Dec 2019
6. Detailed design by co-creation	Jan 2020 - July 2020
7. Detailed technical design	July 2020 - Sep 2020
8. Construct nature based/natural process solution interventions	Aug 2020 -Jun 2022
9. Involving people in nature based/natural process solution interventions	Aug 2020 - Jun2022
10. Production to the 25-year Blueprint for the Culm / Co-creation manual	Jul 2019 -Jun 2022

Lot 6 – Education Specialist – to create educational materials and work with schools in the area to raise awareness of the issues and engage children with the issues of climate change and the process of natural flood management.

Key Outputs and Milestones	Timescale
8. Co-Adapt ‘Adaptive Pathways’ seminar (UK)	Jul 2019
9. Develop education program, materials/resources and liaise with schools	Jan - Apr 2020
10. Deliver education programme as part of co-creation	May 2020 - Jul 2021
11. Produce report as contribution to the 25-year Blueprint for the Culm / Co-creation manual	Jul-Sep 2021

Lot 7 – Habitat Restoration Monitoring – to measure the baseline state and change to habitats within the three demonstration sites.

Lot 7- Key Outputs & Milestones	Timescale
12. Collate existing baseline data	Jul 2019 - Jun 2020
13. Produce report to feed into whole catchment study	Dec 2020
14. Liaise with CTC project team to recruit survey volunteers, design volunteer survey methodology	July 2019 onwards
15. Monitoring habitat restored/ re-created	Jun 2020 – Jun 2022
16. Final report	June 2022

Details of each of these packets of work are contained in the procurement documents, which have been printed off and are available in the members room. The overall timetable and gantt chart for the project is provided as annex 4.

4.0 Collating Concerns

As requested, the Economic Development Team Leader will collect together specific issues that members would like to see addressed through this project. These will feed into the development of a Blueprint for whole catchment management, which is one of the final outputs of the three year project. There will be further opportunities to raise specific concerns relating to the River Culm through the stakeholder events and workshops which will be taking place from January 2020 onwards. It is proposed that there should be stakeholder groups in each of the three project areas, the Upper Culm, Mid-Catchment (around Cullompton) and Lower Culm and the names of District Councillors have been included in the stakeholder list which is being collated to inform these groups.

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Circulation of the Report: Cllr Graeme Barnell

List of Background Papers:

Annex 1 – July Briefing Note from Project Manager
Annex 2 – Project Plan and Gantt Chart

Annex 1 - Connecting the Culm

Briefing Note: July 2019

Connecting the Culm has been developed by a partnership of organisations including Devon County Council, Environment Agency, Mid Devon District Council and National Trust and will be led by the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The project is starting in earnest July 2019, and has funding for three-years, including 40% from partner contributions and 60% funding from the European Regional Development Fund, through the Interreg 2 Seas programme.

The aims of Connecting the Culm are to help the River Culm and its catchment adapt to climate change by: improving resilience to flood and drought, improving water quality, supporting biodiversity and habitat, and involving local people and organisations in the process of developing solutions.

Connecting the Culm is part of Co-Adapt, a €7million project involving eight European projects (including three in England). The Co-Adapt projects will encourage local communities and key organisations to work collaboratively to 'co-create' solutions which improve resilience to climate change.

As of July 2019, the team who will be delivering the project are in place, including over £460k of contractor services, following a recent round of procurement. Steven Johnson has been appointed as Connecting the Culm project manager and will lead the team of contractors who will focus on specific areas:

- **Westcountry Rivers Trust** will be leading the development of nature-based solutions for the river catchment. They will also be undertaking hydrological monitoring, and evaluating the co-creation achieved through the project.
- **JBA Consulting** will be undertaking a whole catchment study, including modelling and analysis to produce a tool which will support sound decision making. This aims to identify opportunities and constraints for the design of nature-based solutions, improve understanding of how different climate scenarios will impact the river catchment, and inform long-term planning.
- **Groundwork** will be leading the co-creation elements of the project, including engaging the public, organisations and stakeholder groups to take an active role in the development of solutions.
- **Catherine Farnell** will be leading education elements of the project, including engaging with local schools to improve understanding of the water environment and the impacts of climate change
- **Devon Biodiversity Records Centre** will be monitoring biodiversity and informing nature-based solutions for the protection and restoration of habitat in the catchment

Please contact Steven Johnson (steven.johnson@devon.gov.uk) with any queries and see <https://blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk/connecting-the-culm/> for project updates.

