

WILD Project Newsletter

Spring 2014

Welcome to our first Newsletter



Photo: Siddington Meadows

What is the WILD Project?

The WILD project (Water with Integrated Local Delivery) is a partnership of primarily four organisations working together to bring about environmental improvements to the rivers and other watercourses of the Cotswold Water Park. The partnership is led by Gloucestershire Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) and includes Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC), Cotswold Water Park Trust (CWPT) and the Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI). The partnership aims to improve the ecological status of the water bodies in the Cotswold Water Park.

What are we doing?

Project Officers are engaging with local communities and landowners to encourage them to get directly involved in understanding local water courses and their management. With local community input we are also devising and beginning to deliver plans of enhancements over the three year period of the project.

Initial work involves discussing and mapping water-related issues in parishes/towns with both communities and landowners. Walkover surveys of water bodies identified as failing for ecology are also being carried out. All of this information is combined and potential projects and recommendations for improvements are discussed with all parties concerned and planned in more detail.



Photo: Chris Rumble, Siddington. WILD volunteer extraordinaire

Why get involved?

The nature and wildlife within your parish vary hugely, the WILD project aims to give you an insight of what you have on your doorstep and how you can be involved in managing and enhancing the wildlife that inhabits nearby water courses. We can provide you with specialist one to one support from:

- Cotswold Water Park Trust
- Gloucestershire FWAG
- Gloucestershire Rural Community Council

For more information on the WILD Project and to get involved please contact:

Jenny Phelps (FWAG) – working with landowners/farmers

01285 700832 or 07876 687272

jenny.phelps@gloucestershirefwag.org.uk

Helen Richards (GRCC) – working with communities

01452 528491 helenr@grcc.org.uk

Petrina Brown (CWPT) – Biodiversity Officer

01793 752730 petrina.brown@waterpark.org

Projects in the Pipeline - Below are examples of work with communities and landowners already taking place.

Poulton

Poulton village has been developing their parish plan and, with the support from GRCC, a village survey was carried out to identify issues affecting the village, one of which is flooding. The Ashbrook flows through the village, which is also an important stream to restore for water quality. As a result of a CWPT survey carried out from the WILD Project, it is evident that fish populations are declining due to low summer flows and the need for some riparian management. Some farm land has also been affected by standing water from flooding, affecting both crop health and the potential for soil and nutrient loss. The NFU farmer champion for the village has also been working with FWAG and Catchment Sensitive Farming to look at water flows across farmland above the village, showing a great willingness to help the community where possible.



With the support of the WILD Project the Parish Council met with the landowner and set about mapping the village river, streams, ditches, road culverts and drains, as there did not appear to be an overview of the ditch network showing collectively how the water flowed across the village. The Parish Council discovered that much of the ditch infrastructure appears to not be well connected leading to the road focussing water to a central point in the village rather than following a natural path. Mapping work identified 40 issues in the village including the lack of suitable culverts installed on access routes over main ditches and some old ditch networks being filled in or disconnected.

The Parish Council now understand how water is currently flowing, land ownership and governance of rivers, ditches and streams and is able to start to create an opportunity for shared problem solving. Creating a list of actions through dialogue between landowners and the village will continue to find possible ways of joint working with the support of Highways, Cotswold District, Natural England and the Environment Agency. This will lead to better management of the water environment for both flooding and water quality.

Works on the Ground, WILD Biodiversity Officer, CWPT

Works on the ground started during the last 2 weeks of January on the Ampney Brook. This involved extensive tree works and scrub clearance to reduce shading on 700m of the watercourse. The river here is one of the few sections that still meanders as the river has been straightened extensively downstream of this section.



Before

After

Work was conducted in partnership with Co-operative farms and have made a massive difference to the amount of light now reaching the river. The hope is that in due course marginal and aquatic vegetation will establish along with associated fauna like wild Brown Trout. The CWPT will continue to work with the Co-op to reduce shading on the Ampney Brook at the end of 2014 once the

arable crops have been removed and will potentially include up to another 1.5km of river enhancements.

“What’s in my back yard?”

Find out about water quality issues affecting your area on the Environment Agency website. Search “What’s in my back yard” at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency>

Getting WILD about Invasives

Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) is a large annual plant native to the Himalayas introduced to gardens back in 1839, the plant escaped and is now naturalised and widespread throughout the UK. It is highly invasive and causes major infestations outcompeting native species particularly on river banks. Because the plant is an annual, it dies back on mass in the autumn; this can leave a bare riverbank vulnerable to erosion thereby aiding sediment pollution washing into the watercourse.



Photo: Dave Kilbey

As part of the WILD Project the CWPT are keen to enlist help from local people to tackle this problematic weed.

As part of the WILD Project the CWPT are keen to enlist help from local people to tackle this problematic weed.

Recent success stories have demonstrated that if enough people can rally together to remove the plant (before it seeds), starting from the most upstream point & working downstream, it is possible to virtually eradicate the plant. However this is reliant on effort being maintained for 2-3 years and subsequent monitoring to remove any stray plants.

How can you help?

- Submit records by downloading the free “Plant Tracker” App or upload records via their website: <http://planttracker.naturelocator.org/add>
- Attend a CWPT surveying briefing session starting in South Cerney on 6th & 10th May 2014.
- Join a plant pull event - starting on 20th May 2014.

What to do next

If you would like to get involved please register your interest with: **Paul Attaway**, CWPT Volunteer Co-ordinator.

paul.attaway@waterpark.org or 01793 752730

