

FOCUS

LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN SHREWSBURY, SHAWBURY, NEWPORT, TELFORD, SHIFNAL, MUCH WENLOCK, BRIDGNORTH, BEWDLEY, BROMSGROVE, DROITWICH AND WORCESTER

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Angling participation project update

The Environment Agency is promoting angling participation in the north and mid Shropshire areas. This project has come about as a result of market research, which shows there are a large number of potential anglers but that certain groups such as the young, elderly and disabled often find it difficult to take part. This is because they do not have someone to go with, somewhere suitable to go or fishing tackle to use. 'The angling participation project seeks to introduce newcomers to angling and to promote long-term support for those who wish to continue' says Andy Roberts, Environment Agency, Technical Officer, Fisheries.



Coaching weekends held at locations such as Telford and in the Wem area were very successful

A series of events have taken place throughout the area.

- The Agency attended the Telford Disabled Angling Association fishing day at Leegomery Pools, Telford in June last year. The event sought to help young people with all kinds of disabilities to take part in an organised event
- The Agency joined with the Telford Angling Association and the Professional Anglers Association to provide the first of three pilot instructional weekends using professional coaches. The event took place at Little Apley Pool, Telford in September 2002
- The Agency has supported the Shropshire Junior Angling Championships event over a number of years as it provides youngsters with an opportunity to take part in the area of competitive fishing.

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Foreword

Welcome to the second local environment focus newsletter for the Middle Severn area. It highlights some of the work begun in the last year to protect and enhance the local environment. Partnerships will continue to play an ever more important role in the years to come if we are to achieve sustained environmental improvements locally.

I hope that you will find this newsletter interesting. If you have any comments or views, or you wish to become more involved in addressing local environmental issues, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Bob Branson

Bob Branson
Acting Upper Severn Area
Manager
Environment Agency



Angling participation project update *continued*



The championship took place on the River Severn at Monkmoor, Shrewsbury on the first Saturday in September and 80 children from 4 to 14 years took part

- The Salmon and Trout Association ran a number of 'taster' events for young people at commercial trout fisheries in the area during the summer
- The second Agency/Professional Anglers Association coaching weekend took place at Mousecroft Pool, Shrewsbury in September 2002. Pupils from the Wakeman School in

Shrewsbury took part. Demand was so great that available places could have been filled ten times over. The youngsters who wanted to attend were equally divided between male and female and between those who had fished previously and those who were novices

- The final coaching weekend of the summer was held at Steel Heath, Nr Prees, Shropshire for young anglers in the Wem area in October 2002.

Lack of access to suitable angling facilities can prevent young, elderly and disabled people from being able to fish. As part of the angling participation project, the Agency is helping to provide safe access to fisheries. The Agency has successfully bid for funds to remove dangerous trees at Sawmills Pool, near Newtown, Powys and to provide angling platforms at Hough Pool, Prees, Shropshire. Both projects are in partnership with the landowners and angling groups and include an agreement that the pools are made available for junior angling events.

A total of 272 young anglers took part in events organised, or supported by, the Agency. The junior angling events



organised by the Environment Agency are free and fishing tackle can be provided if necessary. This summer, it is predicted that over 400 young people will get involved in angling events, as part of the project.

For further information please contact: Andy Roberts, Fisheries Team, Environment Agency Shrewsbury office.

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'The angling participation project seeks to introduce newcomers to angling and to promote long-term support for those who wish to continue'

Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy (CAMS) for the Severn Corridor

Catchment Abstraction Management strategies (CAMS) aim to provide a shared strategy for the sustainable management of water resources within a catchment. These strategies will also set out the availability of water for abstraction in a catchment and its licensing policy. Where there is no available water or there is a deficit, CAMS will determine a procedure for reclaiming water to protect the water environment.

The first CAMS to be produced in the Midlands is the Severn Corridor, which looks at the rivers Severn & Clwydog, from the River Severn's source in the Welsh mountains to the estuary below Gloucester. The consultation document for this area was launched in October 2002 and people were invited to have their say on this proposed strategy.

This consultation document was part of a formal consultation on the way the

Agency proposes to manage water resources for the next six years and the basis on which it would make decisions about abstraction licence applications. The document provides an overview of the River Severn corridor, focussing specifically on the river channel. It does not consider flood management, which is covered by separate studies.

The Severn Corridor is a superb place for wildlife and we need to make sure we can safeguard this, as well as meeting the needs of water users. It's quite a challenge really', says Kate Hurst, Regulatory Officer (CAMS), Shrewsbury.

56 responses were collated, the results of which were published in a 'Statement of Response' in March this year.

The final CAMS document for the Corridor will be launched in July 2003. Then, the



Ironbridge

strategy will set out the licensing practice for abstraction and identify how this should be managed in a sustainable way.

For further information on this article, please contact: Kate Hurst, Water Resources Team, Environment Agency Shrewsbury office.

Guide on angling in the Midlands

More than 370 day ticket fisheries in the Midlands are covered by a guide to game and coarse fishing for people who live in, or are visiting, the Midlands, covering Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, Staffordshire, the Black Country, Shropshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire.

The guide also gives information on rod licences, anglers' responsibilities to wildlife and rod fishing bylaws. This will help to ensure that anglers can check the rules governing their sport.

The region hosts a great diversity of opportunities for both coarse and game fishing with over 7000km of river, 1000km of canal and hundreds of stillwaters. The guide is designed to help the new and

junior angler to find suitable venues as well as offering the more experienced angler a wealth of new challenges.

Furthermore, the Agency is urging anglers to sign up to direct debits for their rod licences. This new system means that anglers will not have to think about renewing their licence - a new one will be sent automatically each year before the new season starts.

For further information, please contact: Ricardo Mateos, Customer Contact Team, Environment Agency Shrewsbury office.



Climate change and flooding in the garden

How gardens will be affected by climate change in Britain is the topic of a new publication, 'Climate change in the garden.' The leaflet discusses how wind, dryness and shade affect types of plants in different ways. The average temperature may rise by 2°C by the year 2030. Summers could be hotter and winters wetter, together with more storms and sudden swings from flood to drought. Another useful guide has also been published, entitled 'Flooding in gardens.' This guide explains how to cope with excess water in the garden.

For more information on flooding, please call Floodline on 0845 988 1188 or visit the Environment Agency website at www.environment-agency.gov.uk/flood.

To obtain copies of both publications please contact: the Customer Contact Team, Environment Agency Shrewsbury office.



Helping farmers

An Environment Agency booklet, 'Best farming practices: profiting from a good environment' has been produced, with the help and encouragement of farmers and landowners. The booklet aims to help identify opportunities for change to benefit the environment. Often, by making only relatively minor changes to the farming system, the risk of environmental damage, can be significantly reduced-providing a sustainable basis for protecting soil, water and wildlife. Experience has also shown that many farmers can save money by simple changes to the way they work.



Beetle bank, sown with tussocky grasses, helps reduce soil erosion by wind and water

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Experience has also shown that many farmers could save money by simple changes to the way they work

The Agency works closely with the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), who provide conservation advice to farmers and advice on the extensive range of grant opportunities available. Publicly funded schemes such as Countryside Stewardship Scheme, Environmentally Sensitive Area Scheme and the Woodland Grant Scheme are administered by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Many of these schemes include options that have a direct beneficial effect on environmental quality. For example, the incorporation of grass strips around fields can reduce the effect of pesticide and fertiliser runoff into sensitive habitats such as hedgerows and watercourses.

Sutton Mill Farm, Claverley, has integrated best farming practices with the arable and sheep enterprises to minimise erosion of the sandy soils.

The Agency hopes that its work with FWAG and the 'Best farming practices' booklet will increasingly help farmers to make environmental management decisions.

For further information on this issue, please contact: Dr Andy Wilcox, Rural Affairs & Environment Group, Harper Adams University College, 01952 815373 or Alison Jones, Farm Conservation Adviser Shropshire FWAG on 01939 262150. Copies of the 'Best farming practices' booklet are available from Ricardo Mateos, Customer Contact team, Environment Agency Shrewsbury office.

Lapwing lifeline

Advice from the Environment Agency is helping to boost bird numbers in a small area of North Shropshire by re-creating wetland habitats. The Lapwing Lifeline is a practical partnership aimed at encouraging farmers to adapt their land management practices to help reverse the falling numbers of lapwing pairs in the county. The Agency is keen to work in partnership with other organisations, such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and The Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), helping farmers to enhance priority biodiversity habitats and species.

John Simister, who farms near Market Drayton has entered into a Countryside Stewardship Agreement on his farm. Mr Simister manages areas of floodplain grassland and has just introduced a herd of belted galloway cattle from Scotland on to his farm which are ideal for wetter conditions. They will manage the rough grassland, which is the type of habitat that lapwings love. The Environment Agency has helped with the scheme by providing a length of fencing and advising on recreating the historic wet conditions. Forty-two acres of low-lying floodplain arable land have been turned over to the cattle along the River Duckow.

By reverting the land to true floodplain and growing spring-sown crops in adjacent fields, ideal habitat is created for waders to live and breed.



Belted Galloway cattle have been introduced to John Simister's farm

For more information on this, please contact: Partnerships Team, Environment Agency Shrewsbury office.

'Rethink rubbish', you can help turn the world around

Welcome to Our Future (WTOF) is working with local authorities and the Environment Agency to help promote new ways of dealing with our rubbish. It is the biggest ever rubbish awareness campaign in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. The Malvern based charity, a company limited by guarantee, has designed and co-ordinated the £600,000 campaign, for up to five years. The landfill tax funding is supplied by Severn Waste Services.



Herefordshire.' She also added, 'we hope the campaign will boost public awareness of waste issues, encourage changes in behaviour and generally drive home the message that we can all make a real difference.'

'Rethink rubbish' is targeted at householders, individuals at work, teachers and school children, and aims to make them aware of why we should manage waste and the importance of reducing, reusing and recycling rubbish.

Manager Sue Fyleman, says, 'we are a throwaway society and getting worse. The amount of rubbish is rising at the rate of 3% a year. Only 13.3% is recycled in Worcestershire and 11.9% in

Currently, householders in Herefordshire and Worcestershire generate 373,000 tonnes of rubbish each year. This is enough to fill a 30 storey building the size of a football pitch every year. 18% of households generate more than 4 bags per week.

Environment Agency Officer Sarah Harcombe, adds 'All of the partners in this project are committed to encouraging people to use natural resources more wisely. The campaign is about getting people to realise the long-term implications of ignoring our role in creating rubbish and recycling, as well as inspiring people to avoid waste and recycle more and more materials.'

The campaign has already been nominated in the National Recycling Awards 2002, in the best information and communication campaign category.

For more information on how to reduce the rubbish you throw away and where local recycling centres are, log onto www.turntheworld.com or phone the campaign office for a copy of the Recycling Guide on 01684 862281. Alternatively, please contact Sarah Harcombe, Environment Officer, Environment Agency Kidderminster office.



Flood exercise in Bewdley and Shrewsbury

The Agency carried out a live exercise, 'Exercise Atlas', in November 2002 to practice putting up the demountable flood barriers at Severnside North in Bewdley. The need to preserve the beauty of the riverside at Bewdley was one of the factors that led to the decision to use demountable barriers. When a flood is forecast, they will be erected along the quayside, and removed when the flood danger has passed. When there is a risk of flooding, the demountable posts are bolted onto permanent steel base-plates with the barriers slotted into place. When river levels are within normal limits, these base-plates are the only visible sign of the flood defence.

Bewdley and Shrewsbury are the first places in the UK to benefit from this innovative type of flood defence. The exercise formed part of an ongoing programme to ensure that Agency staff are fully trained to erect the barriers quickly and efficiently in the event of a real flood.

'Exercise Atlas' took staff through a simulated flood event based on the one that occurred in Autumn 2000. The exercise began with an instruction for the demountable flood barriers to be deployed on Severnside North. Members of the Agency's emergency workforce brought the barriers out of storage at Hartlebury, transported them to Severnside North on a trailer and put them up, as if it were a real flood.

The Agency also carried out a 'tabletop' exercise in Shrewsbury in the same month, to practice response to a forecast flood event. Agency flood defence officers opened the incident room and practiced responding to a number of flood scenarios, which included issuing flood warnings and instructions to the emergency workforce.

For further information on this issue, please contact: Peter May, Flood Defence Team, Environment Agency Shrewsbury office.



Bewdley - Exercise Atlas in progress

Fly tipping — Offerton lane, Warndon, Worcester

Offerton lane in Worcester has been a fly tipping 'hotspot' for many years. The site had to be regularly cleared so that residents on an adjoining caravan site, could get to and from their homes and members of the general public could use the bridle path that leads from the lane to the Worcester to Birmingham canal.

Worcester City Council clears the site bi-monthly, removing approximately 200 tonnes of waste each year. The cost of clearing the waste is around £7,000 a year and Worcestershire County Council pay a further £7,000 to dispose of the waste. The waste included household and commercial waste, which included some dangerous chemicals. On one particular occasion a one-off clearance of dangerous chemicals cost in excess of £6,000.

The Environment Agency has joined forces with the local authorities to tackle the fly tipping problem. The aim is to combat the problem and deter people from tipping illegally at Offerton Lane and other sites. The partnership wishes to educate and remind people of their responsibilities when it comes to disposing of their waste.

The partnership has:

- produced 'No Fly Tipping' signs. These also advertise the location and contact details of local waste disposal sites
- cleared waste in Offerton lane, with help from Worcester City Council, the local councillor, a local housing association working group (Duckworth Trust).

- mounted an overt surveillance camera on a street light overlooking Offerton Lane.

The project has resulted in:

- greatly reduced instances of fly tipping in Offerton Lane
- two successful prosecutions of companies who had dumped rubbish in Offerton Lane. The Magistrates court fined both companies and ordered them to pay costs
- one warning letter
- significant local press coverage.

For further information on this issue, please contact: Sarah Harcombe, Environment Officer, Environment Agency Kidderminster office.

Starting your own business? – get informed and be successful

Over the past six months the Agency has been working with Worcester Management Centre to introduce an environmental legislation and good practice module in an existing five-day business start up course.

Worcester Management Centre has been delivering courses for businesses since 1992. The current course is co-funded by Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce and Business Link, ESF (European Social Fund) and the local Learning and Skills Council, with support from the Agency.

In the past six months, over 150 delegates have attended the fortnightly

run course, aimed at helping delegates successfully set up their own business and raise their awareness of the issues & responsibilities they will face. The five-day course covers marketing, financial planning, bookkeeping, personal selling skills, environmental legislation and good practice. A number of specialist speakers are invited from banks, Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise.

Environment Officer Sarah Harcombe, Environment Agency, says 'It is important that everyone in business is aware of environmental legislation and their statutory obligations. Some legislation affects all business regardless

of their size, like for example the Duty of Care of Waste. I hope that by discussing these issues and raising awareness of good practice, these new businesses will incorporate environmental concerns at the heart of their operations, maximising efficiency, minimising pollution and wastage and complying with the law'.

For more information on the course, contact: Lesley Wilkins at the Business Development Centre on 01905 612412 or write to Business Development Centre, Unicorn Chambers, Chapel Walk, Crowngate, Worcester WR1 3LD. Alternatively email us at bdc@wortech.ac.uk.



If you would like further information on how environmental legislation affects your business log on to www.environment-agency.gov.uk/netregs. This is a very user friendly site, which provides clear guidelines on how to comply with the legislation. Alternatively contact: Sarah Harcombe, Environment Officer, Environment Agency Kidderminster office.

Environmental & business needs survey, Aston Fields Industrial Estate, Bromsgrove

Bromsgrove District Council and the Environment Agency have commissioned a survey to determine how sustainable companies on the trading estate are.

Bishopswood Environment Business Centre carried out the survey and talked to over 74% of businesses on the estate. 54 businesses took part in the survey. These were small to medium enterprises (SME's) employing between 1- 249 staff.

Companies on the estate demonstrated a commitment to broad sustainability issues. Over 75% of companies tried to source services and products locally. 60% of SME's actively encouraged

employee personal development and life long learning.

22% of the companies have an environmental policy. Approximately 45% of companies monitor energy consumption, waste levels and transport costs. Over 25% of companies marketed their products or services on the basis of their environmental responsibility.

The survey highlighted the need and desire for companies to find responsible outlets for small segregated waste streams. Companies on the estate were keen to see an improvement in the trading estate landscape, clearer signage, transport links, better waste storage facilities and a reduction in litter.

The trading estate surface water runoff enters tributaries of the River Salwarpe. Water quality down stream from the estate does not meet water quality standards consistently. The limited knowledge of environmental legislation and good housekeeping for oil covered rags, tools, parts and swarf on site, adds to the local risk of avoidable environmental damage.

Bromsgrove District Council is looking into ways of tackling transport, crime and waste management issues. For further information please contact: Keith James on 01527 881418. Alternatively, please contact: Sarah Harcombe at the Environment Agency Kidderminster office.

Community Strategies

The Local Government Act 2000 placed a duty on local authorities to prepare Community Strategies. Nationally, the Agency has made a commitment to contribute to them. So what do Community Strategies do?

They aim to enhance the quality of life for local communities and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development through community actions, to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area. Community Strategies have a vision and action plans for the local area. These plans are prepared and implemented through the Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) led by the local authorities who work with local partners, public service providers, the police, environmental health, business and voluntary sectors, and others. Their job is to provide action plans to meet the public needs and priorities. This is where we are involved, as the Environment Agency's wide environment management role includes flood defence, wiser and sustainable use of natural resources, wildlife protection, planning liaison and contaminated land management. This means that our work has an impact on many aspects of people's quality of life.

We are keen to have some input into all community strategies, by commenting on the action plans, or attending meetings.

However, with our limited resources there is a need for prioritising our involvement, which we do through our business plans, making sure that we are in touch with the needs of local people.

As a result, we are helping to promote the environment as an integral part of community strategies.

Work to date has built on our strong links with Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council. We are also involved in the Shropshire Countywide LSP. We have also been closely involved in the creation of the Vision 21 Malvern Hills LSP and commented on Malvern Hills District Community Strategy, and supported the North Shropshire rainbow event in October 2002. Bridgnorth is in the process of creating its environment group, and we are also participating in the Worcestershire's Community Strategy Plan 2002-2012.

This ongoing work is enabling us to reinforce our key messages: the importance of more sustainable use of natural resources, minimising waste, flood management, preventing pollution and safeguarding biodiversity, and also helping to deliver our local strategy. We are also starting to discuss with Local Planning Authorities the role of Community Strategies within the context of the proposed Planning Bill and how we may influence the proposed Local Development frameworks through the Community Strategy process.

For further information on this article, please contact: Ricardo Mateos, Partnerships Planning Team, Environment Agency Shrewsbury office.

Low flow alleviation update

Low flows in some watercourses result in lack of dilution of effluent and loss of biodiversity in the stream itself. The Agency is therefore seeking ways of alleviating these low flows; two such initiatives are mentioned here:

River Worfe

Work continues on the scheme for the River Worfe. Control rules regarding the use of Severn Trent Water's borehole at Sheriff hales are being agreed with the company and this will then formalise the use of water from the borehole to alleviate low flows in the upper reaches. In addition, we have been testing releases from a private borehole near Cramp Pool, with the owners' permission, to alleviate low flows down a small tributary of the Worfe, which joins the river at Ruckley Grange. The trials have proved successful and this has encouraged us to carry out the habitat improvement work down the reach. We are now considering the way forward on this – one of the options is to include the proposal in Asset Management Plan 4 (AMP4) concerning the Water Companies' Strategic Business Plans, for the water company to finance in the future.

A group of representatives from the Agency, Severn Trent Water, Wildlife Trust, The Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), National Farmers Union (NFU) and fisheries, meet quarterly to discuss the project and the ways forward.

For more information contact: Jean Payn, Water Resources and Hydrology Team, Environment Agency Shrewsbury office.

Battlefield Brook

Investigation continues into the low flow problems on the Battlefield Brook, which flows through Bromsgrove. The Agency has sunk two observation boreholes, which have provided further information on the hydrogeology of the area. Severn Trent Water are to drill a compensation borehole in the Catshill area. Water abstraction from this will be discharged to the brook to supplement flows upstream of the Agency's compensation borehole, which is just upstream of Sanders Park.

For further information on the scheme please contact: Sarah Gaskill, Water Resources and Hydrology Team, Environment Agency Shrewsbury office.



Burlington Mill Pool showing channel/pool work

The Mere development plan

The Mere is a site which is very popular with local people and day-trippers from Wrexham, Shrewsbury, Chester and from the nearer parts of the Potteries and the West Midlands.



River Mere

The Mere Development Plan is looking towards a new integrated approach for:

- natural heritage
- recreation
- regional and local planning
- culture
- economic development
- information and education
- local interest
- sustainability

Phase I - In August last year, Shropshire County Council commissioned a report to review the issues concerning the ecology, visitor management, recreation and tourism development potential of the Mere and surrounding areas at Ellesmere, North Shropshire.

The Ellesmere site is important for wintering birds, such as coot, great crested grebe, cormorant and goosander. The fish population is mostly composed of native species, which is unusual amongst the Meres and Mosses series. The main species are bream, roach and perch.

A number of issues about the Mere have been raised, such as deterioration of water quality and the loss of marginal and floating-leaved vegetation from the Mere. The site has lost its Site of Special Scientific Importance (SSSI) notification due to a deterioration of water quality and wildfowl issues.

The report calls for, amongst other points, improvement in ecological management, improved interpretation and visitor information, and provision of educational facilities. A steering group has been formed to achieve this improved appearance and management of the site. The group consists of Shropshire County Council, North Shropshire District Council, Ellesmere Town Council, Environment Agency, English Nature and the local police.

Phase II - This is currently being developed by the steering group led by Shropshire County Council. The Environment Agency will advise on water quality, ecological issues and sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) where applicable.

For further information, please contact: Partnerships Team, Environment Agency Shrewsbury office.

Great crested newts

The 'Shropshire great crested newt report' has been published. Protected under European Law, a total of 51 great crested newt sites have been confirmed in the county from the survey undertaken between 1999 and 2000. Since then, a further 7 sites have been discovered.

As the UK currently supports the largest population of this

species within Europe, the need to protect and enhance our resident population is increasingly important. Work has also been undertaken at two sites - Minsterley Hall Pool and Martin Wilson School Pond, to enhance the habitats and conserve the resident populations of this protected species.

For further information, please contact: Viv Geen, Fisheries Technical Officer, Environment Agency Shrewsbury office.

We would be delighted to receive your feedback. For further details on any of the articles in this newsletter to give us your views on this new style of Annual Review reporting or to get in touch please email ricardo.mateos@environment-agency.gov.uk

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