



<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership  11 <sup>th</sup> June 2019
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<u>Item</u>  <b>6</b>
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## **CLUN UNMUDDYING THE WATERS PROJECT**

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### **Summary**

This paper outlines the planned delivery by the AONB team for the next two years of the Environment Agency's 'Unmuddying the Waters' project in the Clun catchment.

### **Recommendation**

The Partnership is recommended to comment on the issues raised.

### **Background**

A two year funding agreement to the end of March 2021 has been made with Environment Agency to fund Alison Jones as the Clun Catchment Officer, along with a capital works budget. The rationale for the project is as follows:

The River Clun catchment consists of seven waterbodies (tributary streams), and the presence of freshwater pearl mussel found in the lowest five kilometres of the river has led to it being designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This bottom section of the river is also part of the River Teme SSSI. Due to the position of the SAC within the catchment, inputs from all seven waterbodies influence water quality, and the river is failing to meet its Conservation Objectives for phosphates, nitrates and suspended solids and the freshwater pearl mussel population is in decline. Losing this population will be viewed as Defra failing its legal duty to maintain the SAC under the Habitats Directive and could result in Infraction Proceedings. In addition, the failure of the SAC to reach conservation objectives also precludes this waterbody from achieving 'good' status under Water Framework Directive (WFD) legislation.

This project will contribute to addressing the main impacts that are causing this failure: excess sedimentation and nutrient inputs. By concentrating on a suite of riparian measures and interception of sediment pathways which will reduce the amount of sediment and nutrients entering the designated rivers, it can be demonstrated that necessary measures are being taken to protect the freshwater pearl mussel.

Whilst this project concentrates on excess sedimentation and nutrient inputs there is also work taking place to improve the overall riparian habitat along the river and at two sites to achieve sufficient improvements that freshwater pearl mussels might be translocated to them in the future.

The programme of work in the project is as follows:

Task 1 – continued delivery of alternative drinking water systems - installation of solar pasture pumps and allied systems.

Task 2 – Feasibility and installation of a bridge crossing on a tributary of the River Clun where a ford crossing is causing major sediment inputs, or an alternative solution.

Task 3 – Diversion of highway drainage near the SAC to create a wetland and reduce sediment input into the river, working with landowners, Shropshire Council Highways and their nominated contractors.

Task 4 – continued delivery of gateway and trackway improvements and interception of highway drains to deliver work identified in the Highways and River Crossings surveys and reports.

Task 5 – continued delivery of fencing, erosion protection work and provision of alternative drinking water systems

Task 6 – tree planting - supervise Woodland Trust funded tree planting along stretches of river which have been fenced.

<b>List of Background Papers</b> River Clun SSSI Restoration Strategy <a href="http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/aonb-partnership/rivers/river-clun-restoration-strategy/">http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/aonb-partnership/rivers/river-clun-restoration-strategy/</a>
<b>Human Rights Act Appraisal</b> The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.
<b>Environmental Appraisal</b> The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.
<b>Risk Management Appraisal</b> Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.
<b>Community / Consultations Appraisal</b> The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.
<b>Appendices</b> None