

CCRiP

Cam Community River Project

Background

The idea of a Cam Community River Project (CCRiP) was first conceived in 2022, originally with a primary focus to address biodiversity loss and poor water quality across the Cam Catchment which would have also addressed flooding issues.

However, the setting up of the project was stalled by the May 2023 flooding event, but has now finally been achieved. To address flooding and drought issues is now also one of the main objectives.

In the Section 19 report issued by the Somerset Flood and Water Management department one of the recommended actions was:

“Investigate and implement Natural Flood Management (NFM) solutions using natural processes to reduce the risk of flooding”

Parties named in the report as being responsible for actions in this respect were:

Somerset River Authority (SRA)

Environmental Agency (EA)

Parish and Town Councils

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG)

Farmers

Landowners

Yeovil Rivers Community Trust (YRCT)

Having so many parties responsible for taking action in respect to the flood risk means it is difficult to organise and implement any co-ordinated plans. This is where the YRCT and CCRiP have a significant role to play in developing and maintaining stakeholder engagement to enable actions to be shaped and driven by the community.

Yeovil Rivers Community Trust

The YRCT is a charity that was originally set up as an environmental group promoting the enhancement and protection of aquatic habitats. In 2018 they extended their areas of interest to include environmental water management issues such as flooding, drought,

surface water management, water conservation, man-made drainage systems and the impacts of climate change. Projects underway are focused on the River Yeo and tributaries.

The flooding in 2023 that impacted the Parish was largely due to the rain falling in the Cam River catchment area, most of which is within the boundaries of the North Cadbury and Yarlington Parish. Other factors mentioned in the Section 19 report include lack of natural defences, drainage due to farming activities, blocked and undersized drainage pipes and uncleared ditches.

CCRiP

The Cam Community River Project (CCRiP) has been set up as part of the existing YRCT framework. It will engage with all the parties mentioned above who have some responsibility regarding flood mitigation in the Cam catchment area. In particular it will engage with landowners/farmers to determine what actions can be taken on their land to reduce the risk of serious flooding in the future and source funding to support approved projects.

20th May 2025 - 1ST CCRiP Meeting

Present – Mareike Beyer, Duncan Smith, Ben Critchley, John Whitehead, Lorne Thomson

Lorne Thomson and Mareike Beyer will act as co-chairs (Lorne is also chair and one of the founding trustees of the YRCT and a hydro-ecologist).

It was agreed that although notes of discussions at meetings would be made, no formal minutes will be kept. Also we would be flexible in terms of who would be invited to or attend meetings depending on the likely areas of discussion.

Topics discussed were as follows:

1) Utilising NFM Features in the Upper Cam Catchment

Natural Flood Mitigation / Slow-the-flow measures are a key method of project delivery by the CCRiP as they offer multiple benefits for flooding, water quality, biodiversity and habitat interventions as a co-ordinated and holistic approach. NFM features use natural materials and natural processes to achieve the desired outcome. They aim to reduce flooding through:

- A) Increasing infiltration to groundwater
- B) Intercepting and slowing surface water flows to reduce runoff
- C) Storing runoff – e.g. ponds, ditches, reconnecting flood plains, wetland creation

Typical NFM features that the CCRiP will look to implement in suitable locations, include wet woodland, wildflower buffer strips, retention/attenuation ponds or ditches, hinged trees, leaky dams, bunds, wetlands/wet meadow and reconnected floodplains.

These interventions, agreed with landowners, can be funded in a number of ways, e.g. through the SRA/FWAG Hills to Levels funding or Community Flood Action Fund, via the Wessex Water Phosphate Reduction Programme or BNG. Interventions will be focused on target areas identified by local knowledge and their effectiveness can be monitored via the established water level gauges for the flood alert system in the catchment.

We are looking at several projects addressing areas in which we know that problems occur, prioritising those areas that would address significant flood risks to properties and roads. The first of these project will focus on land in Galhampton and around Sandbrook Lane where high phosphate levels have been identified and the first land owner engagement has been secured, which will enable funding through Wessex Water. This first project can become an example for other landowners who want to understand better what might be involved. Other areas we will target are upstream from Yarlington and North Cadbury, phosphate sampling in these areas has started.

2) River Clearance

Also of immediate concern is the need to clear some sections of the river Cam to allow the free flow of water especially in times of heavy rain. Three areas have been identified as needing to be surveyed:

Yarlington to Yarlington Mill

Adjacent to Sandbrook Lane

Downstream from Brookhampton

An assessment needs to be carried out, and although the growth of plant life on the banks is at its worst in summer, with waders as long as access to the river can be achieved it should be possible to carry out a survey. Permission will be needed from the landowners before carrying out this work. The Somerset River Authority (SRA) might be able to provide funds to support clearance operations but does not fund surveys. An estimate of the cost of carrying out the surveys will be prepared, and funding for this will need to be sourced, the Parish Council may be able to help if required.

3) Phosphates

Wessex Water (as with all Water Companies) has an obligation to keep the phosphate levels on discharges from water works to be below a certain level. This can be achieved by having an up to date water processing facility (which can be expensive). Further reductions in phosphate levels entering the plant can be achieved by working with landowners upstream to introduce phosphate reduction schemes. This complements the reductions achieved through upgrading processing plants.

The solutions to reducing phosphates in water courses are often the same as would be required for flood mitigation. If the phosphate levels in samples of water taken from water courses are high Wessex Water will pay for the assessment and development of plans to reduce phosphate levels. Mareike and Duncan have started sampling to see if the criteria for funding from Wessex are met, as we have recently had very little rain there is little run off from the land and phosphate levels are variable across

the sampled area but remain skewed towards higher levels. Additional sample points are required and expanded sampling will continue

Lorne will speak to Megan Bessell, who is a Catchment Adviser for the Phosphate Reduction Programme being delivered by Wessex Water, regarding funding support for CCRiP. This is likely to have a positive outcome.

4) Interaction with Landowners/Farmers

There was general discussion on how there was a need to work with landowners on these issues, often there is support from landowners for these initiatives once explained, especially if funding is available. Mareike produced a map of the catchment area where the ownership of many of the fields had been identified. It would be helpful to complete this map, one suggestion was to talk to Sue Fone as she has good knowledge of land ownership due to her work on Rights of Way. Additionally the drafters of the Neighbourhood Plan may have established ownership in 2022 as part of their work.

It was suggested that the web portal 'parishes online' might be a helpful tool which could potentially be used.

It was also suggested that when making initial contact it may be helpful if this came either by direct contact from someone suitable (eg a parish councillor or a member of CCRP) who knows the landowner personally or from the Parish Council by letter.

5) Wessex Water – Brookhampton

There was some discussion of the sewage overflows being experienced in Brookhampton, and that a letter had been sent to Wessex Water by the Parish Council, but no reply had been received. It was suggested that the parish council could send an email to the SRA prior to their next meeting for their consideration as this falls under their jurisdiction.

Examples of NFM features working in the land scape

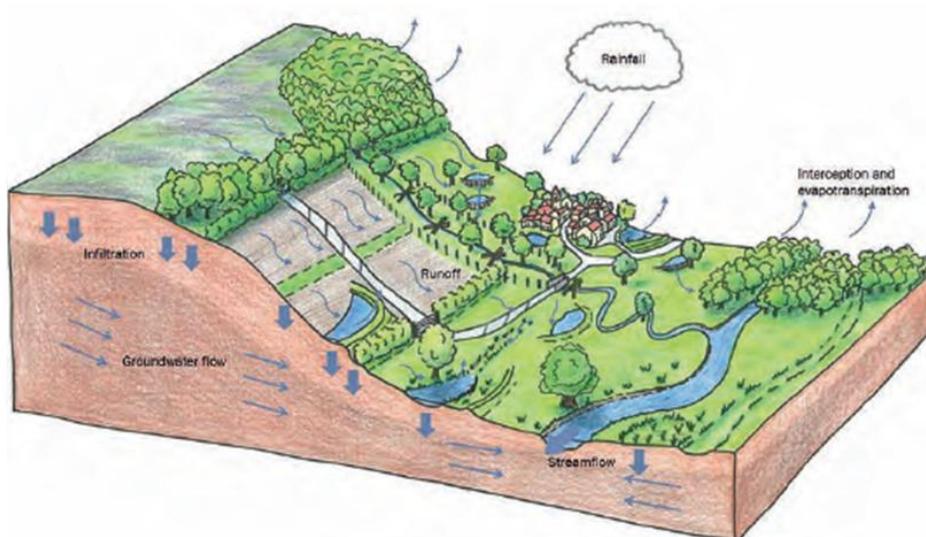


Figure 2.2 The hydrological cycle and NFM (courtesy Emma Wren)

12 June 2025 - CCRiP Meeting

Present – Lorne Thomson, Mareike Beyer, Ben Critchley, John Whitehead, James Buxton, Maria Viney, Clare Leavold

Natural Flood Management

Whilst NFM solutions should be viewed and undertaken as a catchment wide project to be effective, as the catchment area for the Cam and tributaries is large and land ownership is diverse, specific and individual projects need to be identified and implemented.

Funding

Wessex Water Phosphate Reduction Programme

As noted in the last meeting Wessex Water has obligations in respect to maintaining phosphate below a certain level and is willing to work with and fund landowners to reduce phosphate levels by reduction schemes in the landscape which help with flood mitigation.

Phosphate levels from samples taken show elevated levels in nearly all areas, Megan Bessel from Wessex Water has now confirmed that funding for local NFM features is likely to be available. With landowners' permission projects can be identified and this is now in process.

The first such project, in Galhampton on James Buxtons land, has now been approved by Megan Bessel who visited the location. Lorne Thompson will draft and cost a proposal for several NFM features, these will likely be installed in a few months time.

We are grateful for James Buxtons cooperation and enthusiasm, especially as this first project will be an example to help other interested landowners better understand these features.

Community Flood Action Fund (CFAF)

The Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) has launched the Community Flood Action Fund (CFAF) The aim of the fund will be to enable small scale, simple projects that local communities want to deliver. The maximum grant will be £20,000. Applications for funding to be submitted by 26th August 2025, and can be for NFM or watercourse clearance. However surveys required to complete the application will need to be funded. It was agreed that any required surveys ought to be completed by 31st July. Lorne to prepare cost estimate which can be submitted to the Parish Council.

There is also further funding available via the SRA/EA for suitable measures identified in the wider Cam catchment. Mareike attended a meeting with regards to this in May. Communities are asked to identify problem areas (with ongoing flooding issues) which need to be addressed. Further meetings will follow.

Potential Projects

Areas so far being assessed for potential for Wessex Water funding are as follows:

North Cadbury & Galhampton

Main Galhampton tributary; potential for features identified, phosphate sampling (elevated levels found) and land owner in agreement, funding potential confirmed by Megan Bessel, suggestions for several features to be put in writing by Lorne Thompson.

2nd Galhampton tributary; potential for features identified, phosphate sampling (elevated levels found) and land owner engagement in process

Sandbrook Lane; potential for NFM identified, phosphate sampling (elevated levels found) and land owners engagement in process

1st Woolston tributary; potential for NFM identified, phosphate sampling started (elevated levels found)

2nd Woolston tributary; potential for NFM identified, awaiting sampling

Brookhampton tributary; phosphate sampling started (elevated levels found)

Yarlinton

Eastwood/Gribbs Woods Tributary; potential for NFM identified, awaiting further sampling (low water levels)

Other areas of concern currently identified

North Cadbury & Galhampton

Hearn Lane; surface water runoff causing ongoing flood risks to properties

Sandbrook farm; surface water runoff causing ongoing flood risks to properties

Fields bordering Sandbrook Lane; surface water runoff causing ongoing flood risks to properties

Cary Road/Brookhampton; surface water runoff causing flood risks to properties

Yarlington

Sticklepark and Gods Lane; surface water runoff causing flood risks to properties

Shatwell farm development & Yarlington farm development; significant changes in the wider landscape potentially affecting flood risk need to be assessed

Trout ponds and associated land scaping; effects on potential flood risk during extreme events need to be better understood, effects of suspected water course diversion needs to be better understood

Watercourse Clearance

As noted in the previous meeting three areas have been identified that need to be investigated for possible clearance operations :

Yarlington to Yarlington Mill

Adjacent to Sandbrook Lane below Corkscrew Lane

Downstream from Brookhampton

Maria is going to make initial contact Dave Ebagg who is agent for land in Yarlington, Nigel/David Masters re Sandbrook Lane and Paul Longman re Brookhampton.

As noted above it is important to try to complete surveys before the end on July, Lorne Thompson will prepare a quote for this work.

Highways

Localised flooding of highways in high intensity rainfall events can endanger properties. Three locations have been identified as being particularly bad – Sticklepark, Sandbrook Lane & Cary Road (Mitchells Row). To address these issues engagement with Highways (drainage) and Wessex Water (sewage) will need to be developed.

Additionally the flooding on the Woolston Road between North Cadbury and Woolston was noted, no immediate threat to property.

Emily Estates

As Emily Estates represent the largest landowner in the catchment area and with whom some work has already been done, it was felt that a meeting could be set up just to discuss a range of issues associated with various sites. Lorne or Maria will contact Zoe to set up a meeting, in the meantime everyone would forward thoughts on discussion areas in preparation.

It was noted that in a recent newsletter that some NFM work had been completed as a result of recommendations from the Yeovil Rivers Community Trust (Lorne Thompson), we are currently only aware that one suggestion had been implemented and there had been no feedback and little information on further plans. It was pointed out that carrying out this work piecemeal without fully completing all aspects made the outcome less effective. Further engagement is needed to address flood risks to properties in some problem areas.