

Appendix 4 Pilot area summary factsheets

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Alt Crossens

River maintenance pilot area - a summary

A pilot scheme to help landowners maintain rivers and protect the environment has encouraged better ways of working together to manage flooding.

Background

The Alt Crossens is a large low-lying catchment, artificially drained by a number of pumping stations that feed two larger stations at Altmouth and Crossens.

The land is mainly excellent or very good quality agricultural land and we're responsible for overseeing the management of drainage in the area.

We use our legal powers to carry out river maintenance and we currently maintain all the pumping stations that drain the area. We assess all maintenance activities using a risk-based approach and invest in those activities that will contribute most to reducing flood risk per pound of funding. This means that we have to reduce the amount of work we do in the area and we're looking at other ways of funding those pumping stations that are purely for draining land.



Pilot area boundary shown in red

Pilot scheme

In recent years wet weather has caused significant flooding. At the same time we've had to focus our maintenance work in locations where it will reduce the risk of flooding to the most people and property. This has meant that landowners cannot rely on us to carry out maintenance and have had to carry out more of their own maintenance.

To help landowners maintain rivers without harming the environment, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) asked us to introduce a river maintenance pilot scheme.

Under the pilots, landowners and farmers in nine areas across England at risk of flooding were allowed to carry out some work to clear watercourses without needing to obtain formal consent. Environment Agency staff were on hand to provide advice and good practice guidance to make sure that landowners protected themselves and the environment when they carried out maintenance work.

Involving the local community

We publicised the pilot throughout the catchment at open days in local village halls, at the regional office of the National Farmers' Union (NFU), and through our links with the farming community. There was a lot of interest from farmers to representatives from conservation bodies. Numerous landowners signed up to take part in the pilot.



What was achieved?

- 11 landowners signed up to take part in the pilot.
- To date, they've removed silt from 2 km of rivers, with consents to clear a further 28 km over the next three years.
- We checked all work carried out as part of the pilot to make sure it complied with environmental standards, and collected before and after photos where possible.
- A number of landowners also carried out work on 400 m of the Fine Jane's Brook to improve the flow of the water.



Fine Jane's Brook – before and after silt removal work carried out by landowners

Other local initiatives

Across Lancashire we have also trialled whole farm consents. The consent, which is valid for three years, allows landowners to clear silt from more than one watercourse on their land, or to join with other landowners to dredge to remove silt from a longer length of watercourse than the

pilot regulation allowed. In Alt Crossens we issued eight whole farm consents.

What happens next?

Landowners in the catchment are still applying for flood defence consents to clear silt from rivers. Our Partnership and Strategic Overview team for Lancashire is still processing whole farm consents. This was seen as a major success within the catchment, as it significantly reduces paperwork for landowners.

Across the nine pilot areas, landowners and farmers are now more knowledgeable about our role in maintenance work and the rules around how we can spend public money. They are also more aware of their own responsibilities and the work they can carry out both with and without permission. The pilots have helped to bring people together, enabled open conversations and fostered good working relationships.

The learning and feedback from the pilots has informed our advice to Defra on how river maintenance activities could be regulated in future. The pilots have also highlighted that some farmers and landowners find us difficult to do business with and the language we use can be confusing. We will therefore continue to improve how we can work better with others and how we communicate our maintenance plans.

A summary report containing the background and learning from the pilot scheme was published in January 2016. We welcome feedback on the report from anybody involved with the pilots to increase what we can learn further.

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Bottesford Beck

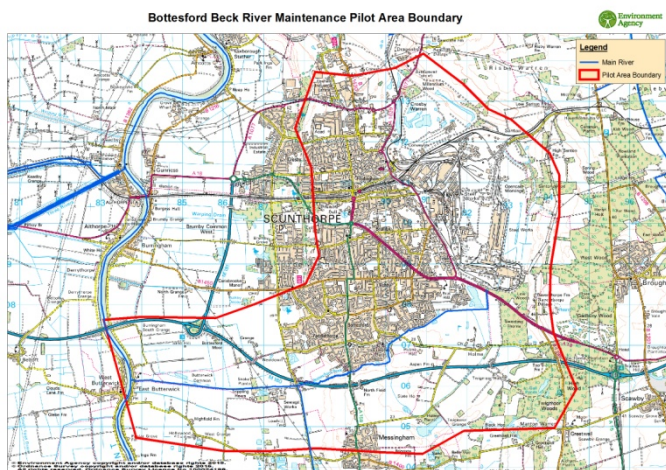
River maintenance pilot area – a summary

A pilot scheme to help landowners maintain rivers and protect the environment has encouraged better ways of working together to manage flooding.

Background

The Bottesford Beck flows out of the Scunthorpe Steel Works and into a semi rural area close to housing, farmland and a golf course. Flooding has been experienced on the farmland and golf course on a number of occasions. The beck then flows across the lowland River Trent floodplain before discharging into the Trent through a flapped outfall.

Under the pilots, landowners and farmers in nine areas across England at risk of flooding were allowed to carry out some work to clear watercourses without needing to obtain formal consent. Environment Agency staff were on hand to provide advice and good practice guidance to make sure that landowners protected themselves and the environment when they carried out maintenance work.



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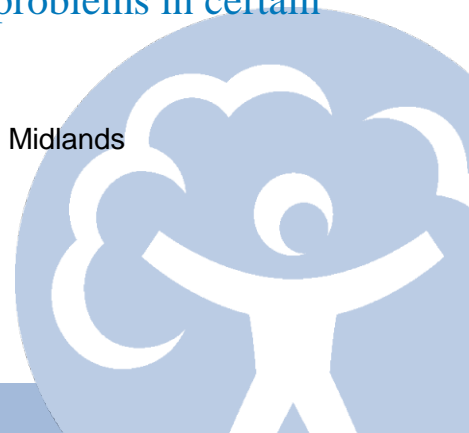
Involving the local community

An active community group (Friends of Bottesford Beck) was set up to improve the environment and access to the riverside. The Bottesford Beck Improvement Group (BBig) was also in place to coordinate actions from different professional partners, including Severn Trent Water, TATA Steel and the Humber Nature Partnership.

North Lincolnshire Council members set up meetings with representatives from the National Farmers' Union (NFU), Scunthorpe and Gainsborough Internal Drainage Board, Environment Agency, landowners and local residents to gain support for the pilot.

'The river maintenance pilots have been a great success in acting as a catalyst to get people together to talk about the flood problems in certain areas.'

Paul Tame NFU East Midlands



What was achieved?



North Lincolnshire Council commissioned contractors to dredge along 3 km of Bottesford Beck. They also cut away weeds along 9 km of the beck, which saw water levels drop by 30 cm in just one day. This work has also helped to improve the quality of the water in the beck.

What happens next?

North Lincolnshire Council is considering proposals to continue maintenance in a sustainable way. We're giving advice to farmers and the golf course who also wish to continue with maintenance on their land.

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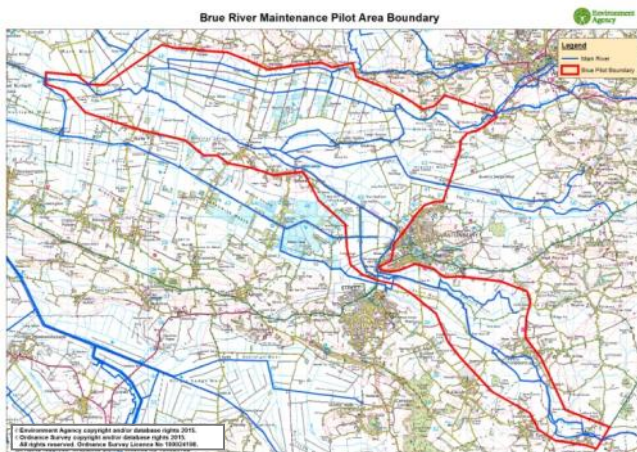
River Brue

River maintenance pilot area – a summary

A pilot scheme to help landowners maintain rivers and protect the environment has encouraged better ways of working together to manage flooding.

Background

The River Brue in Somerset is a lowland pumped area mainly of rural land use. Drainage is managed by the Environment Agency and the Axe Brue Internal Drainage Board. The area is recognised as an internationally important wetland (Ramsar) site and is also a Special Protection Area, National Nature Reserve and Site of Special Scientific Interest. Given the low-lying nature of the catchment, it's not unusual for most of the Brue area to become flooded.



Pilot area boundary shown in red

Pilot scheme

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To help landowners maintain rivers without harming the environment, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) asked us to introduce a river maintenance pilot scheme.

Under the pilots, landowners and farmers in nine areas across England at risk of flooding were allowed to carry out some work to clear watercourses without needing to obtain formal consent. Environment Agency staff were on hand to provide advice and good practice guidance to make sure that landowners protected themselves and the environment when they carried out maintenance work.

We chose the Brue as a pilot area due to local concerns over the level of silt in the watercourse.

Involving the local community

Initial response to the Brue pilot was very encouraging, with the local internal drainage board offering its support, and a number of external organisations and landowners showing an interest in carrying out maintenance work.

However, shortly after the pilot began in late 2013, a major flood incident was declared in Somerset.

The Somerset Levels and Moors were badly hit and our operational response to the flood event dominated well into spring 2014.

People were out of their flooded properties for most of 2014, and there was immense pressure on us to not only repair damaged assets but also to carry out more maintenance, such as dredging the Parrett and Tone over an 8 km length.

In light of this change in situation, it became increasingly inappropriate to continue to promote the Brue pilot and encourage landowners to carry out maintenance when there was similar work being carried out on a massive scale in neighbouring catchments.

However, we continued to liaise with the internal drainage board and the landowners who had shown an initial interest in carrying out work for the remainder of the pilot.



Work carried out on the Rivers Parrett and Tone following the winter 2013 to 2014 flooding

What was achieved?

A group of neighbouring landowners on the Decoy Rhyne were keen to carry out dredging to remove silt on that watercourse. We stayed in contact with them throughout the pilot and, although they remained interested, they didn't carry out work before the end of the pilot.

Landowners along a stretch of the River Brue, from North Drain Pumping Station to Westhay Bridge, and the internal drainage board were very keen for work to be carried out. Towards the end of the pilot, further funding for maintenance became available in Somerset and the internal drainage board plans to carry out 8 km of silt removal works between 2015 and 2016.



River Brue – Axe Brue Internal Drainage Board plans to clear silt from 8 km of the river

What happens next?

As a result of the 2013 to 2014 flooding on the Somerset Levels, the government challenged partners in Somerset to come up with a 20 year flood action plan for the Levels and Moors, including the Brue pilot area.

The Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) was set up in January 2015 to co-ordinate flood-related activities. The SRA aims to raise extra funding locally for maintenance that cannot be justified within current Environment Agency and internal drainage board programmes. The SRA has agreed to look at funding dredging to remove silt in the Brue pilot area.

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The learning and feedback from the pilots has informed our advice to Defra on how river maintenance activities could be regulated in future. The pilots have also highlighted that some farmers and landowners find us difficult to do business with and the language we use can be confusing. We will therefore continue to improve how we can work better with others and how we communicate our maintenance plans.

A summary report containing the background and learning from the pilot scheme was published in January 2016. We welcome any feedback on the report from anybody involved with the pilots to increase what we can learn further.

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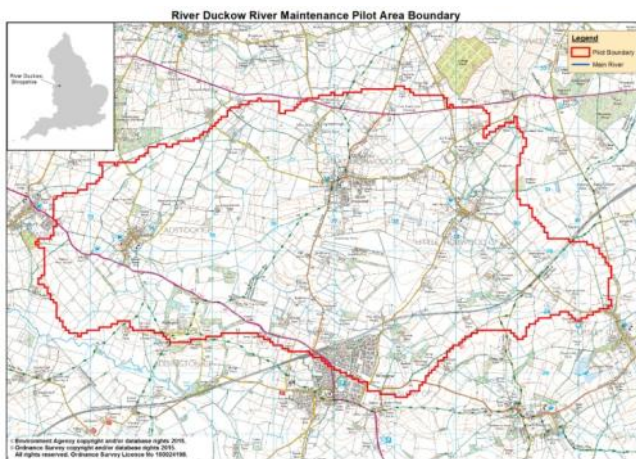
River Duckow

River maintenance pilot area – a summary

A pilot scheme to help landowners maintain rivers and protect the environment has encouraged better ways of working together to manage flooding.

Background

The River Duckow is on a rural part of the headwater of the River Weaver, with a catchment area of around 30 sq km. The catchment is relatively low-lying and with gentle gradients in a rural landscape with arable and pasture farmland.



Pilot area boundary shown in red

Pilot scheme

In recent years wet weather has caused significant flooding. At the same time we've had to focus our maintenance work in locations where it will reduce the risk of flooding to the most people and property. This has meant that landowners cannot rely on us to carry out maintenance and have had to carry out more of their own maintenance.

To help landowners maintain rivers without harming the environment, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) asked us to introduce a river maintenance pilot scheme.

Under the pilots, landowners and farmers in nine areas across England at risk of flooding were allowed to carry out some work to clear

watercourses without needing to obtain formal consent. Environment Agency staff were on hand to provide advice and good practice guidance to make sure that landowners protected themselves and the environment when they carried out maintenance work.

The River Duckow maintenance pilot came about from a local rural watercourse maintenance issue. Lack of maintenance in the pilot area was affecting levels in watercourses further upstream and the drainage of this land.

Involving the local community

We held a meeting with local landowners and managers, the National Farmers' Union (NFU), wildlife groups and the local authority to let the local community know about the pilot scheme and discuss the challenges of managing maintenance in rural areas.

The day was well received and we offered interested groups further follow up events and hands on good-practice demonstration days.

What was achieved?

A single landowner cleared silt from 1200 metres of the River Duckow between August and September 2014 to improve the flow of the river.





River Duckow before (June 2014)



River Duckow after (January 2015)

We carried out water vole and crayfish surveys beforehand and didn't find any. In January 2015 we completed a post-compliance visit check. We judged the silt removal carried out was appropriate for the situation.

What happens next?

The issue at the River Duckow is a localised land drainage issue but typical of the rural environment. The work carried out has solved the immediate concern. Looking to the future, the responsibility for future maintenance remains an issue.

Across the nine pilot areas, landowners and farmers are now more knowledgeable about our role in maintenance work and the rules around how we can spend public money. They are also more aware of their own responsibilities and the work they can carry out both with and without permission. The pilots have helped to bring

people together, enabled open conversations and fostered good working relationships.

The learning and feedback from the pilots has informed our advice to Defra on how river maintenance activities could be regulated in future. The pilots have also highlighted that some farmers and landowners find us difficult to do business with and the language we use can be confusing. We will therefore continue to improve how we can work better with others and how we communicate our maintenance plans.

A summary report containing the background and learning from the pilot scheme was published in January 2016. We welcome feedback on the report from anybody involved with the pilots to increase what we can learn further.

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East Lytham

River maintenance pilot area - a summary

A pilot scheme to help landowners maintain rivers and protect the environment has encouraged better ways of working together to manage flooding.

Background

East Lytham is an area of low-lying flat land, mostly used for agriculture. Within the catchment all water must flow south to Dock Bridge pumping station then out into the Ribble Estuary via pump outlets or the tidal doors.

There are issues around the operation of the pumping station and siltation around the doors. Currently we have a capital project looking at how we can improve the system.

it will reduce the risk of flooding to the most people and property. This has meant that landowners cannot rely on us to undertake maintenance on the river and have had to carry out more of their own maintenance.

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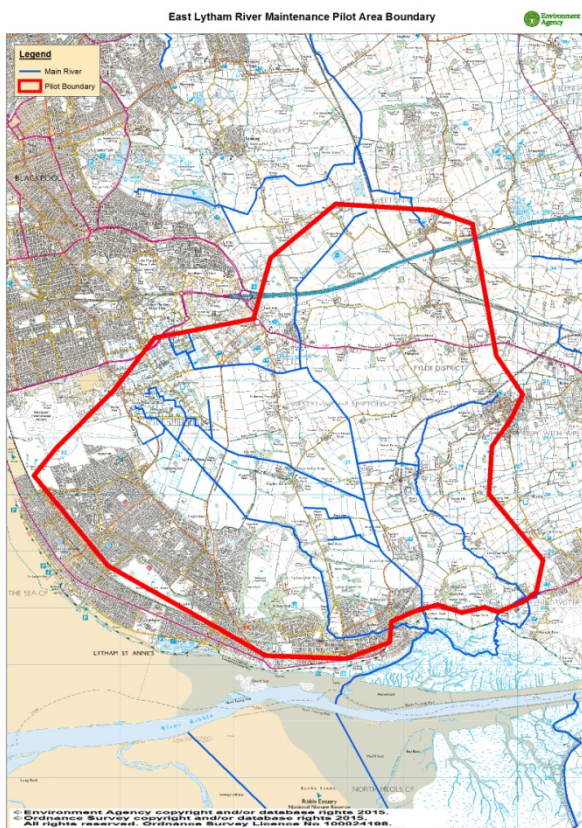
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East Lytham was included as a pilot area half way through the scheme, as landowners expressed an interest in carrying out dredging to remove silt.

Involving the local community

We publicised the pilot at a National Farmers' Union (NFU) Flood Action Group meeting and at the East Lytham Partnership Working Group attended by Fylde Borough Council and Lancashire County Council.

Over 40 landowners attended the meeting and received information about the pilot and our planned routine maintenance for the catchment.



Pilot area boundary shown in red

Pilot scheme

In recent years wet weather has caused significant flooding. At the same time we've had to focus our maintenance work in locations where

What was achieved?

Two landowners joined together and cleared silt from over 2 km of the Branch Drain. They used a single excavator and spread the material thinly on top of the bank.



Branch Drain - 200m de-silted by a single landowner

Other local initiatives

Across Lancashire we have also trialled whole farm consents. The consent, which is valid for three years, allows landowners to clear silt from more than one watercourse on their land, or to join with other landowners to dredge to remove silt from a longer length of watercourse than the pilot regulation allowed. In East Lytham we issued one whole farm consent.

What happens next?

The East Lytham pilot didn't have a large take up, mainly because farmers and landowners felt the issues around the pumping station outlet were causing the high water levels. They were unwilling to carry out their own maintenance work until these issues were resolved.

In April 2015 we began a dredge at the tidal doors in an effort to clear silt and restore gravity flow into the estuary, this has produced temporary improvements until the works at the pumping station commence.

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River Eau

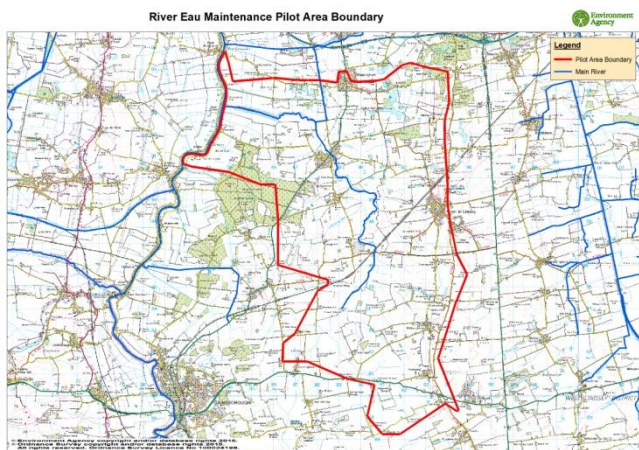
River maintenance pilot area – a summary

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Background

The River Eau Catchment is in the district of West Lindsey in Lincolnshire. The watercourse connects a large arable catchment with the River Trent at Susworth. The river flows through the village of Scotter before passing through the lowland reaches and outfalling into the River Trent through tidal flaps. The village of Scotter suffered from flooding in 2007.

Under the pilots, landowners and farmers in nine areas across England at risk of flooding were allowed to carry out some work to clear watercourses without needing to obtain formal consent. Environment Agency staff were on hand to provide advice and good practice guidance to make sure that landowners protected themselves and the environment when they carried out maintenance work.



Pilot area boundary shown in red

Since 2007, the residents of Scotter and downstream landowners have called for more maintenance in the lower sections of the River Eau. We're also trying to improve the water quality status of the River Eau. A partnership was formed to help resolve all these issues when the River Eau was added to the list of pilot areas.

Pilot scheme

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To help landowners maintain rivers without harming the environment, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) asked us to introduce a river maintenance pilot scheme.

Involving the local community

Partnership meetings set up by West Lindsey district council included representatives from the National Farmers' Union (NFU), Scunthorpe and Gainsborough Internal Drainage Board, Environment Agency, landowners, local residents, the parish council and Natural England. We used these meetings to involve the partners and decide on the best course of action.

"The river maintenance pilots have been a great success at being a catalyst to get people together to talk about the flood problems in certain areas."

Paul Tame NFU East Midlands



What was achieved?



Flooding in Scotter, 2007

Dredging of the lower River Eau to remove silt was too costly and complex for individual landowners. The Scunthorpe and Gainsborough Internal Drainage Board carried out a scoping exercise on behalf of the partnership. It put forward a proposal to carry out targeted conveyance improvements that would benefit water quality, together with a wider study to look at whole catchment improvements.

The partnership made a successful bid for £130,000 of Local Levy funding for this work, together with a £50,000 contribution from the local community and other sources.

What happens next?

The work to improve conveyance is expected to commence in spring 2016. The work will be managed by the internal drainage board under the Public Sector Cooperation Agreement (PSCA), a guidance document that covers maintenance activities.

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River Idle and Isle of Axholme

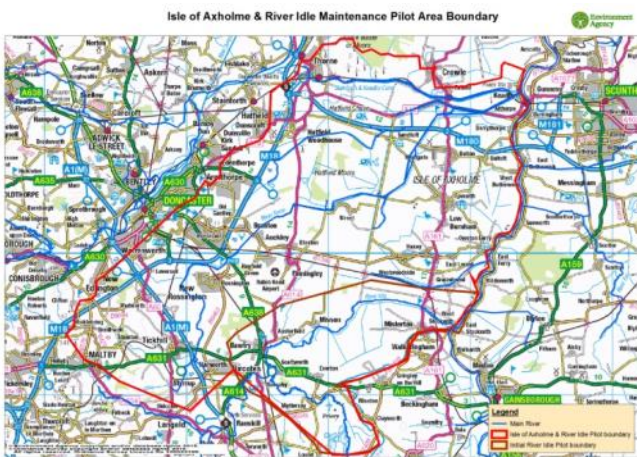
River maintenance pilot area - a summary

A pilot scheme to help landowners maintain rivers and protect the environment has encouraged better ways of working together to manage flooding.

Background

The River Idle in North Nottinghamshire and watercourses in the Isle of Axholme are very low lying, with considerable amounts of pumped drainage. The area has high-grade agricultural land and several important Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

Farmers on the River Idle have suffered from flooding on their land on several occasions in recent years. Farmers and landowner representatives across the Isle of Axholme have asked for more maintenance to be carried out both to prevent flooding and to improve land drainage.



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Pilot scheme

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To help landowners maintain rivers without harming the environment, the Department for

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The River Idle was chosen as the initial pilot area before the boundary was extended to the rest of the Isle of Axholme, which covers parts of North Lincolnshire and Yorkshire.

Involving the local community

We communicated about the pilot with a wide range of organisations and individuals through the River Idle Partnership. This group was set up three years ago to address diverse and often conflicting issues. The organisations we spoke with included the Isle of Axholme and North Nottinghamshire Water Level Management Board, RSPB, National Farmers' Union (NFU), Natural England, farmers, the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, local councillors, angling clubs, a quarry owner and district and county councils. As well as considering maintenance, the Partnership is also looking at improvements to the River Idle SSSI and to the water quality status of the river.

'The river maintenance pilots have been a great success at being a catalyst to get people together to talk about the flood problems in certain areas.'

Paul Tame NFU East Midlands

What was achieved?



River Idle SSSI at Bawtry

The local internal drainage board carried out an initial appraisal of dredging to remove silt activity for the River Idle. It estimated that this work could cost more than £4 million and would be very complex for individual farmers to carry out.

Following this, we've brought forward survey work across the Isle of Axholme, which we'll use to estimate the extent of silt in the catchment.

What happens next?

We'll use this information to make a better estimate of the likely costs of future dredging to remove silt. The partnership is developing a funding strategy for future work that may benefit farmers, local community and the environment.

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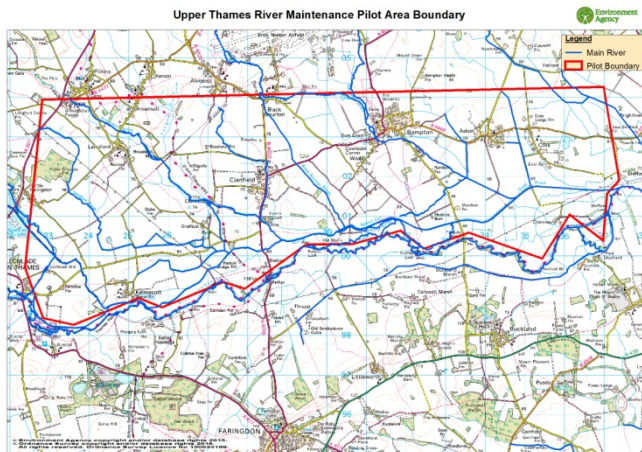
Upper Thames

River maintenance pilot area - a summary

A pilot scheme to help landowners maintain rivers and protect the environment has encouraged better ways of working together to manage flooding.

Background

The Upper Thames pilot was in part of the catchment which is mostly arable farmland. Land drainage and flood risk management is provided by both natural watercourses and purpose built drainage channels.



Pilot area boundary shown in red

Pilot scheme

The farming community in this part of the Upper Thames catchment experienced repeated flooding between 2007 and 2013. This, together with poor land drainage, meant many farmers saw their crops devastated.

At the same time we've had to focus our maintenance work in locations where it will reduce the risk of flooding to the most people and property. This has meant that landowners cannot rely on us to carry out maintenance of watercourses on their land and have had to carry out more of their own maintenance.

To help landowners maintain rivers without harming the environment, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) asked us to introduce a river maintenance pilot scheme.

Under the pilots, landowners and farmers in nine areas across England at risk of flooding were allowed to carry out some maintenance work under a regulatory position statement which required them to notify us, but without needing to obtain formal consent.

We held an in the field training day to demonstrate good working practices and our staff were on hand to provide advice to make sure that landowners protected the environment when they carried out maintenance work.

Involving the local community

With the support of National Farmers' Union (NFU) managers and local branch officers, we promoted the pilot through meetings with farmers and local landowners, encouraging them to undertake maintenance of watercourses on their land.

We also liaised with individual farmers and landowners to progress specific self help work.

A number of leading MPs have also supported the project.

'The pilot has had a positive effect in developing an improved working relationship between the Environment Agency and landowners.'

Tom Ormesher
NFU Environment and Land Use Advisor



What was achieved?

Local community groups cleared vegetation from a 400m stretch of Clanfield Brook, Kelmscott using only hand tools. This work was part of local maintenance that has progressed significantly over the past eight years and it is likely that a local action group could continue to do this work.



Clanfield Brook, Kelmscott

This time using machinery, locals carried out more thorough maintenance along 1km of Kelmscott Brook.



Kelmscott Brook, Kelmscott

What happens next?

The momentum developed so far with the NFU and local landowners continues to grow, and there is increased support for farmers who want to maintain their watercourses.

Those involved share examples of good practice to encourage good practice methods and to discuss common problems. For example, our staff are currently discussing with NFU managers the availability of long reach excavators and other speciality equipment.

We are supporting the NFU with a similar project, the Rural Flood Risk Project, which is looking at how watercourse maintenance affects crop yields.

Across the nine pilot areas, landowners and farmers are now more knowledgeable about our role in maintenance work and the rules around how we can spend public money. They are also more aware of their own responsibilities and the work they can carry out both with and without permission. The pilots have helped to bring people together, enabled open conversations and fostered good working relationships.

The learning and feedback from the pilots has informed our advice to Defra on how river maintenance activities could be regulated in future. The pilots have also highlighted that some farmers and landowners find us difficult to do business with and the language we use can be confusing. We will therefore continue to improve how we can work better with others and how we communicate our maintenance plans.

A summary report containing the background and learning from the pilot scheme was published in January 2016. We welcome feedback on the report from anybody involved with the pilots to increase what we can learn further.

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Winestead Drain

River maintenance pilot area – a summary

A pilot scheme to help landowners maintain rivers and protect the environment has encouraged better ways of working together to manage flooding.

Background

Winestead Drain is a completely man-made system of artificial water bodies. The land is mainly below high tide level in the East of Riding of Yorkshire and drainage is via two pumping stations.

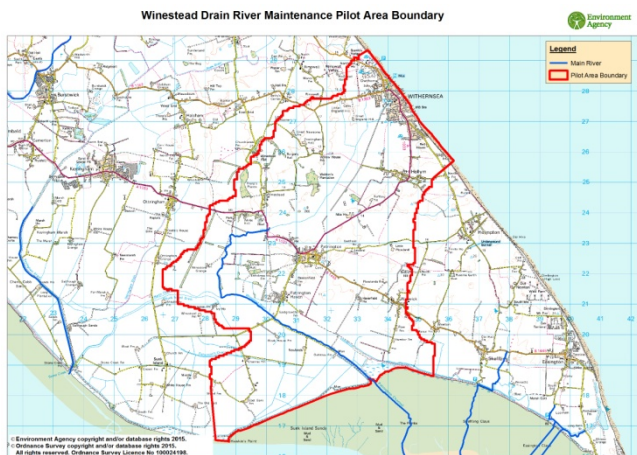
Used primarily for arable farming, the land has a number of small isolated communities distributed through it.

South Holderness Internal Drainage Board (IDB) covers some of the catchment and all of the pilot watercourse.

asked us to introduce a river maintenance pilot scheme.

Under the pilots, landowners and farmers in nine areas across England at risk of flooding were allowed to carry out some work to clear watercourses without needing to obtain formal consent. Environment Agency staff were on hand to provide advice and good practice guidance to make sure that landowners protected themselves and the environment when they carried out maintenance work.

In the Winestead Drain area, there has long been concerns from both the landowners and the IDB about how we carry out our maintenance activities, and they were interested in how they could be involved in the future of maintenance in the catchment.



Pilot area boundary shown in red

Pilot scheme

In recent years wet weather has caused significant flooding. At the same time we've had to focus our maintenance work in locations where it will reduce the risk of flooding to the most people and property. This has meant that landowners cannot rely on us to carry out maintenance on main rivers and have had to carry out more of their own maintenance.

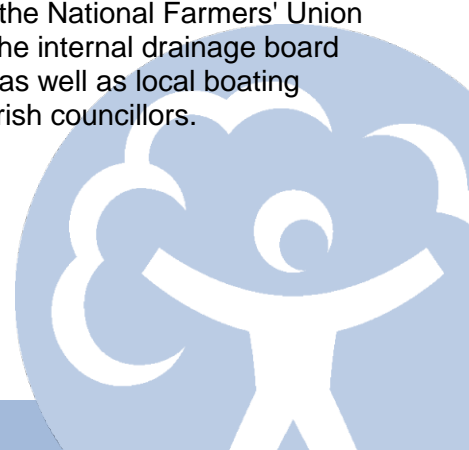
To help landowners maintain rivers without harming the environment, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

Involving the local community

We tried to inform and involve people as much as possible through various existing groups and partners.

Our main focus was on working with the local IDB and those farmers that owned large parts of the land around the watercourse in the pilot area.

We also held an open day at our booster pumping station in the catchment, with around 40 people attending, including farmers, representatives from the National Farmers' Union (NFU), wildlife trust, the internal drainage board and Natural England as well as local boating organisations and parish councillors.

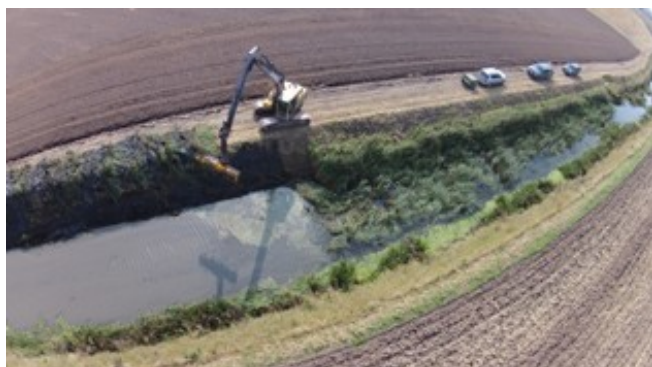


'The open day was very positive in bringing together many facets of advice and gave a face to government organisations. It gave the public an opportunity to be part of a discussion, get a better understanding and also to learn something.'

Natural England Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer for East Yorkshire

What was achieved?

Maintenance work carried out under the pilot including removing silt and cutting back weeds was carried out under the Public Sector Cooperation Agreement (PSCA), a guidance document that covers maintenance activities. We gave our maintenance funding for the catchment to the local IDB to help fund the works.



Work carried out by South Holderness Internal Drainage Board to improve conveyance

What happens next?

We found that landowners are interested in what work is carried out and how it's done, and would like to have more influence over our activities or those of the IDB. They were less keen to undertake work themselves.

We found that the PSCA allowed us to have an open and frank discussion with the IDB and to then put those agreements into action. We will continue to use this as a part of our engagement around maintenance programmes in the future.

Across the nine pilot areas, landowners and farmers are now more knowledgeable about our role in maintenance work and the rules around how we can spend public money. They are also

more aware of their own responsibilities and the work they can carry out both with and without permission. The pilots have helped to bring people together, enabled open conversations and fostered good working relationships.

The learning and feedback from the pilots has informed our advice to Defra on how river maintenance activities could be regulated in future. The pilots have also highlighted that some farmers and landowners find us difficult to do business with and the language we use can be confusing. We will therefore continue to improve how we can work better with others and how we communicate our maintenance plans.

A summary report containing the background and learning from the pilot scheme was published in January 2016. We welcome feedback on the report from anybody involved with the pilots to increase what we can learn further.

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