

DRAFT

‘Appraisal: River Restoration's Missing Link’

held on the 27th November 2002 at the University of Nottingham, organised by:

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&

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In collaboration with the River Restoration Centre



Supported by the School of Geography, University of Nottingham;
Department of Geography, Queen Mary College, University of London;
Haycock Associates



1) Background

In November 2002 a workshop was organised at the University of Nottingham to discuss the role of appraisal in river restoration. This was organised by Lydia Bruce-Burgess (Environment Agency- formerly of Queen Mary, University of London) and Kevin Skinner (Haycock Associates/University of Nottingham- formerly of Integrated River Services) in collaboration with the River Restoration Centre.

2) Aims of the Workshop

The aim of the workshop was to draw together a select group of academics, policy makers and practitioners to discuss various aspects of this important procedure. Project appraisal is seen here to be a vital component of successful (and hence sustainable) river restoration. Without evaluations at various stages in the restoration protocol we do not know whether the most appropriate methods and techniques are being used and whether schemes have been successful as a result. The main objective of the workshop was to facilitate discussion of the various policy, practical and financial constraints that currently inhibit appraisal procedures from being undertaken on a regular basis. For this purpose the programme was split into 3 main sections. These included an examination of the current status of appraisals in the UK, a review of appraisal techniques and finally an outline of how monitoring and post-project appraisals can be more readily integrated into restoration projects and their results disseminated. This workshop provided a forum where a combination of short presentations and much discussion could provide a more holistic view of appraisal methods. Particular attention was paid to tools currently available to assist the undertaking of appraisals within the fields of geomorphology, ecology and as part of public participation in river restoration projects.

Prior to attending the workshop attendees were asked to provide answers to a short questionnaire. This questionnaire enabled attendees to identify issues which they felt were key in the field of appraisal. The summary results of the questionnaire are illustrated in Table 1. Pertinent questions that individual wished to address were also fed into the discussion sections of each different session (see Table 2).

Table 1. Key Points raised within the Questionnaires

<p>What are the main components of the appraisal process?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline survey/collation of existing data – this includes a range of information e.g. habscore, geomorphological assessments, pre- and post-photos, topographic surveys, fluvial audits etc ... • Community involvement • Cost/benefit analysis • Definition of project/scope • Detailed design/ preferred option • Dissemination of results • Empirical assessments of flood defence benefits after major events • Feasibility of options/budget • Identification of problem/objectives/stakeholders • Implementation • Pre and post-project appraisal • Progression towards sustainability appraisal from inception of project to post period
<p>What do you see as the key benefit of appraisal?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Best practice’ techniques for river rehabilitation are identified • A system of standardise techniques • Ascertain risk and adjustments • Clearly defined pre-project data to inform project, acting as a baseline for comparing post-project changes • Define dynamics of change in original scheme • Defines what can – and what cannot – be achieved by the project • Effective implementation • Effective monitoring of the methodology and the project itself after completion • Effects of a proposal and its alternatives are understood • Justification for future work • Learn from ‘failures/ what works and what doesn’t /early detection of problems • Longer term impacts • Quality of decision-making is improved • Relevant factors/interested parties are properly considered throughout • Sets out clear objectives • Taking on new projects rather than appraising effects of old ones • Understand how/if specific river/wetland restoration projects have met their original design objectives
<p>What do you see as the key current main constraint?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding • Identification of the longer-term benefits of river restoration • Lack of knowledge about the most appropriate techniques for different schemes • Lack of scientific/statistical understanding to undertake appropriate baseline monitoring • Lack of support from regulators • Lack of time • Lack of understanding of impacts over wider spatial areas and longer time scales • Lack of understanding of what appraisal constitutes • Learning through post-project appraisal at all sites (rather than representative sites) is limited as a result of the costs of scientific monitoring • Need for appropriate robust, cost-effective appraisal techniques • Obtaining adequate baselines is difficult, without having significant forewarning of the likelihood of a restoration project going ahead • Uncertainty attached to different approaches to river restoration • Unwillingness to publicise project failures

Table 2. Questions addressed in the workshop

<p>Session one</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many participants have been involved in projects where appraisals have been an integral? <p>Session two</p>
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- Identify best way for river restoration to be accepted at the strategic and CFMP level
- Identify opportunities/threats presented by the implementation of the water framework directive
- Is this an international problem?
- Has anybody cracked it within the context and constraints of government funding regimes elsewhere?
- What are the implications of the re-structuring of the EA upon restoration work?

Session three

- Can geomorphological audits be used as a means of providing catchment scale information on the physical status of designated rivers?

Session four

- Could RHS be adapted to include spatial flow data to improve its usability for fisheries mapping?
- How do we better integrate morphological and ecological appraisal?

Session five

- Do we need to include floodplain function and processes?
- What are the minimum criteria for a robust appraisal methodology in order to maximise use of resources for environmental benefit?

Session six

- How can we make Post Project Appraisals really useful, i.e. that the lessons really WILL be learned by for future projects?
- How can we undertake appraisal more readily?

Session seven

- What work is undertaken and how do we find out about it?

Session eight

- Are participants now going to incorporate appraisals into work programmes?
- **And finally.....**How do you eat the elephant? – Where does one start?