

**Wherryman's Way Works – River Chet**  
Report by Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer

**Summary:** This report provides members with information about a potential partnership project with Norfolk County Council to improve a section of the Wherryman's Way on the true left bank of the River Chet by infilling a section of the bank which is eroding badly due to a failing box culvert. Members are asked to consider whether the project should be prioritised and whether consideration should be given to a wider project to improve the bank of the River Chet from Chedgrave Common to the downstream end of Hardley Flood.

**Recommendation:** That members note the contents of the report and consider whether a partnership project to carry out works to the Hardley Flood outlet should be prioritised.

## **1 Background**

- 1.1 Members will recall that in 2013 the Broads Authority acted in partnership with Norfolk County Council to replace a damaged sluice at the extreme upstream outlet of Hardley Flood. This project was prioritised as the missing sluice was adversely affecting water levels in the River Chet and Hardley Flood.
- 1.2 Since these works were completed the bank at the extreme downstream outlet of Hardley Flood has started to erode due to the fact that a box culvert through the bank allowing water to flow into and out of Hardley Flood has failed. This means that uncontrolled water flow is causing rapid erosion of the bank thus placing the integrity of the bank and the Wherryman's Way Long Distance Trail under threat. At present the gap in the bank is spanned by a footbridge which will eventually collapse as further erosion occurs. Additionally, due to the alignment of the river at this point, it is likely that as the opening widens water will preferentially flow in and out of Hardley Flood causing siltation in the river channel and the flood itself.
- 1.3 Officers have been in discussion with Norfolk County Council for some months regarding the problem and have now put forward a number of proposals to deal with the issue for consideration.

## **2 Proposed works**

- 2.1 Having looked at the scale of the problem officers consider that as a temporary measure, in order to restrict flows and reduce the scale of the erosion, bagged stone could be placed in the outlet channel which would minimise erosion and maintain the bank until a more permanent solution is agreed.

- 2.2 The options available for delivering a more permanent solution are to completely fill the outlet and widen the bank with material dredged from the River Chet or fill the outlet with a piped culvert which would maintain the connection between the flood and the River Chet but be more costly due to the additional construction works that would be required to retain the structure in the bank and provide a level foundation for the pipe.
- 2.3 Both permanent solutions are likely to cost in the order of £12,000 but detailed costings will be worked out if the project proceeds. Officers consider that the preferred option would be to completely infill the inlet and widen the bank using dredgings. This option has a number of merits including the fact that it will secure a narrow section of bank from future erosion and remove the need for Norfolk County Council to maintain a footbridge over the current gap in the bank. This will protect the Wherryman's Way and reduce the risk of increased siltation occurring in the River Chet and Hardley Flood.
- 2.4 Due to the fact that Hardley Flood is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) there is a need to undertake a Habitats Regulations screening assessment prior to any works being carried out and this is currently being discussed with Natural England.

### **3 Future work on the Wherryman's Way**

- 3.1 The proposals described above will deal with the immediate problem of the downstream outlet to Hardley Flood but the whole section of bank from Chedgrave Common to Hardley flood is also eroding and settling in places as the true left bank of the River Chet is not maintained by the Environment Agency as a flood defence bank. In time this will place the route of the Wherryman's Way under threat and potentially adversely affect levels and siltation rates in the River Chet. Norfolk County Council is currently considering where bank works would benefit the route of the Wherryman's way and seeking to identify external funding sources to cover the costs of improvement works on the whole length of bank. The Broads Authority could potentially assist in this regard by providing sediment from the river for use in bank works.

### **4 Conclusions**

- 4.1 There is a pressing need to deal with the initial problem of the downstream outlet to Hardley Flood and officers consider that this project should be prioritised given the threat to the Wherryman's Way and the likelihood of increased erosion and siltation occurring if the outlet is not filled. However, as a matter of policy the Broads Authority does not generally maintain public rights of way and has no responsibility for the maintenance of river banks. The maintenance of the Wherryman's Way is the statutory duty of Norfolk County Council as highway authority and the Broads Authority would only be in a position to proceed with the project if Norfolk County Council is prepared to enter into an appropriate partnership agreement which covers costs and ongoing maintenance responsibilities. It should be noted that the Broads

Authority already has an investment in the weir that was constructed in 2013 and unless this project proceeds the weir will not operate effectively.

- 4.2 Officers will continue to discuss the proposal for a wider project to improve the Wherryman's Way from Chedgrave Common to the downstream end of Hardley Flood with Norfolk County Council particularly with regard to the provision of dredged material from the River Chet in any bank works that take place.

Background papers:	Nil
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Broads Plan Objectives:	TR1, TR2
Appendices:	Nil