



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Report

AGENDA ITEM 4

Date: 6th March 2024

Title: River Chess Valley Smarter Water Catchment

Author: Steph Horn, Smarter Water Catchment Project Coordinator – Chilterns Conservation Board

Chess 'Smarter Water Catchments Pilot' www.chesssmarterwatercatchment.org

The Chess is one of 9 chalk streams in the Chilterns AONB, supporting a unique and diverse habitat. Our collective vision is that the Chess catchment is a jewel in the heart of the Chilterns landscape. We want to create a place where people are working together to protect and improve the water environment for everyone, from the headwaters above Chesham to its confluence with the River Colne in Rickmansworth. A catchment includes both the river and all the land around it, from which the river is formed. The approach encompasses 6 themes: 1] water quality; 2] managing flow; 3] wildlife corridors, 4] preventing the introduction and spread of invasive non-native species [INNS]; 5] involving people; & 6] working together.

The partnership is a collaboration between Affinity Water, Buckinghamshire Council, Chilterns Conservation Board, Chiltern Society, Environment Agency, Hertfordshire & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Thames Water and The River Chess Association. This mixed group from different sectors provides a steering group and governance for the direction to which the Smarter Water Catchments will take. Commencing in 2021 and funded until March 2025, a £3 million of investment has been provided by Thames Water. *[NB Jed Ramsay from the council's flood team is a steering group member, looking at water quality and flow issues in Chesham, in Partnership with the Bucks-led 'Project Groundwater']*.

Under the theme of involving people, the project has worked with Sustrans to develop a strategy to address access in the Chess Catchment. The Partnership felt that the Chess Valley Walk was a popular and well-used walk, renowned by the walking community. Therefore, work has been undertaken to scope additional footpaths and walking routes that will provide alternative routes and access for all within the catchment area of the Chess. Working with stakeholders has been critical.

Steph Horn Project Coordinator from the Chilterns Conservation Board will update the LAF on the current work on access undertaken by the project.