Hopefully by now you will have seen Sir David Attenborough’s explanation of a Nature Recovery Network (NRN). The rivers in our catchment provide us with a ready-made NRN, and as a partnership we are well placed to continue working to improve connectivity across the landscape. In this latest issue of the newsletter, we cover a wide range of topics encompassing urban and rural issues, take a look at a couple of specific projects and have the opportunity to find out about some of the resources available to us all to help in making our water environment better for both people and wildlife.

CaBA and 25 Year Environment Plan progress
According to a recent CIWEM report, “CaBA is already contributing to meeting 25 YEP goals on: clean and plentiful water, thriving plants and wildlife, reducing environmental hazards, using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently, and increasing engagement with the natural environment”. This is a positive assessment of catchment partnerships nationally, however, the report also highlights the need for increased collaboration and greater funding certainty to “enable a more strategic and long-term approach to planning and project delivery”.

A spotlight on...urban rivers
Whilst our catchment has many rural areas, managing our urban rivers is equally important to achieve our water quality and biodiversity targets. We already have local groups such as the Maun Conservation Group, Warsop Footpaths and Countryside Group and Forest Town Nature Conservation Group working tirelessly in our catchment and new guidance recently published could help these, and other local community initiatives, to further develop their knowledge and skills. The “Trout in the Town” Urban Rivers Toolkit is “full of inspiring, empowering advice for anyone who wants to start taking care of their local urban waterway”. The Wild Trout Trust website also has more information and individual factsheet downloads available.
Work continues to tackle Himalayan balsam

Warsop Footpaths & Countryside Group—Warsop Himalayan Balsam Report 2019

During 2019 volunteers surveyed over 8km of waterways within the parish of Warsop and devoted over 60 volunteer hours to removing approximately 12,000 Himalayan balsam plants. Their priorities remain

1. Eradicating Himalayan Balsam from Sookholme Brook and its tributaries
2. Preventing it from becoming established on the section of the River Meden flowing through the Hills & Holes SSSI
3. Managing the Himalayan Balsam on the riverbanks at Meden Vale to reduce the risk of it spreading downstream
4. Removing it from the wetlands of The Bottoms Local Nature reserve

Although they report mixed results, the level of commitment shown to tackling INNS in this part of the catchment is quite staggering. A massive thank you to all the volunteers involved both here and elsewhere in the annual balsam bash!

......and maybe there could be an extra weapon coming to help in the fight against this invasive plant.....? Read on below...

Rust fungus being used to tackle Himalayan balsam in Norfolk

Last year, a research team released Himalayan Balsam plants infected with a rust-fungus onto sites around the banks of rivers Wensum, Glaven and Bure in the Broads National Park...and the signs are encouraging as the team, from the ‘RAPID LIFE’ project, the Norfolk Non-Native Species Initiative and the Broads Authority, have since observed the diseased plants spreading through the National Park area. The fungus survives in the leaf litter over winter and infects new seedlings. Signs include mottled brown leaves and pink spots on the plant stems. You can find more information here and we will hopefully be talking more about invasive species at our next Sherwood Catchment Partnership meeting, so keep an eye out for the date being published soon.
Are beavers a solution to the freshwater biodiversity crisis?

So asks a recent research paper from scientists studying the biodiversity impact of beavers in south central Sweden. Having collected data on plants, water beetles and other environmental variables, it was possible to compare biodiversity between beaver-created and non beaver-created wetlands. The team concluded that “Beaver-created ponds support novel biodiversity that is not merely a subset of that found elsewhere in the same landscape”. Although they also make it clear that beavers alone won't solve the biodiversity crisis, they make an important point about the importance of large herbivores in creating and maintaining habitat diversity. In a Wildlife Trusts’ report on their experiences of beaver reintroductions, the wider benefits of having beavers in the landscape were highlighted:

And for the River Idle Catchment Partnership? Is there a place for introducing this keystone species, and all of the benefits it could bring, into a controlled environment where we can see and study the impacts for ourselves? We would welcome your thoughts......

Lowland Natural Flood Management Measures: a practical guide for farmers

As human land managers, we can certainly play our part in looking for ways to improve water quality and biodiversity, as well as helping to alleviate the impacts of extreme rainfall events. This new guidance from the Dales to Vale Rivers Network has been produced to provide simple, clear advice on the provision of natural flood management measures for lowland areas. It gives details of a wide range of interventions, including agricultural benefits, methods, maintenance and other considerations. Well worth a look and available to download for free via the CaBA website.
Hopefully by now many of you will have heard about the fantastic project that Catchment Agricultural Adviser Phil Billings has been working on with the support of Thoresby Estate, Severn Trent and Future Biogas. Sherwood Catchment Partnership attendees were treated to a site visit to see the maize and all of the different undersown trial plots. As an energy crop used in the production of biogas, maize planting has taken off across the catchment and the trial is looking at ways to make sure that yields can be maintained alongside minimising run off and nutrient leaching. On a sunnier day earlier in the year, farmers and agronomists were on site when the central pollinator strip was in full bloom and buzzing with insect life—one of the many multiple benefits of the trial. With over 40 plots using different planting methods, spacing, undersown crops and levels of fertilisation to name but a few of the variables being studied, it will be interesting to see the results of current harvesting and how this knowledge can be used to further protect soils and water.
Water Challenges and Choices consultation

Hopefully by now you will all be aware that the Environment Agency are launching a consultation seeking our views on the next River Basin Management Plan (RBMP). Our responses, both collectively and individually, will help to shape the future approach to managing the water environment. The Challenges and Choices consultation seeks our views on the challenges that threaten the water environment, how we can work together to manage our waters and who should pay. We will be exploring this further in our next catchment meetings, but in the meantime please do take a look at the Challenges and Choices website which explains the process, gives links to some video clips and details the ways that we will be able to feed into the consultation.

Understanding Catchment Data

When targeting and planning projects, as a CaBA Catchment Partnership, we have a myriad of datasets available to help us take an evidence based approach. This video gives a guided tour through the latest version of the CaBA Data Package, which is provided free to all CaBA Catchment Partnerships to help plan collaborative actions. Episode 1 shows the layers which are contained in the Opportunities group, and talks about how these can be used to identify multi-benefit opportunities for collaboration.

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