



**Arun & Western
Streams Partnership**

A healthier future for our catchment



**Western
Sussex
Rivers Trust**

Minutes of the Arun and Western Streams Catchment Partnership quarterly meeting held Wednesday 6 May 2026.

Attendees: Aimee Felus (WSRT), Eloise Phillips (WSRT), Chloe Clarke (WSRT), Sam Frith (WSRT), Sarah Hughes (WSRT), Louise Barnetson (WSRT), Melanie Sanders (WSRT), Tracy Thurlow (WSRT), Becky Hiorns (NT), David Elliott (NT), George Tinker (NE), Jennifer Pollitt (SW), Jenny Anderson (RRCCIC), Pete Crawford (HDC), Roy Briscoe (CDC), Rosie Pyper (EA), Sophia Llewelyn (Goodwood), Dominic Henly (West Sussex Gov), Ruth Childs (South Downs National Park Authority), Holger Schiller (West Sussex CC), Lyra Ginns (Southern Water), Bradley Ginns (Southern Water), Zoë Fothergill (Southern Water), Dr Julia Brown (University of Portsmouth), Charlotte Owen (Sussex WT), Jess Price (Sussex WT), Jake Barnes (South Downs National Park Authority), Katie Archer (National Trust), Maria Kirk (South Downs National Park Authority), Max Gravestock (South Downs National Park Authority)

10:00 Welcome and introductions

Eloise Phillips (WSRT) welcomed the session and attendees each gave a brief introduction for all to understand what organisations and roles were present at the session.

10:15 Catchment Partnership Update Aimee Felus, CE WSRT

Aimee Felus (WSRT) spoke to the group about the national picture and the water white paper that followed the independent water commission, as well as regional water planning and the likely role of catchment partnerships. Aimee also gave an update on Defra doubling investment for catchment partnerships, and Southern Water's additional investment relating to the creation of the two new roles for the AWSCP, the Catchment Partnership Project Manager (Mel Sanders) and the Catchment Coordinator (Eloise Phillips).

10:30 Introduction from Eloise Phillips, Catchment Coordinator

Eloise introduced how the expansion of the Catchment Coordinator role is to further harness the potential of the group, widening its scope, increasing its collective influence and delivering more projects for more improvements in our riverscapes. Eloise outlined her role as facilitator for the meetings, and how she aims to work with partners to explore how to make the partnership even more impactful and effective, and asked for partners to get in touch with her if there were anything they would like to discuss at this stage. The key aims of the partnership were identified as improvements to water quality, enhanced biodiversity, reduced flood risk, resilience to climate change, and health and wellbeing benefits for local communities.

10:30 Beavers on the Rother update by David Elliott, National Trust Lead Ranger for South Downs West

David delivered a presentation on the Western Rother Beaver Group and gave an update on the EOI from the group for release in the Rother. Lyra Ginns asked about processes for how habitats (specifically dams) will be monitored and potential investment into human maintenance for habitats. David explained that there are licenses from Natural England to modify beaver dams in a certain given set of circumstances, and the mitigations system that is available if needed. The way that beaver licensing systems work is that to get to the process of wild release, there must be a project officer in place, who is the person responsible for management and communication. There was a question of what timeline is the group considering currently, to which Dave replied the group is possibly working towards a full application to Natural England towards the end of this year.

Save the date: On Wednesday 17th June between 10am-4pm, there will be a drop-in **Beavers in the Western Rother Open Day** at the South Downs Centre in Midhurst. This is open to anyone in the Western Rother area. It will be a chance to meet members of the Western Rother Beaver Group to raise any concerns as well as discuss potential opportunities.

From 6-9pm there will be a film screening of *Balancing the Scales*, and a talk and discussion with Dr Rob Needham from the Beaver Trust.

11:15 Water in the Park update, Ruth Childs Nature Recovery Strategy Lead SDNPA

Ruth gave an update on her first few months in the role, transferring from the planning directorate where she was a landscape specialist to landscape operations. Ruth mentioned the Water in the Park report, which she aims to convert into an internal

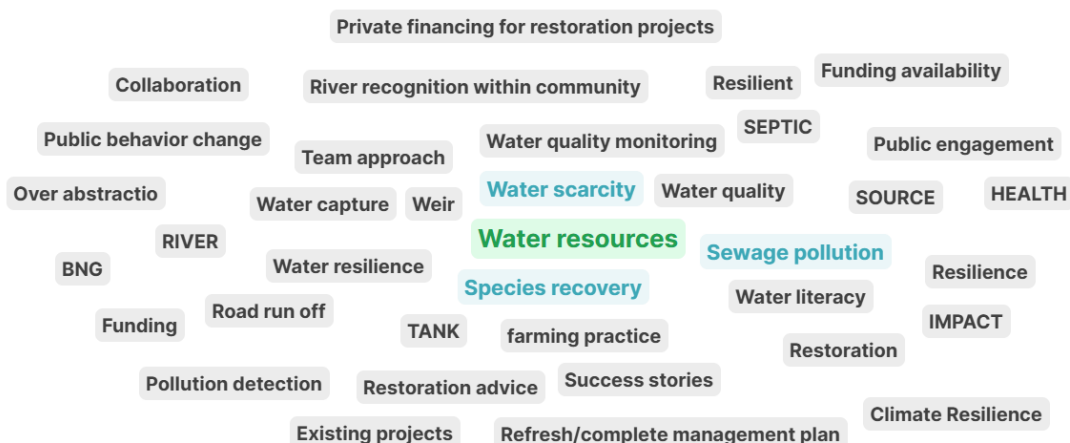
action plan for the Park Authority to help drive and push forward some of the work concerning water across the SDNP.

Ruth sees the Strategy Lead role and the role of the Authority as a ‘broker,’ for information, for unlocking funding, and for relationships. Ruth plans to find out what projects are already in place across the catchment, what some of the potential struggles are, where some of the gaps might be, and be a source of coordination and general assistance as needed. She also wants to coordinate evidence, skills and collaboration when working together, to help all share expertise, experience, funding, and add value to the brilliant work that is already taking place within the catchment.

11:30 – 13:00 group activity

The group worked on an activity to identify what contributes towards an effective Catchment Partnership. This involved table discussions to think through structure, sub-groups, project themes, topics for future meetings. Informal networking over lunch. Finally, feedback sharing from group discussions.

Key topics identified as useful to cover in future meetings:



13:00 Meeting closed.