

# Tree Works: Lessons Learned

July 2017

As an organisation, we are committed to improving how we work both internally and with our external stakeholders.

We recently held a lessons learned workshop to discuss the tree works on the River Aire. We wanted to ensure that we captured what could be improved upon and take action to imbed some changes into our ways of working. This briefing details the outcomes of the workshop and the changes we are making.

## Background

Due to feedback received from our internal and external partners about the tree works carried out along the River Aire we decided to hold a lessons learned workshop to understand how we could improve. The workshop used continuous improvement methodology and was run by a Business Improvement Facilitator. Attendees included representatives from our Asset Performance teams, Fisheries, Biodiversity and Geomorphology team, Environment Programme team, Estates team, Customer and Engagement Teams and Communications team.

Our intention was to discuss any issues we encountered during the tree works and create a plan of action to allow us to make improvements going forward. This briefing note explains the issues discussed and the plans we are putting in place to improve our engagement and communication about any future works.

## Headline issues from workshop

The workshop identified a number of headline issues to tackle.

The main challenges were:

- The tight deadlines that we often have to operate under meant that our internal consultation process was rushed.
- How we liaise with relevant stakeholders in a timely manner
- How we gather local information where applicable
- How our survey work is carried out in a consistent manner prior to any works taking place

## What has been put in place so far?

- We have recently appointed one of our Biodiversity Officers to work more closely with the Asset Performance team. This will help ensure that we are working closer together and sharing best practice. We will utilise the existing strong relationships with key external partners to make sure other projects / information is considered prior to works being carried out.
- Our Fisheries & Biodiversity team and the Wild Trout Trust will work together to provide specialist training for our field teams and contractors.
- Initial meetings have taken place to plan an engagement strategy for the next round of maintenance works. All teams have been involved in these discussions to ensure stakeholders are considered and engaged. As part of this, we are now trialling a new engagement assessment form to make sure we can anticipate the engagement needs surrounding proposed works on a case by case basis.

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## Improvements already realised

We are determined to learn from our recent experiences and we are encouraged by feedback we have received, that changes are having an effect already. These include:

- Early stakeholder engagement carried out in the Don and Rother catchment with angling groups and other river users, meant our works went ahead without causing concern for the public.
- We are planning a tree-planting scheme on Eshton Beck as mitigation for the loss of trees on the River Aire. We will also consider similar schemes where funds and opportunity allow. Bat boxes are also being erected on suitable trees as mitigation for the loss of any potential bat roosts.
- Landowners/Riparian owners have provided positive feedback on tree works.



Picture of contractors working next to the River Dearne.

## How you can find out more

You can keep up to date on our progress by contacting your existing EA contact. Alternatively you can email [enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk)



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