

# Stedham With Iping Parish Council – River Rother Working Party

## Rother Management Opinion Survey

### **We need your opinion of the management of the River Rother in our parish.**

Further to the public meetings and working party meetings over the last year, the Parish Council need your support.

The Environment Agency (EA) are neglecting the management of The Rother and we need your help to hold them to account.

### **The Problems**

The EA have lowered the water level in the river to relieve pressure on the old and failing sluices, revealing a large expanse of unsightly concrete and high banks.

Lower river levels expose banks which may become unstable if not properly managed.

The old mill workings are a heritage asset to the parish but are in a state of disrepair.

The more modern sluice is proving unreliable, and the EA is not maintaining it.

The Rother's ecology is poor; typical for a river with a sluice impeding the flow. These structures block the passage of fish and slow the water causing sediment to build up (9000 tonnes estimated at present!)

A healthy river should have fast- and slow-moving sections of water, with deep and shallow parts, exposed gravel beds etc. Most of the Rother in the Stedham half of the parish is slow moving and silted.

### **The Constraints**

The Parish is a stakeholder in the Rother, not its owner. Its management, including the sluices, is by the EA under their framework agreed by Central Government. The EA own the assets. The river and riverbank are owned by the adjacent landowners.

Modern river management policy embraces more naturalistic schemes, so we will not see high water levels permanently maintained as the norm, except in time of flood or spate.

Funding for any work will not be forthcoming if we cannot demonstrate an improvement to biodiversity and protection of heritage assets.

### **The Options**

We have taken advice from EA officers, The National Trust and the Arun and Rother Rivers Trust. All are in general agreement that there are four options that are usually considered in cases like this.

- 1) Do Nothing - Accept the continued deterioration. We don't think this is an option.
- 2) Install a fish and eel pass – Low cost and quick, but does not address the overall river health. Also these require ongoing maintenance.
- 3) By-pass the obstruction – A channel around the Stedham Mill sluices would allow fish passage but the amount of private land required makes it impractical.
- 4) Remove the obstruction – Removing the weir and sluices at Stedham Mill would allow the river to return to its own natural level. The silt would be naturally

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dispersed over a number of years by increased flow over the winter period. Fish and eel passage would be unhindered once work is carried out in the mill pool

**Option 4** is the option currently most favoured by the working party and the Environment Agency, but it is not without its challenges.

- We would need to secure the agreement of a number of landowners
- It would be the most expensive and we need to secure the funding through grants.
- We want to maintain the footpath crossing at the Mill, possibly with a new bridge.
- We want to ensure the Mill workings are conserved, so the leat (Mill channel) may be drained. This could be planted / landscaped to maintain its appearance and bank stability.
- River banks, in the short term, may be exposed in some areas. We would look to reinforce those with suitable planting, which may take 18 months for seeds to take hold.
- Unsightly concrete could be removed and the area relandscaped in keeping with the surroundings, but this is costly work.

We need your opinion on this course of action.

## Your Opinion

I \_\_\_\_\_ (name) of \_\_\_\_\_ (address)

support / do not support (**delete as applicable**) the River Rother Working Parties preferred option 4, detailed above.

## Further comments:

Please Return to the SIPC Clerk, Morag Birch at Grado, School Lane or send by email to [clerk@stedhamwithiping-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@stedhamwithiping-pc.gov.uk)