

URSULA



The
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Achieving multi-functional benefits: lessons from missed opportunities

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Basic argument

- Water management is a complex business with implications for a wide realm of activity;
- Funding and motivation for water related investments tends to come with one dominant function, with overlapping realms ignored / minimised;
- One step to address this would be to embed public participation more thoroughly in all processes of water management.

Structure: Three cases

- Dearne River Restoration
- Malin Bridge Flood Alleviation
- Five Weirs Walk
- Conclusion

DERNE RIVER RESTORATION

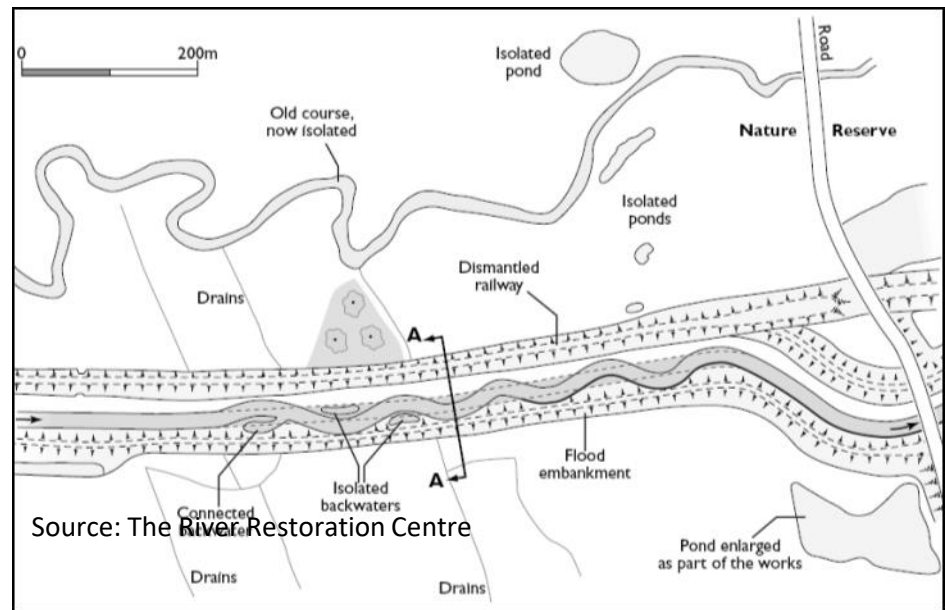
Dearne: Background

Lowland river in north of England in former coal mining area;

1970s: A straightened river channel created to south of original course - aimed to relieve contamination and flood risk

1995: 500m stretch of the straightened course was 'restored' through placing stone barriers to create a sinuous channel better for habitat (fish)

2009: Research on public perceptions about the restored stretch and an adjacent unrestored and still straightened channel



Dearne: restoration practice



Straighten, not restored



Restored

- In 1990s restoration was viewed as a technical business without consultation;
- Research showed that people cared intensely about ‘their’ river, and were actively engaged in their landscape’s history;
- Significant differences in opinion about the restored stretch – for some the enhanced nature was better but for others, it caught more litter and looked ‘messy’

Dearne restoration - conclusion

If consultation had taken place it would have:

- Celebrated the landscape's history, perhaps supporting the development of some 'interpretation' material;
- Revealed (and perhaps resolved???) different perspectives among the residents, as well as between the residents and the ecologists;
- Enabled small benefits (e.g. positioning of benches and sight lines) to pay attention to the residents' views and experiences

Issues with the no-consultation system

- Positions the residents and their landscape as entirely subject to others' decision making;

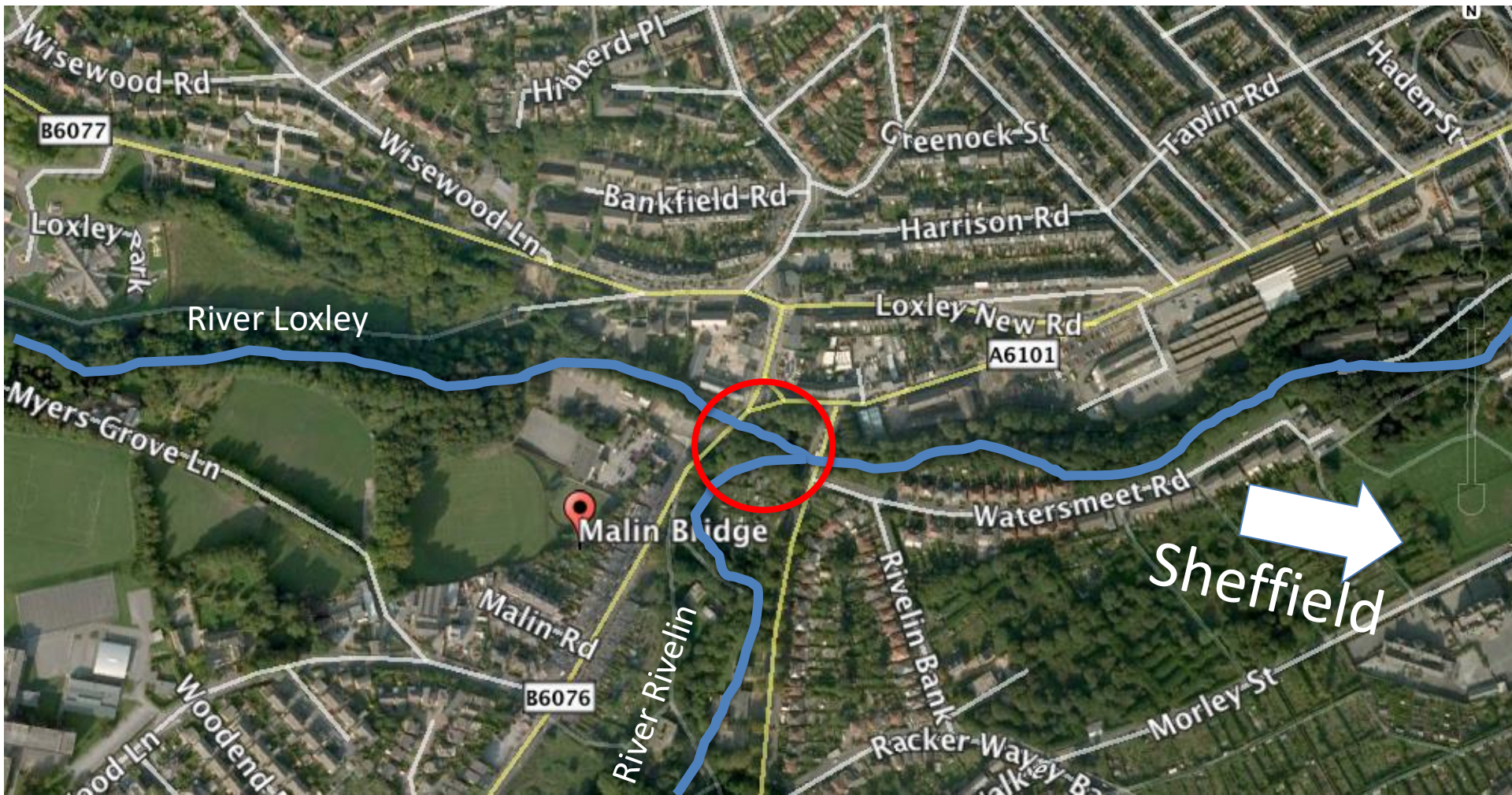


MALIN BRIDGE FLOOD ALLEVIATION

Malin Bridge Background

- Confluence of two small rivers to the west and north of Sheffield;
- One site of Sheffield's water-driven metal industry - shifted to flatter downstream land with steam power and electricity.
- Since 1920s Malin bridge has been a honey-pot for access to Sheffield's lush green valleys with industrial heritage

Courtesy of Google Earth



Malin Bridge vegetation: cause of flood?

- Summer 2007, flooding affected 1200 homes and 1000 businesses in central Sheffield, exacerbated by vegetation damming bridges.
- After flood DEFRA funding caused EA to identify sources of vegetation (including Malin Bridge) in Sheffield area for action

We've spent a lot of money and time after the 2007 floods picking trees out of bridges; its really easier to pick trees out of the ground rather than pulling them out of bridges (EA manager)

- Quick 'informative' consultation with Sheffield Council (programme level) and with riparian owners (local level), & with passersby (local interpretation board), enabled work to occur in late summer 2009.



Issues with plans / consultation

- *“It was a very sort of engineering-focused programme”* Sheffield city council worker;
- Emphasis on how the change was needed to relieve floods;
- Interpretation boards focused on the history of the area, not what was planned;
- Ecological report only released the day before the work began;
- Geographical description “Malin Bridge” did not indicate the extent of upstream work that was finally conducted

The works – ‘visually dramatic’

- Through August and September 2009, 400 tonnes of trees and vegetation were removed from the site alongside 4,500 tonnes of earth and gravel.
- Scope expanded: *“Really we were supposed to stop at the weir, but we’d taken some trees out, and then you can see up the weir, and then there were trees that were problematic and, you know, well we’re on site with all the machinery here”*.



After

- Work exposed old weir and confluence of rivers;
- Local views were polarised: for some it was tidier and returned to old (pre-vegetated) state, for others it was a travesty: *“I just think it looks really ugly now”*
- An ecological survey after the change showed a decrease in biotic quality between August and October.

Lessons

- There was a valid debate to be had about the extent of flood interest in clearing the vegetation, and how they should balance with other interests;
- Experts (in the Council and the EA) were divided on the appropriateness of the action;
- The public, (many of whom were also 'experts') were similarly divided;
- The debate was cut off by inept consultation.

FIVE WEIRS WALK

Background

- The “lower Don valley” is a flood plain area to the north and east of Sheffield, which through the 20th century was the location of heavy steel industry
- By the 1990s the area was largely abandoned by industry, new Meadowhall shopping complex 1995



The Five Weirs Walk

- Riverside walkway (and cycleway) stretching 7.5 km from Sheffield City Centre to eastern outskirts.
- Conceived, developed and steered to completion by a charitable trust, over a period of 20 years.
- Key element in regeneration of the River Don corridor.



The Five Weirs Walk Trust

- Convergence of like-minded individuals with shared vision.
- Knowledgeable and well-connected professionals, including those from Sheffield Junior Chamber of Commerce and Sheffield City Wildlife Group.
- Five Weirs Walk Trust founded in 1987 to construct and promote a public walkway-cycleway along the Lower Don.



“The support we have received in this campaign from politicians of all parties, leading professionals, prominent business people and many ordinary citizens has been an impressive demonstration of how the Trust’s original vision has now been taken to heart by the city as a whole.”

(Five Weirs Walk Trust Directors’ Report, 2001).



Activists: core and periphery

- Key individuals form Trust Committee; some (especially main office-holders) involved for entire duration of project.
- Core group makes decisions, develops strategies, deals with sponsors, landowners, officials, etc.
- Wider, looser concept of “membership” as fluctuating body of supporters who may volunteer for different tasks at different times.



“Grass roots” participation

Participation in the project originally seen as including special interest groups and local residents. *“Within half a mile of the river lie many of Sheffield’s poorest communities. The scheme would open up new recreational, sporting and educational opportunities for these areas.”* (Initial Prospectus, 1987).



- One successful collaboration with a neighbourhood group was with the Tinsley alliance, over the development of Meadowhall’s footbridge
- Otherwise community involvement was limited e.g. litter picks

Democratic?

Yes

- 5WWT was conceived, developed and run by individuals living in Sheffield.
- 5WWT worked with community groups when possible and appropriate – e.g. Tinsley alliance.
- Many individuals contributed to clean-ups and other action.
- 5WWT goal and actions fitted with those promoted by the democratically elected Council.

No

- 5WWT involved middle class individuals from the west of the city imposing their ideas about access to leisure on the poorer eastern part of Sheffield.
- Limited efforts were made to involve local community, particularly in the East of city.



CONCLUSION

Multi-functionality

Case	Primary function	Other functions impacted (but not prioritised)
Dearne	Ecology	Aesthetics
Malin Bridge	Flood risk	Ecology & aesthetics
Five WW	Access	More & different recreation?

Commonalities & conclusion

- Shifting funding streams to require multiple benefits seems a very big 'ask', and it is challenging to see how this can be done;
- Funding could, however, require adequate public consultation, and in the cases discussed such consultation would have been a great proxy for combined funding.