

Rivers: Engaging, Supporting and Transferring knOwledge for Restoration in Europe (RESTORE)

Les Fleuves: Impliquer, soutenir et transférer de connaissance pour la restauration en Europe (RESTORE)

Mant, Jenny; Elbourne, Nicholas

River Restoration Centre, Bullock Building, Cranfield Campus, Bedfordshire,
MK43 0AL, UK
Email: rrc@therrc.co.uk

RÉSUMÉ

RESTORE est un projet financé par le programme UE LIFE+, dans le volet "Information et Communication", qui vise à développer un vaste réseau Européen de décideurs, de planificateurs et gestionnaires des bassins fluviaux, de consultants, avec l'objectif de partager le savoir-faire sur la restauration des rivières et de contribuer à la connaissance de son importance pour l'implémentation de la DCE et d'autres directives Européennes et de ses bénéfices au sens plus large.

ABSTRACT

RESTORE is an EU LIFE+ Information and Communication funded project that aims to develop a comprehensive network of policy makers, river basin planners and practitioners across Europe to impart information about the importance of River Restoration in the context of WFD delivery and wider benefits.

To date the project has, through questionnaires and discussion with a range of interested parties, identified some key areas that either link to river restoration objectives or are integral part of their process and ultimately rationalise the need to consider river restoration within wider water management criterion. These include: understanding the key concepts of river restoration, linking to EU directives, the impact on the economy, the contribution of wellbeing of local communities, the role of flood management, the benefits to wildlife, balancing restoration with the need to sustain hydropower and linking rivers to spatial planning.

The priority of each of these key themes varies across member states. This project through a combination of workshops and other data collection and dissemination routes provides a platform for effective knowledge transfer. This paper will highlight how this is being achieved and discuss some of the outputs to date.

KEYWORDS

Best practice, Communication, European River Restoration, Evidence base, Information, Policy makers, Practitioners, River Basin Planners, Stakeholders.

RIVER RESTORATION AND WFD DELIVERY

1 BACKGROUND

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) (2000/60/EC) is one of the most influential pieces of European water legislation in recent years (Kaika, 2003). All European Member States must aim to achieve good ecological status in waterbodies by 2015 and river restoration concepts have been recognised as providing a significant contribution to improving the hydromorphological and biological condition of rivers. However, there is a common perception that there is a lack of scientific evidence regarding the success of restoration projects (Palmer et al. 2005) which has begun to lead to a greater focus on developing integrative monitoring programmes. Alongside this there is a growing appreciation that the science behind river restoration needs to be better communicated (Wohl et al., 2005) to practitioners and to help inform policy decisions.

1.1 Information dissemination across Europe

As an information and communication focused project this EU LIFE+ funded project aims to develop a comprehensive network of policy makers, river basin planners and practitioners across 21 countries in Europe. The project will be delivered over a 3 year period which commenced in 2010. RESTORE will provide the platform for effective knowledge transfer, and the discussion of strengths and weaknesses of river restoration techniques and options the outputs of which will be disseminated across Europe to provide information on river restoration in the context of WFD delivery and wider benefits across Europe.

The principal objectives of RESTORE are to:

- Support river restoration practices across Europe
- Build up existing river restoration network capacity
- Promote effective river restoration knowledge transfer
- Establish long-term river restoration knowledge sharing

Now in its second year the RESTORE project has highlighted pan-European issues that are affecting best practice delivery of river restoration. Through the delivery of a number of engagement events, the RESTORE project is able to collect information on the specific delivery of river restoration in different countries and how this is supported or constrained by local policy implementation. This presentation will highlight some of the outputs from these events, including where it has been identified that changes in policy could help to deliver more effective river restoration and discuss what RESTORE has already been able to achieve in terms of supporting river restoration delivery across Europe. To date for example, these have included: being instrumental in voicing the concerns of consultants and contractors in how projects are translated from concept to delivery; making policy change recommendations that could help the implementation of river restoration across member states (such as stating the importance of ensuring clear and more direct links between land and water policies); disseminating information about how different member states are capacity building through stakeholder engagement and; transferring the knowledge about newly emerging mechanisms to achieve this.

2 A NEW WEB-BASED DATABASE OF RESTORATION PROJECTS

Through this engagement process, it has also become evident that although some technical information is available to help guide best practice river restoration, nonetheless, this evidence base is patchy. The RESTORE project is developing a wiki-database ('wiki') and alongside the information gained related to river restoration trends across Europe. This tool comprises a website to which users can add, modify or delete content on their river restoration projects via a web browser using a simplified mark-up language or a rich-text editor – the key benefit of this being that any person anywhere can contribute to the resource at any time. Data that can be input spans technical elements of the projects in terms of the physical and ecological elements as well as economic and social information. Through this process it is anticipated that information and knowledge sharing across Europe will be encouraged.

2.1 Engagement process

This presentation, will detail the key elements that can be collected about best practice river restoration projects for this wiki-based tool, provide an up to date summary of project information collected thus far and discuss some preliminary observation trends collated from the data. It will also explicitly outline how individuals can be involved within the RESTORE process both in terms of helping to develop the 'wiki' tool and to participate in future events.

3 SUMMARY

To date the RESTORE project has demonstrated the value of communicating river restoration associated information across Europe. It has been instrumental in forming some of the topics for discussion at the 6th World Water Forum, forged stronger links between policy makers in different member states and identify where and in what format new guidance is necessary. The implementation of the wiki tool together with other dissemination mechanisms the RESTORE project can influence the implementation of best practice river restoration and increase the understanding of the river restoration concept in the context of economic and spatial planning, flood management, wildlife, social well being and balancing the needs of hydropower as examples. The project outputs will live beyond the life of this project as it has the benefit of committed post-project commitment from the European Centre of River Restoration (ECRR).

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