### EIA Quality Mark Case Study

#### Trews Weir, Exeter

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<th>Key Issues:</th>
<th>Purpose of the project:</th>
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<td>17 years ago, Mary-Rose Lane, Biodiversity Technical Specialist, recognised that the featureless grassland might as well have been “green concrete with a keep off sign”, both in terms of wildlife and the degree to which walkers and cyclists interacted with their surroundings. Flood defence yes, ecosystem services emphatically no. She is quick to credit NEAS’s Sarah Kingdom for the constructive and creative rapport that enabled things to change.</td>
<td>The transformation of the flood relief channel at Trews Weir, Exeter, as part of the £32M flood defence scheme for the city is a major success for the Environment Agency.</td>
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<td>The Exeter flood defence scheme, a three way partnership to improve the defences, was initiated in 2009 and accelerated in 2014. The consultant initially failed to see the significance and benefit of Mary-Rose's vision to transform this corridor of land right through the city. NEAS worked with the consultant to change their perception from “FBG wish list” to one of understanding the strategic significance of the environmental possibilities for the river corridor, for people and for wildlife.</td>
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## EIA Learning Outcomes

**Lessons learnt:**
The consultant brought into their team the very experienced Jo Cullis, and the trio, Mary-Rose, Sarah and Jo quickly formed a powerful and enduring partnership. Mary-Rose describes her working relationship with Sarah.

“We know each other’s strengths and use our combined knowledge and expertise to build a stronger level of justification for an integrated environmental design that we know will bring a multitude of beneficial outcomes. It’s a real partnership, we each do what we are meant to do and can do best.” For Mary-Rose this is the visioning, based upon her knowledge of the locality, combined with setting high quality expectations, a result of her extensive experience of habitat management. From Sarah it is her knowledge of how to justify and achieve environmental improvement as part of a complex flood defence scheme. Sarah can spot impending new opportunities and bring them to Mary-Rose’s attention. She has the experience to be able to intercept potentially damaging proposals which could prejudice the realisation of Mary-Rose’s vision. Both know the outcomes that FCRM can achieve through properly integrated design.

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**Lessons learnt continued:**

“It has been great working with Mary-Rose on Exeter. Working with someone who really knows and understands their patch and is willing to engage with, rather than comment on, the EIA process from the beginning, means we have been able to efficiently create a multi-functional scheme with many benefits. Via team work and collaboration the area aspirations now perfectly complement the flood defence scheme and have become assets to the wildlife and people of Exeter” is how Sarah sums up something that in an ideal world should be the norm, but in reality is dependent on the knowledge and motivation of those we consult with.

Mary-Rose summarises the outcome. “People passing through the river valley park [the footpaths and cycleways are possibly the most well used in the city] stop, explore look and make positive comments about how they now enjoy this space. There are a plethora of micro-habitats, the flood relief channel connects the freshwater and intertidal river. Fish, eel and lamprey inhabit the backwaters and the area is used by estuarine [from the neighbouring SAC] and freshwater birds. The wildflower mix was sown to link up to a Pollinator Network, and there are bumblebees and butterflies where previously there were none.”

And Mary-Rose adds a final recommendation. “For us this is a huge success, unimaginable 17 years ago. It demonstrates that it is always worth holding onto and nurturing a vision because at some time the right people and circumstances will come along and you will have the opportunity to make it reality.”