Open meeting 12th November 2026 on ”Natural Flood Management”



Debbie Coldwell, a Natural Flood Management officer for the Don Catchment Rivers Trust (est 2010) gave this months RVCG open meeting talk. Around 36 people turned out on cold night to hear this excellent presentation. The Don Catchment Rivers Trust seeks restore rivers, improve habitat, work with schools to educate, collect river data and see how changes to land management can help rivers.

Over the last couple of decades we have seen more river flooding with climate change and increased urbanisation. Natural Flood management seeks to slow water, store water, increase infiltration of water into soils and hold back sediment from water courses. When it works it reduces the peaks of floods, gives people more time to prepare for floods and takes the pressure of hard engineered flood defences. It can also improve water quality, increase carbons storage, help with drought resilience as well as increase wildlife habitats and amenities for people.

Debbie works in the Upper Rother Catchment where she has run a project called “Slow the flow to the Calow”. As part of this ponds and leaky dams have been built to hold back water. These have created flood water storage for a much lower amount that if they had been built with hard engineered structures. Sheffield city centre now has a sustainable Urban drainage system with planted gravel cells to store rainwater.

As she said, we can all do small things to help with natural flood management. Be it lifting a paving slab on our patio to allow more infiltration through to diverting downpipes into water butts and ponds. Anything which stops all the storm water going straight into over stretched drains and rivers helps.

Mark Bateman