

# Position Statement



## **Dredging : *Not a panacea***

- ***Whilst dredging will always be part of the 'tool kit' its ability to mitigate extreme events on a catchment-scale will always be limited unless it is part of a more integrated approach.***
- ***Dredging can make matters worse by accelerating flow and undermining structures or increasing problems downstream.***
- ***The emphasis on reducing water and sediment flow to the main rivers should be a priority for any catchment.***
- ***Dredging potentially pushes the problem downstream, and does not provide the additional Green Infrastructure benefits of NFM and SUDS.***

Dredging a water course can appear the most obvious action to increase the capacity of our rivers. The residual bank of sediment left after a flood event naturally inclines one to beg the question: *'if only we had cleared that bank of sediment we could have reduced the risk of flooding'* . However that bank is only a very small part of the story. The deposited sediment is the most obvious sign of where the energy of a watercourse has failed to support the sediment load ( i.e. at the end of an event!) . What you do not see is the 'gravel conveyor belt ' that exists during an event relentlessly carrying cobbles, boulder and huge amounts of sediment with devastating energy.

Rivers are as likely to scour as they are to sediment ( especially in the faster flowing catchments such as the Calder ). This can have a devastating impact on vital infrastructure such as bridges. Moreover, by increasing conveyance of water ( easing the passage of water ) downstream – the impact of dredging may make matters worse for downstream communities.

Dredging may also damage wildlife and ecosystems in certain areas. Removing vegetation can remove shade and increase water temperature, making fish more susceptible to stress in hot weather. Silt may become suspended in water instead of sitting on the river bed and may reduce the quality of the water. Dredging also may harm fish spawning grounds and disturb river life.

Reducing the flow of water before it reaches a water body will always be preferential; better still reducing the sediment load in a river through smaller interventions such as our large woody debris dams on upstream gullies ....but on a wider catchment scale can reduce downstream impacts. Equally, trying to 'make space for water' where rivers can reconnect with flood plains will help reduce impacts downstream. This is where Slow The Flow believe the emphasis should lie and this is what we will campaign for.

*Slow The Flow is a charity working to advance the education of the public in Natural Flood Management, Sustainable Drainage Systems and other renewable methods of managing the environment, including the exploration of alternative practices which safeguard the natural environment and its resources in a manner which best fits the specifics of a local geography.*

Slow The Flow can be contacted in the following ways:

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