The multiple benefits of thinking *blue-green* in Hebden Bridge

e-Bulletin #2

In this latest e-bulletin I share with you my experiences of spending a week touring the city of Portland, Oregon; where innovative solutions to stormwater management are having multiple benefits for the local population, water, economy and wildlife. There are a number of things that looked very much like they would fit in with the environmental awareness that has long been associated with Hebden Bridge.

In this bulletin:

Experiences from Portland, Oregon

The city of Portland in Oregon is definitely thinking differently about water management. The city is increasingly utilising green infrastructure, which highlights the importance of natural process in urban planning and design. The city is faced with flood threats primarily from the heavy rainfall experienced from October – May, and has come up with some fairly innovative (and attractive) ways of dealing with this problem. These include the guiding of stormwater from streets and paved areas into bio-swales, where the water can slowly infiltrate into the ground therefore helping to reduce the pressure on the city's sewer systems (top right). Many of the downpipes from houses and shops have been diverted onto the surface so that stormwater running off roofs runs into gardens and soakaways rather than directly into the drains. Rain gardens have been introduced into public areas (town squares, corners of major street junctions, school playgrounds) (above). Finally, many of the city's larger roofs have been fitted with eco gardens to store, filter and purify stormwater (lower right).

All of these features have multiple benefits, which extend to increasing biodiversity, creating recreational areas, sequestering carbon and making the city a nicer place in which to live. It would appear the benefits to reducing flood risk are just a small part of the bigger picture. I look forward to sharing these ideas with you at our workshops.

Lessons for Hebden Bridge

Many of the solutions adopted by Portland are on small scale plots, set up by communities or individuals, and at minimum cost compared to the value of the benefits. They have to fit into the existing cityscape, where space is at a premium. Although they are small, it is the cumulative impact when they are taken together, that has had a measurable effect on the management of stormwater. I feel there are definitely some ideas here that Hebden Bridge might want to think about when managing runoff – particularly in the urban valley floor – as part of a wider programme of measures that cater for the changing land uses as we move through the catchment.

Next steps

Thank you to those that have got back to me with regards meeting up to discuss the project. I will be in Hebden on Sunday 5th and Tuesday 7th May, so if you are around haven't been in touch, please do so.

Shaun Maskrey lgxsamas@nottingham.ac.uk 07887 398337