

Flood Meadows & King's Pond (Including the River Wey at Alton) Steering Group Meeting Notes 19th November 2020 at 10.00am, held virtually

In attendance: Cllr Pam Jones (Open Spaces Committee Chair), Charles Kaye (Wey Walk Working Group / AHRA) Brian Goode (Alton Society), Jenny Griffiths (ACAN) Councillor Suzie Burns, Louise Parker (Amery Hill Residents Association) Glen Skelton (Surrey Wildlife Trust), David Tickner (AVLAN) and Leah Coney (Town Clerk)

- 1) The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting
- 2) The **Terms of Reference** for the Group were discussed. The Clerk was asked to amend the terms to reflect the extended remit of the group as follows:
 - Include the River Wey at Alton in the Steering Group title.
 - Include the route of the Wey Walk within the scope of the group
 - Add liaison with riparian landowners.
 - Make reference to working in conformity with local plans and frameworks for the river, including but not limited to Environment Agency management plans, the Water Framework Directive and local sub catchment group plans.

3) Friends of King's Pond and Flood Meadows

BG reported the useful work undertaken by NCS over the summer at Flood Meadows. The Alton Society working party has been able to do a few bits and bobs but work has been limited this year with lockdowns.

SB reported a disappointing number of volunteers so far for the Friends of King's Pond sessions. The first one was held in September but the second session in October didn't go ahead through lack of volunteers. It was commented that friends groups are only as good as its volunteers, so hopefully more people can be encouraged for next year.

JG asked for details so she can promote through ACAN and LC noted interest from Alton Lions, who have been given more information and a reply from them is awaited.

PJ noted the King's Pond Bio-blitz postponed from this year which hopefully will be re-run next year and will be a good opportunity to recruit more volunteers.

4) Contamination and water flow, Brick Kiln Lane.

The Environment Agency have put sandbags along the lane which may have helped although the river was still discoloured this weekend after the heavy rains.

DT asked will the new balancing pond at Will Hall Farm help with water run-off from Brick Kiln Lane? LP replied that there is a liaison meeting next week and information has been promised on this which (requested consistently for the last 12 months.)

CK noted that at the moment they are completely separate systems, ponds are for the development run off not Brick Kiln Lane and are quite separate flows at the moment.

PJ noted that once the town council takes ownership of the lower field this can also be looked at.

PJ to request invitation for GS to next liaison meeting

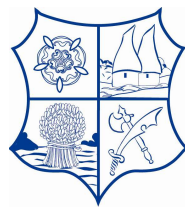
CK said there are two issues 1) Contamination in BKL from run off from the fields which is being addressed and then debris flow which blocks the gullies, which is a separate issue. This area has been highlighted to County Councillor Andrew Joy in relation to local flooding. Amery Hill Residents Association (AHRA) will write to AJ for an update

5) Project -state of the riverside paths in Flood Meadows

It was noted that two parts of the riverside path have eroded. Is action required?

BG noted that the water has undercut all the way along the path although there are these two areas which are particularly bad.

Suggested that the wood could be used from the bridge which is being replaced. LC volunteered the grounds team to help with labour costs if required. GS to speak to Aquamaintain to quote for the works as he had spoken to them about gravel recharge, so they could look at this at the same time.



6) **Project – gravel recharge at Flood Meadows**

BG, GS and CK met last week with Bob Booker to look at this. An Environment Agency licence is required for the project but it can then be carried out in sections (licence valid for 3 years once obtained)

GS to ask Aquamaintain to quote.

DT asked should we be looking to reprofile the river?

GS noted that berms not ideal as areas are dark and children play around the area but yes it would be great to narrow the channel there but it is so well used that it may prove difficult.

7) **Project – River along Weyside Walk.**

CK would like to put together a scheme for this area and scope it to see what can be done to enhance this area. The group were happy for CK to liaise with GS on this, GS has asked Aquamaintain to have a look to see what ideas they may have.

8) **Update on river and Wey walk plans for the Brewery Site, (inc. Silt trap King's Pond)**

PJ noted planning application being considered for the brewery site next week.

GS said he thought the Environment Agency (EA) biodiversity team felt this was an opportunity lost but there is a 70m stretch will be more like a straight narrow culvert, similar to that in Weyside Walk.

It was noted that the EA has issued a letter to the planning authority which is quite strong on this and hopefully addresses this concern by requesting certain conditions are applied to any permission

LP asked how do we ensure that those conditions are recognised by the planning committee and applied? It was requested that LC write to Cllr Titterington who will be making the Town Council representation to the planning committee meeting, highlighting this and copying the ward councillor Richard Platt as well as Glen Skelton, Louise Parker and Charles Kaye in case Cllr Titterington has any questions.

9) **River Wey Monitoring**

JG noted that AVLAN working with GS is introducing a regular surveying of the river. Samples taken in training and more recently were somewhat disappointing. A session was due in November but postponed until the new year but a keen group of 12 – 15 volunteers have been trained and regular monitoring at 3 or 4 different sites along the river will happen going forward.

LC asked if AVLAN would be happy to volunteer at the BioBlitz if it re-scheduled. JG confirmed they would be happy to help.

10) **Management Plan actions for Flood Meadows and King's Pond**

LC noted the final bridge replacement is being carried out at Flood Meadows before Christmas.

SB noted that the feeding stations at King's Pond need some restorative work on both sides of the pond the railway and Ashdell Road; Aquamaintain to be asked to quote.

PJ noted that the dredging of the pond was not required at the moment; very expensive and invasive. There was discussion over this and it was suggested a reed bed to be installed to reduce silt without the huge cost of off-site removal.

Feeding is still an issue, the number of rats has reduced but this will continue to be monitored over the winter.

PJ suggested that Swan Support should be invited to the BioBlitz next year.

PJ noted that egg oiling was not carried out in 2020 because of lockdown and was prevented in 2019 because of resident concerns. PJ wished to recommend the engagement of a commercial egg oiling contractor, which was agreed.

LC to circulate the action plan for the management plans to the group

11) **Future plan for the river to include Wey catchment plan. (Scoping)**

Hampshire & IOW Wildlife Trust Watercress and Winterbourne project details had been circulated by PJ. The project does not cover this area but they would be happy to share resources and learning.

DK noted there are a couple of other groups locally including Wessex River Trust and the South East Rivers Trust which might be useful for ideas and resources. GS would like to put a project register together for the river around Alton and then circulate it so it can be shared and added to. The Alton Natural History Society would also be interested in an educational project. LC suggested that the Bio-blitz might be a good project for them. DT noted there are a number of project plans around to draw upon and included a link to one in the chat room.

12) **Date of next Meeting** was confirmed as Thursday 25th February at 10am. LC to send Zoom and calendar invitation.