

Flood Meadows & King's Pond (Including the River Wey at Alton) Steering Group Meeting Notes 20th May 2021 at 10.30am, 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) David Tickner (AVLAN) and Leah Coney (Town Clerk)

1) Friends of King's Pond and Flood Meadows

SB reported that the first Friends of Kings Pond group since lockdown will convene this coming Sunday 23rd May. Martin Whapshott will attend on behalf of the Grounds Team. People can register their interest in joining the group by contacting her or the Town Hall. BG suggested SB pop down to the next Flood Meadows session to see how they run their volunteer mornings.

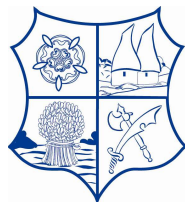
2) King's Pond Updates

- i) **Drainage Survey.** Professional survey costs were obtained and on average were going to cost in excess of £10,000. On that basis councillors wished to look at alternatives to paid engineering surveys. A pro-bono survey was undertaken by a local drainage engineer who looked at the paths around the pond both in the dry weather on Easter weekend and also again in the pouring rain on the 28th April. His recommendations are contained in a report which will be submitted to the next Open Spaces meeting.
- ii) **Rats.** A recent month-long deployment of traps resulted in the removal of 9 rats and 8 mice. Unfortunately, the rats are so well fed that they are no longer being lured into the traps with the bait as they are not hungry. There are still a noticeable number of rats at the pond and Environmental Health have been contacted to look at options going forward. It was noted by LC that in a recent correspondence with one of the experts working on the BioBlitz, he commented that the build up of silt, wildfowl waste and rat waste meant the ecologically the pond was "dead" and it meant he was unable to undertake pond dipping as part of the BioBlitz.
- iii) **Grill/Screen.** Following a request from a member of the public to confirm the "grill clearing" regime with the Environment Agency, the EA has since been in correspondence with ATC in respect of the grill which is owned by the Council. With the grill being brought to their attention, they have reviewed the current regime and concluded that due to resourcing constraints, they are now looking to the Town Council to clear it.
"We also monitor and clear the screen during the autumn/winter due to the volume of debris that falls in the watercourse. With the reduction in our resources and our drive to reduce carbon footprint. We would be looking to the council as the asset owner to undertake, regular checks and clearance where possible. When we clear the structure, we leave the debris on the bank, when this has built up we have been taking it away. It would be good if the council could aid in the removal of the debris"

The Environment Agency will, during high rainfall events continue to undertake flood runs and clear key pinch points and screens; Kings Pond is one of these and will still be checked.

The Environment Agency have also said they are keen to ensure that we work together to reduce flood risk to Alton. If there are any incidents that the council need to report please contact 0800 80 70 60. This is our 24-hour emergency incident hotline and is for not only flooding but pollution as well.

- iv) **Trees in the water.** Due to the pollution in the water at the pond it has been challenging to secure a tree surgeon to undertake the work to remove the trees currently in the pond. This work is recommended to be carried out around September time when the water level should be relatively low and costs for the work will be submitted to the Open Spaces Committee.
- v) **egg oiling.** Whilst the licence had been obtained, due to continuing issues associated with lockdown and an unwillingness by local companies to undertake the egg oiling due to the need to get across by boat to the island, which was partially flooded resulting in just three nests this year, the decision was taken not to egg oil for 2021.



In addition, CK noted that there was one mated pair of Canada Geese at Flood Meadows which will be monitored.

3) **Project -state of the riverside paths in Flood Meadows**

An indicative price of £38,000 has been provided to officers and will be presented to Open Spaces Committee next month. LP said she will go away and “percolate” some ideas for how fundraising may be achieved to help meet the cost.

Anecdotally LC noted that Dr Chatfield had reported that a number of years ago a similar project had been discussed and due to the costs, this is why the Friends of Flood Meadows was set up to undertake the repairs to the paths through volunteer activities, however, the path, despite the best efforts of the Sunday working party, is becoming flooded more regularly.

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

LC noted the quotation from Aquamaintain at around £8500 which may be reduced to £2,400 if volunteers are engaged and just the material costs are provided by the Council. It was suggested that AVLAN volunteers might be able to help with the gravel recharge. A decision will be made by Open Spaces Committee next month as to how to proceed with this.

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

JG prepared a successful bid for £15,600 of funding for this project. Her thanks to Cllr Burns and Hunt for funding for the information board. An MOU has now been completed with the EA and awaiting first instalment of payment. Aquamaintain will be submitting the EA permit application which will also be submitted to EHDC as they will require a licence for AVLAN to work in the river as they are the landowner.

6) **King’s Pond former Car Park by the Railway Bridge**

CK noted this is still embryonic and will be discussed further off-line before putting any proposals together.

7) **River Wey Monitoring**

AVLAN working with GS on sampling. Two groups of 6 went out at the end of April. Took some good samples at Flood Meadows. Baseline monitoring will also be done by Costa Coffee later in the year, GS noted that sampling could be done to see upstream and downstream of King’s Pond AVLAN will have a stall at the bio-blitz so people can find out more

8) **Management Plan review for Flood Meadows and King’s Pond**

The group noted that some water sampling is required at the Pond.

LC noted that any management plan review will need to be put out to tender later in the year providing the current plan and any information gathered at the BioBlitz by way of background.

9) **Leaflets**

- i) Flood Meadows. Is progressing well, artwork and layout are well advanced.
- ii) King’s Pond – will wait until the Flood Meadows one is completed and additional information is available after the Bio Blitz which may wish to be included.

10) **Trees for Life update**

PJ also noted the Trees for Life book for the original project at Flood Meadows is now located at the Town Hall. It is hoped to have the book put on display at some point.

11) **Date of next Meeting TBC**

The meeting finished at 11.27am