



KING'S POND COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER FOCUS GROUP

TUESDAY 11TH NOVEMBER 2025

6:00 PM

ALTON COMMUNITY CENTRE

MINUTES

Present:	C&SFG members	Councillor Don Hammond (DH) Councillor John Quincey –KPT&F Group (JQ) Jenny Griffiths – AVLAN (JG) Cathy Wilson – Alton Natural History Society (CW) Tim Pinchen - King's Pond T&F Group (TP) Dr June Chatfield – Resident (DJC) Charles Kaye – Amery Hill Residents Assoc. (CK) Will Seabury – KP Preservation Society (WS)
	Officers	Tom Horwood – Town Clerk (TH) Hayley Carter – Deputy Town Clerk (HC) Natalie Beckell – Events and Marketing Lead
	Councillors	Annette Eyre (Town Mayor) Nick O'Brien (Deputy Mayor) Janice Treacher Barbara Tansey Matthew Kellermann Roger Lamb Richard Moore
	Individuals x 51	

1. Welcome & Introductions

TH welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for coming. He acknowledged that King's Pond is a subject everyone is passionate about and asked everyone to keep that passion but make their comments and ask their questions respectfully. He then ran through the importance of allowing everyone equal opportunity to speak and the introduction of a numbering system to ensure everyone had that chance.

The Community and Stakeholder Focus Group then introduced themselves, as did members of the Task & Finish Group who were in attendance and the Town Council officers.

2. Apologies for Absence

Group members – Terri Quincey, Olivia Paynter, James Willis and David Simpkins
T&F Group members – Paul Ebbutt
Alton Town Councillors – Chris Botten, Mark Boyce-Churn, Matthew Bayliss

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd September 2025 were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting.

4. Update on Maintenance Works

HC updated the meeting on the repairs to the paths around the pond and proposed tree works which is currently out to tender and will be going before Full Council on 10th December.

5. Project Governance

Due to the large number of attendees, DH briefly went through the Project Governance structure and responsibilities of the 3 Groups, the membership of the Focus Group and the Purpose of the Group

FULL COUNCIL has Strategic Oversight, controls the finances and is the ultimate decision maker.

The TASK & FINISH GROUP (T&FG) prepares and implements action plans

The COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER FOCUS GROUP (C&SFG) is a disseminator and sharer of information on the King's Pond Management Project and a conduit for community feedback to the Task & Finish Group.

Detail on Project Governance is on the ATC website
<https://www.alton.gov.uk/kings-pond-project/>

The meeting this evening is of the Community And Stakeholder Focus Group and any member of the public is invited to attend. It is not a decision-making meeting, but is intended to be an exchange of information. The Task & Finish Group report on what they have been doing and take questions and comments back from the community. This is the third meeting of the group. Meetings are held every two months.

6. Report from the Task & Finish Group

The slides from the presentation can be found on the Alton Town Council website at <https://www.alton.gov.uk/kings-pond-project/>

a. Phasing of the Project

The project is at Stage One, which would take us up to the Public Consultation stage and then the Council to make a decision on which option to take forward into Stage Two.

The project has to go to the Environment Agency and the Planning Authority for permission, whether the Council decide to go with the 'Dredging' or 'Pond and River' option. In order to apply for those permissions full plans have to be drawn up, including the technical details of whichever scheme the Council decides to go with following

public consultation. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a big consideration of any planning application now and so the ecological surveys are vital for the Council to be able to identify potential improvements to biodiversity and to document whether there will be (or has been) any positive or negative impact on the site resulting from any works.

b. Land ownership and implications

TH updated the meeting on his attempts to communicate with the Waterside Court management company. The design of a meandering river depends on the outflow of water from the site being significantly lower than the inflow. This would mean having to remove the weir and due to the ownership of the pipework at that end of King's Pond this would therefore depend on the residents of Waterside Court. The dredging option would not require engineering works outside of the Town Council's ownership. TH said he had been communicating with the company secretary of the management company of Waterside Court for some weeks but had yet to receive a response to his invitations to meet with company directors.

DH added that while it would be necessary to remove the weir to achieve the meandering river, as that would lower the outflow by 800mm, with less engineering, and working within the ATC owned site, at the weir a drop of 300mm could still be achieved and so a straighter river option could still be possible, which would still keep a large pond and some wetlands and would cost less money to achieve.

c. Stage One tender

TH said that as the options outlined in the tender document for the Stage One design work are therefore now different, the current tender cannot proceed. The Council will be asked on 10th December if it wishes to restart the tender process and which options it would like to take forward..

d. Programme

DH ran through the programme, which has been updated to reflect the additional tendering period. If Council is happy to take the tendering process forward following the meeting on 10th December, then a contractor would be appointed in March to complete Stage One and the programme should then be on schedule to undertake the work in Winter 2027, whichever option is chosen. The work must be done outside of breeding season and when the water is at its lowest. This is all dependent on being able to secure funding.

e. Environment Agency (EA)

TH informed the meeting that officers and members of the T&F Group met with the EA on 27th October to update them on the project and get their feedback. The EA's preferred option is the stream rather than dredging, but they appreciate the decision is ATC's and while they are clear on their preference, they were at pains to stress they are not putting pressure on ATC to choose one option over another and they

would not object if the Council decides to dredge and keep the pond as it is. They did point out there would be more funding available for the river option.

TP pointed out that the while ATC own the pond, the EA own the river and so ATC cannot do anything without their permission.

- f. Lasham Drain)
- g. Upstream surface run-off)
- h. Geological investigation)

TP updated the meeting on his investigations and stated that the Lasham Drain has been running with clear water all summer, whereas the River Wey running into the pond has dried up. He went on to show the route of the Lasham Drain and the surface water drains through the town that drain into the river and pond. The T&F Group have asked Thames Water about any silt traps and filters that stop pollutants going into the river / King's Pond but are still waiting for the information.

In order to work out why the Lasham Drain runs clear water some of the group had a geology lesson from Dr June Chatfield earlier in the week. It is believed that the Lasham Drain water comes from the gravel running under the High Street.

The geology is important as you would not want big diggers going in to dredge and cutting through anything that is important in keeping the water in the pond.

He went on to explain that the reason they are doing all this work is to make us more of an "intelligent customer", so we can challenge anything we are told and make sure we get the best for the town.

- i. Ecology

DH informed the meeting that the ecology surveys have been done over the course of the past year and can all be seen on the website. The geology reports from Dr June Chatfield are also on the website.

He went on to identify the gaps in the knowledge which include insects and fish.

7. Next Steps

- The 10th December Full Council meeting will have an item on the agenda for the Council to approve changing which 'Pond and River' option to look at.
- Then the Stage One tender will have to be redone.
- A separate meeting will be organised to do an ecological review and look at what improvements could be made to the pond by each option.
- Complete Stage One, get designs and costings and take it to Public Consultation prior to a Council decision.
- Continuing investigation of the upstream drainage.

- Continuing research into similar projects.

8. Group Discussion

CW said that TP has done the most phenomenal job on the Lasham Drain. She went on to ask a question about the dredging option – a while ago there was a question about whether there will be a BNG requirement – is this still the case and would there be a cost implication? DH answered, saying that the T&F Group had arranged a meeting between the ecology team and the environmental officer at EHDC. Any large construction project has to demonstrate that they are:

- a) not harming biodiversity
- b) improving biodiversity

This is a planning requirement.

It was not a conclusive discussion, but the feeling was that as long as we can demonstrate there is no negative impact we would not have to prove the 10% improvement.

CW then asked what would happen to the silt if the pond were dredged.

DH responded to say that the silt is contaminated and contains lots of metals. It therefore must be disposed of through a licensed operator that takes hazardous waste unless we can find a home for it on-site.

CK said that with Climate Change we get more rain than previously and the ground is a lot wetter. Residents along Tanhouse Lane have seen more flooding of their gardens and South East Water (SEW) have produced a report that indicates there could be a catastrophic flooding incident in the town. The town has done nothing to plan for such flooding. This all needs to be taken into account when planning anything that changes the flow of the river and makes it one that flows all year round rather than a winterbourne. Amery Hill Residents Association (AHRA) has been campaigning with the Town Council to get something done by the relevant parties to clear the grills on a regular basis but it has been like trying to get blood out of a stone. SEW had considered stopping extraction of water in Lasham but have now said that they will not do that due to the dangers.

DJC said that the River Wey is a chalk stream and these are ground water sourced. In this area that is through the Zig Zag beds. It does vary seasonally and flows more in the winter. That is a natural fluctuation. There is also lots of surface run-off as Alton is in a valley. Flooding is usually when high flow from groundwater coincides with heavy surface run-off as at Farringdon, Chase Field c. 25 years ago. In the past there would have been flood plains. The growth of the population of Alton and the covering of so much of the ground (for example front gardens turned into parking), also affects this quite severely. It stops natural drainage and when that happens the water follows the roads and enters water courses. Climate change is also adding to this.

TP said that he agreed about climate change and the flooding in the town.

Anything done with King's Pond will have to pass through a flood analysis. SEW and the EA are remodelling the town and anything we do will be fed into that.

Nothing will be done without permission.

9. Public questions and comments

People attending the meeting were invited to speak using the numbers which had been given out as they arrived.

Number 1 - No one had this number.

Number 2 - An individual stated that they are an environmental scientist. They said this is a really good opportunity to make the right choice for the long-term, not just the short-term. It would be good to increase biodiversity. Having more wetlands would also improve water drainage and would be good for helping with the flooding issue.

Number 3 - A resident of Farnham said they had never heard of this Farnham River Group who had made themselves known in the local paper. He said he was a highways engineer and backs up CK from AHRA and what he said. The town is badly silted up and there has been a distinct lack of maintenance of the drainage system. The river from Alton to Farnham is now a drainage system for the A31 and pipes go into the River Wey. Whenever the river is flooding that road is flooding. He added that 100 years on the other side of the King's Pond weir it is getting the same silt in it, which is running into the river. He added that he is here to support option 2a. It is a shame about the Town Council's history and if there were a history of proper maintenance the pond would not be in the position it is now. He did recognise that this was not any of the people sitting in front of him now.

TP said that he had not plotted the drainage after the pond in the presentation, but we do have the information and there are a significant number of drains going into the river all the way up and through Farnham. He asked the gentleman to speak to him after the meeting to help with his area of expertise.

CW thanked the gentleman who spoke and said he is by no means the first person to comment on the drainage further downstream and also the sewage works.

DJC said she is a member of the Wey Valley Catchment Partnership. When they did their vision of the Northern Wey it was clear that unless they solve the sewage problem it will not pass the Water Framework Directive.

Storm water gets into the sewage works and overwhelms it and then there is legal discharge into the river.

DH said that he is not a fan of the sewage companies, but Alton is better placed than most towns because of the new tanks that were put in down Newman Lane. The situation does get worse when you get down to Bentley. He added that it is hundreds of years since the River Wey was a pristine chalk stream. Probably in the twentieth century it was in its best condition, before the population of Alton grew, and any improvements we can make would be good.

Number 4 – this lady was reading on behalf of Antony Furnival. He started by making several criticisms of the lady from Farnham that had been mentioned in the local paper. TH noted the many important points that were raised and asked the reader to ensure that the tone of the text as far as possible reflected the constructive and respectful tone of the meeting so far. In response to an assertion that was made, he clarified that the Town Council had not invited people from Farnham to the meeting but said that it is a public meeting and anyone is welcome.

The lady continued to reflect the content of the message, asking whether the chalk stream is even possible in light of the latest developments and issues over

ownership of the pipework. The written comments also mentioned that there were eight species of bats around King's Pond.

CW asked that if anyone had evidence of eight bat species being there then it is really important that evidence goes into the county records as they only have a record of five species on the site. DH announced that the report commissioned by the Town Council had been received that evening and evidenced thirteen species on the site, albeit some had only visited once or twice in six months. There was no evidence of them roosting on the site. He said the report would be added to the ATC website.

Number 5 – This gentleman said that in a previous meeting he had asked about costs and while he realised exact figures could not be given he wanted to know if there was a ballpark figure.

DH answered that in 1996 the cost of dredging the pond was just over £100,000. Since 2010 engineering costs have increased by around 150% and if you assume the same increase for the period from 1996 to 2010 then you would be looking at around a 300% increase. As the previous contaminated silt had been disposed of on-site this time you would also have the added cost of disposing of the silt.

Number 6 – none.

Number 7 – June Hodgkinson said she is a happy resident of the former brewery site. She said there is work being done on the site to ensure the surface water run-off is clean and can go into the river. She asked if anyone was aware what impact that would have on the river.

TP replied that the T&FG have asked CALA for the information and they have been assured they have limited pollution control and the cost of maintaining this will be borne by the residents. They do not believe there will be much difference resulting from the estate compare to when it was the brewery on the site.

Number 8 – Councillor Richard Moore said that when the pond was dredged in 1996 the silt was put on the bank and then covered over. He asked that costs be obtained for removing that silt from site and replacing it with the new silt to be removed. DH said that would always be the intention and while the cost of excavating it is not yet known, the cost of removing it from the site and taking to a licensed disposal facility it is believed would be in the vicinity of £250,000.

Number 9 – “Biodiversity is a wonderful thing but we are also always being told about mental health issues and the benefits of a large expanse of water on mental health is underestimated. That is why we should dredge.”

CW said this is a very important point. This was raised at the last meeting and she asked to be reassured that there will be a full cost-benefit analysis, not just of the financial aspect.

Number 10 – Councillor Barbara Tansey wanted just to say thank you to everyone who had done the huge amount of work on this project so far. She stressed that everyone is a volunteer and they are giving up much of their time and have done an amazing job.

Number 11 – wanted to follow up on the amenity side of this. You see people pushing buggies around, young people and young families. They are very much in favour of dredging but there is so much more that could be added to enable people to enjoy the space.

Number 12 – said their question had already been asked.

Number 13 – Jeremy Burke said he is a civil engineer and has already made his views clear in a letter to the Herald which he had shared with the Town Council.

He is in favour of retaining the pond but having said that thinks there are some very real difficulties. Commenting on a few things he has heard today, he asked whether it is really a good idea to divert the Lasham Drain. He said we should be trying to improve the biodiversity throughout the town, not just at King's Pond. There are different kinds of biodiversity in the town, for example at Flood Meadows. The inlet end of the pond is already very much a water meadow, but the end of the pond near Waterside Court should be kept as big a body of water as possible.

Number 14 – Ash Dolan-Shakeri from the Hopfield Residents Association quoted an article from Councillor Hammond which had been in the Alton Herald on 9th October and asked him to expand in it and say how he arrived at that conclusion. He added that the observations were at odds with SEW's position.

DH said that his conclusions were not at odds – they were looking at a different section of the river. The land falls away after the pond and water runs downhill not uphill.

TP said putting in additional clear water is about dealing with nutrification and silting and enabling the water to carry these rather than disposing of so much of it along the way.

CK added that the town has a bad history of looking at the river in small chunks and not as a whole.

Number 15 – none

Number 16 – “If one course of action is dead why do we have to start again? Why can't we draw a line under it and just pursue the dredging option?”

TH replied that there has not been a decision on that. It will be going to Full Council in December.

Number 17 – Mark Gaudion asked for clarification on some of the tree works, in particular hazel coppicing around the pond.

HC replied that she would bring the Tree report and plans to the Friends of King's Pond session the following morning to go through with him and the rest of the group.

Number 18 – Councillor Matthew Kellermann said the pond is acting as a giant silt trap and if you remove the pond you have a smaller area for the silt to be deposited in and so it will silt up more quickly and increase flood risk. He went on to question why the Council was spending money on this before doing a flood risk analysis and said it seemed back to front to him. The flood risk analysis should be done first.

He then added that the original option for the meandering stream was chosen by the previous council. That option has now gone and so that whole option is dead. Option 3c was rejected by the previous council and it is not going to work. He further asked why we are keeping it going when it is a phenomenal waste of money, and said he thinks it is disgraceful that this rejected option is being brought back to the table. He said if councillors are reticent to make this decision they should throw it open to the public and take the responsibility off their shoulders.

DH replied that that flood risk analysis is part of the Stage One design. He explained that you cannot work out the changes in flood risk until you know what changes you are going to be making. He went on to say that he did not accept the statement about wasting money. So far almost everything done had to be done no matter which option is chosen. He said, “We are not wasting money and I am quite emphatic about that.”

Number 19 – said that there was no key on the diagrams and asked what each colour meant.

TH apologised that the key was not very readable on the screen but all the documents could be seen on the website and the key is there.

Number 20 – Councillor Janice Treacher re-emphasised that, as Councillor Hammond had said, the money spent so far has been spent on things that were needed whether we dredge or not. She added, “I would like to thank my fellow councillors for all the work they do. We bend over backwards to remain impartial and take all views into consideration.”

Number 21 – said if the site were changed to a smaller pond with a river it looked like the island would go and that would take away the nesting site for the swans. DH said that the island is very important as a nesting site and noted that we will be giving the designed notes that highlight these things must be taken into consideration. The diagram was a very rough first draft done when the ideas were first investigated, prior to all the ecological surveys, and were not a final design. The importance of the island is well recognised and addressing that is part of the Stage One design work.

Number 22 – said they felt the ecological surveys were skimmed over a bit on the presentation. They said the Great Crested Newt is a protected species and they would like to know the specific surveys that have been done as they are very important.

CW said that the surveys done are now all on the website and directed her to that. There are no Great Crested Newts on the site.

Number 23 – none

Number 24 – said the first thing we are going to lose is the swans as they will not have enough space to take off and land. We have ten swans at the moment which is a great achievement. He added that they have lived in the town for many years and don't remember ever seeing flooding in the town. There is no water going into the pond at the moment and lots going out, so it must be spring fed. He said if the Council had dredged it every year like they should have done it would only cost £20,000 now.

DH confirmed that there will be a meeting solely to discuss the ecology of the site. A swan requires 25-30m to take off from water or dry land and another 25-30m to gain height. The swans will not be trapped and will have sufficient space to take off and land with either option.

Number 25 – said he is a member of the King's Pond Preservation Society (KPPS) and his biggest question was “Why are we looking into this?” He said it is common knowledge that this current town council are pursuing this river option and the run-off has been glossed over a bit. He said the population of the town has increased and there is run-off from all the houses. The pond is a silt trap and the idea that it is going to be a lovely chalk stream is ludicrous. He added that he has been a fisherman all his life and this proposed shambles is going to cost a fortune. He said that to say there is pollution in it is a nonsense. There were three cormorants there today and they don't go looking for pollutants. He added that the KPPS have done their own research and have different results.

DH asked any who have done research themselves and have actual reports to please share it.

Number 26 – none.

Number 27 – said that the ‘Deciding the Way forward’ document says that taking the pond offline is a dodgy option. £500,000 spread among 20,000 residents over 20 years would be £1 per year per person so it is actually a cheap option.

Number 28 – Richard Carter thanked everyone for the huge amount of work that has been done so far and said that he thought both options should be investigated and then put to a public consultation.

Number 30 – Councillor Annette Eyre, the Town Mayor, said that she is really thankful to everyone that has come today. She added it is her job to listen to everyone’s views and she can’t do that if they don’t tell her.

Number 31 – Simon Coward said he has recently moved to Alton and one of the things he loves is King’s Pond. It provides a place of relaxation to young, old, disabled and people with mental issues. It is a great space and it is something that hardly any other town in Hampshire has. The pond in the pond and river option would only be around 40% of the size of the current pond and the ‘stream’ would just be a ditch for some of the year.

Number 32 – Nathan from the KPPS said in summary of what has been said this evening, discovering the weir is owned by Waterside Court is a big obstacle to the Town Council’s plans and it is time to stop exploring this option and let it go.

Number 33 – Tony Day said he has been authorised to speak on behalf of Lakeside (Alton) Management Company (LAMC) which represents the people who lease the flats in Waterside Court. He said he spoke at a meeting eighteen months ago asking to be fully included and consulted and apologised that they had not responded to the Town Clerk’s attempts to engage. He said there had been several issues within the company. He explained that they had had to do some investigations into their site and had sent the drawings to the council eighteen months ago. He asked whether all this has been married up with the council’s drawings to create one single model of the river.

He added that Waterside Court has the highest risk of flooding from any changes at the pond. He also asked that if there is a mental health benefit then that should be classed as a cost benefit to be had.

He asked whether he could please organise a meeting with the T&FG outside of this one.

TP added that with the ownership of Waterside Court being an offshore trust nothing for that was coming up in Land Registry searches so any information Mr Day could provide would be appreciated. He added that if they have any further information on the piling and the construction of the dam the T&FG would be grateful to see it.

Mr Day added that the documents they have date back to the 1980 and do not detail any of the construction of the dam but any exchange of documents would be great.

TH thanked everyone for all their comments and questions, emphasising how important it is to hear all the views. He confirmed again that there are decisions to be made and thanked everyone that a respectful tone had been largely maintained.

10. Date of Next Meeting

To be confirmed and publicised.