

LFCC Minutes

Thursday 4th March 2021

Attendees: Martin Moore – LFCC, Ade Bicknell – EA, , Russ Hatchett – Swallowfield FC, Ian Watson – LFCC, John Green LFCC, Rob West R.A.E.A.C., Mike Wharmby Gresham AS, Amanda Ingham HloWT, Chris Gardner SERT, Wayne Russell AFC, Trevor Ashton GAS, Gary Dee , Steve Bailey

1) **Martin Moore welcome**

MM welcomed members to the meeting. This was the first Zoom meeting held by LFCC.

2) **Ade Bicknell EA.**

Ade said that despite COVID last summer had been very busy due to high temperatures which caused problems on stillwaters. Typical problems were algae crashes coinciding with high water temperatures. A major fish kill occurred at Fleet Pond resulting in many if not all large fish dying. Monitoring will continue into 2021 to see what residual fish population remains and whether weed regrows. Ade put in a successful application for FIP funds and some of these have been allocated to LFCC. Licence sales are up meaning more FIP funds should be available. There are planned projects on the Lyde and St Pats stream. Calverton fish were stocked in late autumn (barbel, chub, roach, dace) at Arborfield and Swallowfield. A bid has gone in for more fish in 2021. It would be useful if clubs had site permits in place in advance as this makes it more likely that they would receive stocking. Enforcement patrols have been carried out although this has been more difficult under lockdown rules.

3) **Chris Gardner SERT**

Chris has taken over from Moragh as the catchment host for the Loddon. New arrangements mean that he will have more time to devote to the Loddon and hence more opportunities to pursue new projects and funding. The Charvil backwater was completed last autumn, just in time for floods. Thankfully it seems to have survived a number of floods and looks in good conditions. Lockdown restrictions have made it difficult to carry out any follow up visits.

4) **Martin Moore white clawed crayfish**

During some bridge works on the Barkham Brook, white clawed (native) crayfish were discovered. MM last saw these in 1992 in the same area. Together with SERT and WDC we plan to carry out an eDNA survey to discover the extent of the WCC on the Barkham Brook and whether their

range overlaps with that of the signal crayfish. Depending on what we find, this may limit plans to improve fish passage on the Barkham Brook as this could facilitate movement of signal crays to the detriment of WCC. Some FIP money is being used to part-fund this work.

5) **Amanda Ingham HloWT**

Amanda gave a presentation on the environmental land management scheme (ELMS) which replaces the CAP subsidy system after Brexit. It should lead to more environmentally sound farming practice being rewarded. A copy of Amanda's presentation has been posted on the LFCC website.

6) **Ian Watson fry sampling**

Fry sampling was very limited in 2020 due to COVID restrictions and has not been possible at all in 2021. Far fewer chub fry were found in 2020 than in 2019 but more dace fry turned up. Fry populations may be expected to fluctuate a lot from year to year. As in 2019, not one barbel fry was found in 2020 but a number of juvenile barbel (about 12-13cm TL) were found in the Arborfield by-pass channel indicating that at least some local recruitment takes place. It is not currently possible to identify stocked fish from Calverton. We had hoped to be able to elastomer tag the barbel last year but that was not possible. Similarly, it was not possible to PIT tag more fish at Arborfield to enable their tracking. We hope it will be possible in 2021.

7) **AOB reports from clubs**

Wayne Russel from AFC gave a presentation on activities at Arborfield. Lots of small barbel are showing up in anglers' catches, just a few inches long and now up to 4lb. These were not seen a few years ago. There has been a problem with flooding of fields leaving fish stranded. A visit was carried out with SERT, LFCC and EA to examine the problem and look at possible solutions. *IW note – Uni Reading have already carried out some research on these fields including mapping and heavy metal analysis.* It is hoped that it will be possible to break the bunds and restore floodplain connection to allow stranded fish to get back into the river. *IW note – UoR student will look at possible heavy metal contamination in the bunds to check if it is safe to disturb them and dispose of soil on site.* A major problem has developed on the raised river channel above the water offtake where a retaining wall has become undermined and is in danger of collapsing. This is in need of remedial works. *IW note – water levels were dropped by TW before the by-pass was constructed in response to erosion of the bank near the road bridge. Burrowing by crayfish has probably made this worse.* AFC have agreed with TW that the overflow weir can be notched to enable a sweetening flow into the channel below. This should enhance the area for fish. It is an important habitat for juvenile roach.

Mike Whamby gave an update on Gresham Anglers' stretch of the Lyde. This suffered from historic engineering works for a water mill and parts of the water have become very degraded. Crayfish burrowing also damaged banks

leading to water loss into adjacent woodland. This has been solved by remedial works. It is planned that FIP funds will be used to restore the degraded stretch and new gravels will be laid.

Robert West raised the issue of whether fluctuations in water level in the Blackwater might be due to Camberley STW. **Action:** RW to discuss with IW and MM.

8) **Treasurer's report**

John Green reported that LFCC has about £9k in funds including £5k EA funds for fishery improvement. Most members have paid by BACS this year which has been helpful under lockdown. John would like to step down as Treasurer. Trevor Ashton has offered to take over but requested a detailed job description before agreeing. **Action:** MM and JG to draft.

Date of Next Meeting – **TBC**