

LODDON FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION CONSULTATIVE

Minutes

DATE 4th November 2021
VENUE Swallowfield Village Hall
TIME 7.20 pm arrive for 7.30 pm start, 9.30 pm finish.

Apologies Amanda Ingham, Trevor Blake, Simon Bartlam, Gary Dee.

1. Welcome Martin Moore (MM)

MM welcomed members back after 20 months. In March Alan Brown RAE Treasurer died. MM gave a brief review of activities. The State of the Loddon document is out and on the LFCC website after much work from all those involved. Update is planned in the future. Discharges from STW continue to be of concern, vote in Parliament went against the original proposals, but amendments might help get support. Charvil backwater money from TW used for this WDC site. SERT built backwater. Thanks to Simon Bartlam for his help. Barkham Brook white claw crayfish found near roadworks. Follow up surveys with Uni Reading eDNA samples has been carried out to check for WCC, signals and crayfish plague. Lyde project was carried out prior to Rivers Week – see Mike Wharmby's presentation. Rivers Week included planting of marginal plants at Charvil, plus a fish survey. Some juveniles were found but no barbel. Bassetts Mead gravel introduction involved 15 volunteers who put in 30 tonnes of gravel, introduced mainly to create riffles. Also to reduce dog erosion. Wyndham's Pool floating pennywort clear up going well – see MM presentation on FP. Swallowfield backwater has been constructed. Spoil used to create horse jump. Completed in 2 days after a long planning. Fry surveys at Charvil not much found – see IW presentation..

2. EA news Ade Bicknell (AB)

Rod licence sales 2015 986,000 and declining until lockdown when it went up to 958,000 in 2020 but has declined again in 2021. FIP funding relies on rod licence income. 34 W Thames Fishery Improvement Projects. Rivers week £5k, Lyde £10k, St Pats £2k, Floating pennywort at Wydhams £2k, aeration Farnahm, AGAC, Aldershot Park £7k, £31K in total.

On the Cove Brook Southwood SANG, council funding, EA helping design, deliver 2022 hopefully. Heckfield Place Whitewater advice on habitat work, should be finished by now. Whitewater Preservation Society given advice. Fewer stillwater mortalities this summer. Yateley, Stapely, Southill Park all got

help with aeration equipment.

Floating pennywort is also on the Basingstoke Canal. Fish passes have been visited and maintained to ensure function. Sturgeon removed from stillwater. NNS so need to be removed, possible disease risk. Fleet Pond survey carried out to see what remained after the 2020 mass mortality. Eversley Mill fish passage hope to install fish pass, waiting for response from owner. Cove Brook fish passage to be improved by railway culvert by putting in by-pass. EA Fish surveys restarted in last week. Need new EA Catchment Coordinator. Andrew Weatherley has temporarily moved, now the post will be filled by Lauren Giddings.

3. HiOWT update Amanda Ingham – sent in advance as unable to attend

Amanda's presentation was given by IW. Any errors and omissions are his. AI reported that progress has been made on various farm projects to improve land management in several areas including pesticide handling, soil and manure management and reduction of diffuse pollution. More can be found on the <https://lfcc.org.uk/environmental-issues/conservation/280-the-state-of-the-loddon> .

4. Introduction to the new SERT catchment host Chris Gardner

CG was unable to attend.

5. Fry sampling Ian Watson (IW)

Very little sampling has been possible this year due to COVID restrictions. An attempt was made to set up fry emergence traps but this was washed out by the summer flood event. Only two surveys have been possible. One was carried out at a side stream at Charvil. Reasonable numbers of juvenile fish were caught but no barbel. At Swallowfield, the new refuge was sampled and yielded lots of minnows and a few juvenile fish but no barbel. Sampling an existing ditch mouth at Swallowfield yielded large number of minnows and a lot of juvenile (mostly 1+) fish including roach and bream but no barbel.

6. Break

7. Barbel tagging PIT and Panjet Ian Watson

We need to get the PIT tag detector repaired before it can be used so that depends on finding funding. EA have agreed to mark the barbel being stocked into the Loddon this autumn so that we can identify stocked fish and tell them from natural recruitment. The barbel will have alcian blue dye injected which should provide a more stable mark than Panjet. We will advertise this so that anglers can report marked fish and we can get an idea of how much they spread out and how well they survive. AB will travel to Calverton to mark the fish. We

anticipate 600 juvenile barbel will be stocked. AB will advise on where the marks are located and then where the fish have been stocked. All LFCC will be asked to report sightings of the marked fish so that we can have some idea of their dispersal and survival.

8. Floating pennywort update MM

LCP meeting identified need and concern for FP. Mill Lane was a major concern with FP being a major threat to fishing and ecology. Mill Lane is close to Blackwater and so there may be a risk of transfer. Removal seems to be working as now very little left. Grows from rhizomes. Wistaria Lane u/s of ML so maybe source. TW did initial clearance. MM organised visits 2-3 times a year and only one small clump found in 2021. Wyndhams Pool is most trouble to clear. Swamp off main lake retains FP. FIP money was used to get contractors in this year. There is a need to keep going back. No spraying with herbicide is possible. Basingstoke canal FP near Fleet still present and keep finding more plants. IW/MM and AB/AW did survey this year and found plenty of pieces. Small fragments are less likely to grow compared to pieces with some root. Also found Carolina fanwort *Cabomba caroliniana*. IW mentioned that water hawthorn *Aponogeton distachyos* is found in the Blackwater and needs monitoring to check is it is spreading. It appears to out-compete the native Potamogeton.

9. Gravel introduction at Gresham – Mike Wharmby

Lower Lyde Improvement Project used relatively simple techniques. Took quite a few years to develop. Initial estimates costly so had to develop something cheaper. WTT involved, Andy Thomas helped develop set of improvement projects. £10k project was finalised with funds from FIP, and Gresham club talked to AB to get approvals. LFCC involved. The Lyde should be very good but it has suffered degradation from various sources over the years with banks poached etc. This project at was just upstream of the Lyde/Loddon confluence. Wanted to improve recruitment of BT. Not stocked. Lot of infill from marginal vegetation. Banks dredged and no longer natural. Can suffer from low flows. Current WFD status is Poor. SERT identified options but were expensive. Gresham put in 9 wooden groynes, Aug 2021 and 150 tonnes of gravel. Had to double handle gravel to get from R-bank to L-bank. Raised bed to increase flow and create riffles. Reprofiled banks where gravel went in. Managed to get gravel right across river. Some has since become dirty and needs raking to clean it. MM hopes weed growth will help direct flows.

10. AOB – news from clubs etc

Zoom meetings suggested by IW on specific subjects – investigate further maybe involve Chris Gardner to introduce SERT.

11. New Treasurer and vote to confirm

No objections to Trevor Ashton taking over. MM gave thanks for John Green

who has been Treasurer since the inception of LFCC. MM made a presentation of a fish fossil to John as thanks.



12. Date of next meeting TBC

END