

LODDON FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION CONSULTATIVE

Minutes

DATE 3rd March 2022
VENUE Swallowfield Village Hall
TIME 7.30 pm start, 9.30 pm finish.

Apologies: Amanda Ingham, Ian Campbell, Chris Gardner, Mike Wharmby

Item:

1. Welcome MM 10 mins

What does the LFCC do?

First of all and most important a big thank you to every one of the clubs, societies organisations and individuals who have supported and continue to support the consultative. Apart from trying to keep the consultative going – and I regret in my case a somewhat muddled and fashion at times what do we do? We represent the LFCC and I hope the angling fraternity on a diverse range of groups and issues in the catchment. It is often frustrating that we cannot find more time to devote to these threads, but that is arguably the nature of a voluntary group such as ours.

The groups include the Loddon Catchment Partnership

Local Flood Groups

Thames Water Drainage Management Planning Meetings

Reading University – Landwise

-Geography & Environmental Science

-Biological Sciences

Planning applications

TVERC

Consultations typically from the EA & Thames Water

We do our best to communicate with clubs plus other groups such as Blackwater Valley Partnership, Basingstoke Canal Association, Fleet Pond

Society, HIWWT, BBOWT plus individual landowners

COVID has challenged this at times

We continue to assist in co-ordinating EA stockings and wider issue in the catchment

I have recently been on visits to Whitewater Mill at Poland regarding possible habitat and connectivity improvements, similarly at the mill at Hartley Westpall on the LYDE, whilst have also had a river walk on R&DAAs stretch of the Loddon at Whistley near Twyford.

The easier stuff is perhaps things like invasive species, but I do believe that water quality continues to be by far the biggest challenge. This is not simply the discharges from STW but also more diverse pollution from urban run off and agriculture. It will be interesting to see how the ELMs schemes assist in improving the latter, but regrettably urbanisation is steadily if not rapidly increasing with little mitigation of its impacts.

We have also prior to this meeting had a steering group meeting particularly focusing on our finances, membership and communication with members.

2. AGM Treasurer's report, election of Chair, Webmaster and Secretary, confirmation of Treasurer

Treasurer's report posted on website. Need to chase up non-payments and may need to consider raising subs in future. RW - Metrobank community bank account is free if charge. Treasurer's report was accepted unanimously. MM, RH, IW and TA voted in unanimously.

3. EA news (Ade Bicknell) 15 mins

Calverton barbel marked for Loddon. Alcyan blue injected to mark fish just forward of the anal fin. 600 fish stocked on 30th November 2021, MM measured a selection. Fish all stocked at Red Spinners section at Arborfield, this lies between weirs at Arborfield and Sheepbridge. Might provide some information on fish passage. Want to stock in a different place in 2022 but clubs must apply for a site permit to enable this. Other species stocked at Swallowfield (Loddon) and Arborfield (Loddon). Anglers are requested to report any catches of marked fish for the next few years so that we can assess their survival and dispersal.

Lyde mill – new owners. Possible to create a bypass and/or fish pass and spawning channel. Has a potential bypass channel which could be adapted to improve fish passage.

Poland mill on Whitewater also potential for fish passage. Owners are keen to improve environment. Also potential for flood risk reduction. Have dropped levels on sluice which has improved river upstream. Possible scope

for work there in Rivers Week.

Possible improvement work at Cove Brook especially to ease fish passage.

4. Introduction to the new SERT catchment host Chris Gardner

1. SERT New Catchment Officer position for Loddon Catchment Partnership and projects.

Position is currently being advertised the closing date for applications is Sunday 6th March, details on LFCC website. We hope to fill the position by the early summer, to give us more capacity to deliver the Catchment Based Approach and river based ecological improvement, education and engagement projects in the Loddon catchment.

2. Emm Brook project.

We are working with project partners to overcome lots of different challenges, mostly related to permissions for the works to go ahead. Significant delays with flood modelling sign off have caused delays. Working towards a delivery date of late Summer 2022. Finalising landowner agreement with Wokingham BC Legal team for interventions in the Balancing Pond.

Working closely with Wokingham BC Greenways team as their new cycleway runs through the project site. Both projects have similar delivery timeframes. Our Restoring River & Catchments Team were out onsite last week undertaking vegetation clearance, before bird nesting season. This will provide access for site machinery and also space to de-water silt from the paleo channel in early Summer.

3. Potential Willow tree project

Have been in discussions with Wokingham's Veteran Tree Group re. a veteran willow tree project proposal. There are over 100 ancient and veteran crack willows recorded within Wokingham borough. They are ecologically and culturally important riparian monuments to past industries and serve as niche habitats for many species. This proposal aims to find a way forward to restore pollarding management to these trees to ensure their continuing contribution to riverside ecosystem services. LFCC have been identified as a potential partner.

5. Break 20 mins

6. White claw crayfish and signal crayfish DNA studies (IW and MM)

WCC found in Barkham Brook. Tried some water samples last autumn to see if we could detect eDNA but results were not conclusive possibly due to old reagents being used. Working with Soon Gweon from University of Reading to continue this work and repeat sampling in May when WCC are more active and probably moulting but need funds to pay for reagents. WDC will hopefully provide this. Also looking at some trial work with signal crayfish to see if they eat fish spawn and fry. If the trial is successful we hope to go on to develop a PhD project to look at the impact of signal crayfish predation on recruitment of gravel spawning fish (chub, barbel) in the Loddon catchment. Need some funds to allow for the test sampling to take place. About £750 promised so far, need another £250 to make the project viable.

7. UoR student projects

Swallowfield and Arborfield bund samples. All OK no significant amounts of heavy metals in the bunds so they can be broken and soil spread on land. Need to get flood risk clearance and funds to reconnect floodplain. Next steps are to get site meetings and agree the way forward.

8. AOB – news from clubs etc

Talks – flea and tick treatments, microplastics, Dave Solomon on Thames fisheries, ARK, beavers, Heath Lake Crowthorne,

9. Date of next meeting

26th May

END