

LODDON FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION CONSULTATIVE

Agenda

DATE Thursday 18th January 2024
VENUE Swallowfield Village Hall – diverted to The Crown PH
TIME Meeting has usual 7.30 pm start, 9.30 pm finish.

Apologies received from : Amanda Ingham, Ade Bicknell, Lou Sykes

Note: we were unable to get into the hall as a power cut had reset the entry codes and had to relocate to the local pub. This made presentations difficult but we did get the WTT presentation in full.

Item:

1. Welcome MM 5 mins

MM re-elected, SG re-elected. IW re-elected. MM thanked TA for acting as Treasurer and for finding new Treasurer Sean Doyle. SD was voted in unanimously.

2. AGM to approve the appointment of new Treasurer, Chairman's report, Webmaster report, Treasurer's report

A summary Treasurer's report has been posted on the LFCC website. Operating funds were OK for last year. Slight surplus for 2023 of about £60. Angling Trust membership is important for insurance. Some equipment bought from EA funds (Protek Post Driver and Ammonia monitor to help with AT water sampling). MM, with IW & RH, did a few fry surveys, survey at Dinton on Emmbrook, also at St Pats. Work on eDNA with UoR continues mainly on the white claw crayfish in Barkham Brook. Floating pennywort work continues, Basingstoke Canal is a problem (new FP keeps turning up) still especially with reduced funding. Himalayan Balsam clearance continues at various sites, including Wellington Country Park, Dinton Pastures, TDFC - St Pats, Arborfield and Swallowfield. TDFC work at St Pats gravel, fry refuges, LWD as reported in the last meeting. Angling Trust WQ monitoring taken off with sampling from Thames to Gresham and sites between, also on Blackwater. A few gaps to fill in. Rivers week was held last Sept will do same this year. Some reports of otters Swallowfield so putting in putting in otter fence around a pond. Greywell Mill wall collapse and silt deposit. Left alone for winter, could not do anything anyway until red tape sorted out. Enhanced water flows have exposed potential new redds

3. EA news given by Ian Watson 15 mins – Calverton stocking etc

Ade secured stock fish from Calverton again this year which have been put into waters as follows:

St Patricks stream 300 barbel, 300 roach, 300 chub, 300 dace. All the barbel have been marked with blue dye. See the LFCC website for details of this and previous markings. This was reported in the local press. Marked barbel can be reported on the “report a barbel” page Report a Barbel (lfcc.org.uk). **If you catch a marked barbel please report it** as it is the only way we can keep track of stocked fish. The location of the marks on the stocked barbel can be seen at LFCC - Gallery

River Blackwater Yateley 300 barbel

River Blackwater Farley Hill, 300 roach, 300 chub, 300 dace

Brickfields pond 100 rudd.

FIP – Ade wishes to remind the group FIP portal is open on Angling Trust Website to apply for funding for projects until 14th February. Its an easy process if anyone wants to have a chat about potential projects please contact Ade.

Brickfields: Brickfields country park near to Aldershot has a keen group of volunteers which look after the pond and are very passionate about the whole park. We have provided management advice for the pond and carried out a fish population survey. Following the survey we have stocked some rudd from Calverton. It is really important to engage and encourage small volunteer groups as I expect this location could be a troublesome spot without their help.

Aldershot Garrison Angling Club Ade has managed to source some funds for the angling club to carry out some marginal planting work at one of their fisheries. The angling club will be carrying out some tree management and lifting the canopy. We hope that as marginal plants establish this will in turn provide habitat for juvenile fish and help to improve water quality.

Other: Pollution Incident RMA Sandhurst, Survey Petty’s Brook following pollution incident, Floating Pennywort – no action during winter months. Fisheries have been helping as Community Information Officers during the recent flood incident.

4. Update from SERT – Lou Sykes presented by IW

Note: it was not possible to show Lou’s slides so please see LFCC website for these. SERT reported on a mapping exercise to show areas in the catchment ranked according to water availability classed as good or bad in terms of location and supply. This revealed areas where action if needed to alleviate stress on water supplies whether as groundwater or surface water. SERT also reported on funding from Thames Water, Basingstoke & Deane Borough

Council

Total: £30,883 for three new projects to look at :

Desk study: using EA, water company datasets and SCIMAP run off modelling to understand the current knowledge of water quality issues in the catchment.

Sediment pathways: using pollution source tracing to walk priority areas in the catchment to trace where inputs are coming from.

eDNA sampling: to analyse microbial communities to establish the make up of pollution entering rivers.

Loddon Rivers Week had an extra funder this year in Network Rail that added to funds from the EA to facilitate a week of volunteer activity. Despite rainy weather trying to throw a dampener on the week, we still had over 80 volunteers come out across half a dozen sites, clocking up more than 300 volunteer hours. We installed 21 tonnes of gravel into Bassetts Mead, making that a total of 81 tonnes over 3 years, to create a pool and riffle sequence for fish and invertebrates. We installed large wood into the River Blackwater at Ivy Park Recreation Ground, opened up an overshaded section of the Petty's Brook in Chineham, had a RiverFly show and tell in the middle of Basingstoke and took the EA and other stakeholders out for a day of activities at Arborfield. The week doesn't happen without an enormous amount of collective effort from partners, and a special thanks must go out to the funders and to the volunteers for getting out and involved.

Work planned for 2024 includes Catchment wide eDNA monitoring of bacterial communities looking at urban and rural sources of poor water quality. Pharmaceutical monitoring with Imperial College London, looking at chemical loads in rivers. INNS monitoring and removal. Loddon Rivers Week 2024

5. Andy Thomas Wild Trout Trust on habitat improvements for rivers

Described work of WTT. Membership charity. Gave an outline of basic conditions needed for healthy river. Habitat needs to be suited to target fish. Monitoring by anglers is important such as for stock assessment. Diverse habitats important. Bottlenecks can be in spawning, juvenile, and adult habitats. Helps if juvenile habitat is close to spawning habitat. Must be clean gravel or substrate for spawning. Large Woody Debris creates and maintains habitat for adults and spawning. Coarse Woody Debris good for small fish although it often looks like unmanaged growth. Tree management needs to be done with care and regular maintenance will be needed. Impoundments block fish movement and sediment movement. Sediments can build up behind structures degrading habitat. Legacy river management is a big problem for coarse fish especially in summer floods. Can restore even badly managed rivers. Backwaters can be quite rare on managed rivers. Can need a lot of digging to remove enough soil to create one. Remove hard edges and replace with brushwood but it has to be done properly and maintained.

6. AOB – follow up on projects and funding opportunities. Future Zoom talk from Buglife – this is deferred until 2024

Bob Dunn river warden Gresham £1600 grant to buy WQ kits. Also recovery of water vole. Sparsholt students have helped river work. RB Basingstoke Canal may get less funding from Hants CC as cuts have to be made. Website for consultation - Hampshire County Council Future Services Consultation | About the Council | Hampshire County Council (hants.gov.uk) See also Cuts Threaten the Future of the Basingstoke Canal but You Can Help! – The Basingstoke Canal Society (basingstoke-canal.org.uk)

IW reported on the recent success of Fish Legal in challenging the EA RBMP for the Costa Beck. See here Landmark victory for Fish Legal! High Court rules Defra's River Basin Management Planning unlawful - Angling Trust This was an important victory which means all RBMP will need to comply fully with the need for an effective plan to deal with pollution and other problems and that the EA must carry out a proper consultation.

KT Li ion battery storage protests got support from Fish Legal over issue of fire hazard from battery storage. Also got support from Maria Miller (Cons B'stoke). Fire brigade have also protested. No bunds planned to deal with any run-off. This issue is ongoing despite the opposition from many groups.

7. Date of next meeting

TBC – should be in April

END