

# LODDON FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION CONSULTATIVE

## Agenda

**DATE** Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2024  
**VENUE** Swallowfield Village Hall RG7 1QX  
**TIME** Meeting has usual 7.30 pm start, 9.30 pm finish.

**Apologies:** Ade Bicknell, Trevor Ashton, Trevor Cottam

**Item:**

### **1. Welcome MM 5 mins**

MM showed fire exists, toilets etc. Some survey work done but limited by rain. eDNA on BB planned with UoR. Had a visit to Berkshire Trout Farm and Hungerford trout fishery to see improvements and weir removal.

### **2. EA news by Pete Grey**

#### **Update from Ade Bicknell**

#### **Floating Pennywort**

Carried out the usual pennywort hunt in the Loddon Catchment. No FP found at either the small pond at Mill Lane or Wisteria Pond. Just six strands found in the wetland above Wyndhams Pool.

The Basingstoke Canal at Fleet has significant small clumps and fragments of floating pennywort present. As much pennywort was removed as possible from the bank but previous work on the canal has shown a removal by boat is required.

The Basingstoke Canal Authority has been approached again and asked for help to remove pennywort and carry out a leaflet drop to local residents as we are suspicious pennywort is coming from a local source, maybe a garden pond. I have been told this will happen!

#### **Fish Stocking**

Fish are ordered for a Calverton Fish Farm delivery next month. In the Loddon Catchment there are batches of barbel which are blue dye marked to be introduced to the Loddon and St Patricks Stream where the great habitat work has been carried out. We are also expecting some chub, dace and roach for the Loddon. Please remember to report any captures of marked barbel to the LFCC.

## **Fisheries Improvement Project funds for River Whitewater Greywell Mill**

Funds passed onto the Wild Trout Trust to deliver a project downstream of Greywell Mill. Following the failing of the mill silt smothered some relatively good trout habitat downstream. The project will see the installation of flow deflectors or mud engines to help to move sediment downstream and re expose hard river bed.

## **FIP applications open**

Please speak to your local Fisheries Officer Adrian Bicknell if you have any potential ideas for FIP funded projects. Applications can be made through the Angling Trust portal.

## **Positive Koi Herpes Virus Outbreak in the Loddon Catchment**

We have had a positive confirmed KHV outbreak in the Loddon Catchment which has caused a fish mortality towards the end of the Summer months. Just a reminder to always think about biosecurity at your fisheries. Ensure nets and fishing equipment is dry when transferred from venue to venue. I doubt now the temperature has dropped that there will be any further impact this year. However biosecurity is something you should always be thinking about!

## **New Enforcement Officer for Loddon Catchment**

Cameron Winfield is our new Environment Agency Fisheries Enforcement Officer for the Loddon Catchment, very happy to invite Cameron to a future meeting to discuss any enforcement issues and introduce himself.

## **3. Gravel laying at St Pats**

MM helped lay gravels at St Pats. Put 50 tonnes in last year and put 150 tonnes this year. Created 2 gravel bars. Shoal of chub moved in and spawned on the new gravel. Has helped to create more variety of habitats in St Pats..

## **4. Mink trapping on the Gresham waters James Watson**

River manager for Gresham. Joined Waterlife Recovery trust and got some funding from Basingstoke council. It is a good project to get involved with. Noted how little waterfowl were on river. But did see mink. Tracked a mink back to its burrow and found pile of kingfisher feathers. Started in E Anglia to see if mink eradication was possible. Have been able to do this by trapping alone. Eat mainly mammals and birds. Mink spraint tend to contain a lot of fur and feather vs otter fish bones, etc. Has not seen a water vole. AI said only seen in very limited numbers. Filcris raft and Perdix traps. See ppt. Send mink to labs for genetic analysis so they can work out which families they came from. Have caught 21 so far. Traps baited with mink scent. Tend to catch large males first, then females and juveniles. Get rid of males and population crashes.

## **5. Update on the Lyde habitat improvement works Mike Wharmby**

FIP grant paid for improvements. Got assessment done first. Fishery had declined in last 10 years. Project to raise bed, get more dynamic flow. Added

35 tonnes gravel in 3 sites. Problem in first winter of silt being washed down. Gravels now clean, *Ranunculus* growing, trout spawning and trout being caught. Other spp found too. Overall conclusion that fishery has been improved.

## **6. Lou Sykes LCP update and Rivers Week**

Rivers week 72 volunteers, 160 volunteers hours, 90 school children.. events well spread out. Want to expand it next years. Needs more funding to cover costs. Riverfly, Pettys Brook habitat improvement, Embrook day. Finally got funding for restoration of the old channel. Existing channel will provide flood relief. Will clear way for fish to migrate. Bassetts Mead 15 tonnes gravel. Tices Meadows cleaning willow. Riverfly training programme 2 courses in 2025. Trained 20 people so far. Also got more water quality test kits.

## **7. Break 20 mins**

## **8. Grayling in the Loddon – introduction or reintroduction? General discussion.**

MM discussed history of grayling in the Loddon. Suggestion of stocking grayling. MM outlined range of reasons for stocking/not stocking. Native distribution is hard to determine. May not be native to the Thames catchment (WTT thinks they are). No mention from Bishop of Winchester records. A number of historical stockings. Carter Platts noted stocking into Loddon was not successful. WTT view is that only reintroduce to rivers where they had been present and where the reasons for their loss have been addressed. Might need to improve water quality first. EA view is that it could be difficult to justify as stock from Calverton is limited. Grayling may be more demanding of habitat than trout but Loddon might be suitable. Might take as long as 6-7 years to work out if introduction was successful as shown by population being self-sustaining. There would need to be a conservation argument to justify. Gravels may be a problem due to spring algal blooms. Overall view no stock 5, only if historical evidence 5, stock anyway 3, and a few undecided. Maybe only justified if the habitat is right.

## **9. AOB –**

Longbridge Mill would be very expensive to put the gates back, also expensive to restore the river. What to do? There is a risk of silt being washed downstream. Lou has looked at site to see about restoring the old river channel but this would be a long term project. Need to get some funds to work out what is feasible. Maybe have a better idea by April 2025.

MM trip to Diglis fish pass. Could arrange a trip in 2025.

## **10. Date of next meeting**

23<sup>rd</sup> Jan 2025. Maybe have Soon to talk about eDNA work.

**END**