

The Hanneys Flood Group Report

Environment Agency conservation officers
visit to Letcombe Brook at East Hanney.

22nd May 2008



Objective

To inspect the Letcombe Brook between Dandridges Mill and Lower Mill in East Hanney so that the EA conservation officers could provide guidance on approach and methods for reducing the amount of flora in the channel whilst preserving the balance of the eco system.




Attendees





Alison Futter, Conservation Officer, Environment Agency
Pedro Collins, Conservation Officer, Environment Agency
Stewart Scott, Chairman The Hanneys Flood Group
Iain Brown, County Councillor
Alan Miles, East Hanney Parish Council



Observations and agreed actions




The matters discussed during the visit have been compiled into a tabular format and also referenced to a map of the area for clarity.



| Observations | Agreed Actions |
|---|---|
| <p>Dandridge's Mill Area Significant flora growth in the channel at the outfall on the SW edge of RBL car park</p>  | <p>All flora directly affecting the outfall can be removed</p> |
| <p>Large clumps of Ranunculus in channel. The presence of this species is a strong indication of good water quality, but the quantity currently in the channel is reducing water flow</p>  | <p>Action can be taken to reduce the amount of this species in the channel by removing sufficient material to reduce a clump to around a third of the channel and positioned in the centre section.</p> |

| Observations | Agreed Actions |
|---|---|
| <p data-bbox="225 264 927 338">Large amount of Sparganium (Bur Reed) restricting main channel</p>  | <p data-bbox="927 264 1369 526">May be cut back, but ensure to leave a fringe to reduce erosion of the bank and highway footings. Also note that the restricted channel in this area results in faster flow and hence less silting.</p> |
| <p data-bbox="225 696 927 734">Brookside Area</p> <p data-bbox="225 734 927 884">Large clumps of Ranunculus in channel. The presence of this species is a strong indication of good water quality, but the quantity currently in the channel is reducing water flow</p>   | <p data-bbox="927 696 1369 996">Action can be taken to reduce the amount of Ranunculus in the channel by removing sufficient material to reduce a clump to around a third of the channel and positioned in the centre section.</p> |

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|---|---|
| <p>Evidence of cress.</p>  | <p>Leave undisturbed</p> |
| <p>Clumps of Himalayan Balsam, a highly invasive plant, identified</p>   | <p>Should be completely removed without delay, as they will spread significant amounts of seeds if left to flower.</p> |
| <p>Grass clippings found deposited on bank. These create a toxic mixture when wet, killing river wildlife.</p>  | <p>Education required, as clippings should be disposed of away from the river – ideally composted. The area would benefit from local planting of indigenous wild plants. A Fetter can give guidance</p> |

| Observations | Agreed Actions |
|--|---|
| <p data-bbox="225 230 496 264">Iron Bridge Area</p> <p data-bbox="225 264 874 450">Large clumps of Ranunculus in channel. The presence of this species is a strong indication of good water quality, but the quantity currently in the channel is reducing water flow</p>  | <p data-bbox="874 230 1369 600">Action can be taken to reduce the amount of this species in the channel by removing sufficient material to reduce a clump to around a third of the channel and positioned in the centre section. Following sections should try to encourage a sinuous route where practicable.</p> |
| <p data-bbox="225 846 459 880">Low Bank Area</p> <p data-bbox="225 880 874 992">The group acknowledged that the east bank was very low and overflows regularly even after moderate rainfalls.</p>  | <p data-bbox="874 846 1369 1294">The EA Representatives suggested that the best course of action would be for a formal request to be made to them, whereupon suggestions, drawings and options could be considered. It was also noted that the EA recommended that the large silted area containing willow herb vegetation should form an integral part of the banking plan</p> |

| Observations | Agreed Actions |
|---|--|
| <p>An excellent example of a Rumex Water Dock was observed in this stretch of the brook</p>  | <p>Please do not disturb!</p> |
| <p>Hog Weed Observed</p>  | <p>Should be removed with caution, as this variety can cause skin irritation</p> |
| <p>The abundance of Ranunculus and silt in the channel at this point is particularly dense.</p>  | <p>It was agreed that a second channel could be made, producing an island in the middle section of the channel</p> |

| Observations | Agreed Actions |
|---|---|
| <p>Lower Mill Area</p> <p>The EA representatives considered this stretch “outstanding”. It offers a perfect habitat for water voles, although none have been recorded recently. The sedges are particularly good examples of what is achievable.</p>   | <p>Action can be taken to reduce the amount of Ranunculus in the channel by removing sufficient material to reduce a clump to around a third of the channel and positioned in the centre section.</p> |
| <p>Lower Mill Bypass Area</p> <p>The bypass channel would benefit from removal of heavily overgrown section. A proposal from Robert Hodgson to improve conveyance has been made to the EA. A Futter and P Collins will speak directly to David McKnight.</p> | |

Other general comments noted during the course of the inspection

- The EA representatives implied that because Keith Lead was already aware of the position and extent of the work required, a Waiver on the required consents for performing this work could be readily obtained
- EA advice is that September would be the best time of the year to perform the work
- It is possible that White Clawed Crayfish are in the area, although none have been recorded recently. Any evidence of this species should be photographed. Alison agreed to provide Stewart with full guidance notes prior to the work taking place
- The meadow that forms an integral part of the west bank of the brook immediately downstream of the Iron Bridge was considered by the EA representatives to be in an ideal location for the landowner to take advantage of DEFRA's Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) Scheme, should he so wish.
- When the rununculus is removed it should be left on the bank for a few days to allow any creatures within the rununculus to return to the brook.

A Miles
S Scott

23rd May 2008.