

The Hanneys Flood Group AGM 2020

Date

13th July 2020, 20.00hrs

Location

Zoom video conference due to Covid 19 social distancing requirements

Present

Clive Manvell, Phil Manvell, Alan Miles, Stewart Scott, Dickon Green, Ian Green, David Blomley, Myfanwy Jones, Guy Langton, Jane Taylor, Keith Chisholm, Paul Sayers, David Stubbington, Lamorna Zambellas, David Corps, James Smith, Adam Kozlowski, Mark Bradfield (Letcombe Brook Project), Gill Parry, Patrick Karney; Simon Moulds and Anthony Wan (Imperial College).

Apologies

Stephanie Scott, Stella Brecknell, David Corps, Denis Houldey, Robin Sawn, Adrian Bodimeade and Steve McKechnie

Stewart Scott opened and chaired the meeting to the agenda. He also facilitated screen-sharing so documents were seen by all participants.

Minutes from the 2019 AGM

Last year's Minutes were agreed as correct, with amendments that David Stubbington was present, and Alan Miles attended the whole of the business section.

Election of Committee

Stewart Scott has been Chairman since the Group was formed and stated that he wished to stand down. Clive Manvell accepted nomination and was voted in unanimously as the new Chairman.

Jane Taylor agreed to continue as Treasurer and was re-elected unanimously, with thanks.

Clive identified a need for additional Team Leaders to take responsibility for organising and running working party sessions. Stewart Scott, Keith Chisholm, David Stubbington and Mark Bradfield all volunteered to act in this capacity and were thanked. David Blomley may be able to assist, during summer months when he does not have other commitments.

Post meeting note: The Constitution requires 4 Officers – Chairman, Vice chairman, Treasurer and Secretary. The responsibilities will have to be allocated amongst the committee members.

Review of activities during the last year- Clive Manvell

Clive talked through his photographic record of activities (attached) since June 2019, including working party sessions and the major achievement of fitting out the Hanney Hut, which replaced the horsebox trailer. A big thank you was expressed to Keith Chisholm for master minding the groundworks project, funded by a grant from SSEN, and to David Stubbington and the various teams of volunteers who provided skilled labour. The Hanney Hut now houses resources of the Hanneys

Flood Group, the Nigel Eady Community Woodland and the East and West Hanney Parish Council Emergency Committee.

Report from the Letcombe Brook Project - Mark Bradfield

In early 2020 the heavy rainfall resulted in increased water levels in the Letcombe Brook and Mark received calls from concerned residents, but no property was flooded. The augmentation of and extraction from Letcombe Brook have both ceased and the Brook is now returning to its natural levels. Unfortunately, a planned water vole survey was cancelled due to Covid 19 restrictions, but it is hoped to re-schedule this next year. Mark has been working on a desk-top study of the entire catchment area with EA. A fish passage has been installed at Venn Mill and progress is being made to create one at Lower Mill, with construction work planned to start in October, pending EA approval. A grant of £9-10K has been obtained for tree coppicing work, some of which will be done on the Hanney stretch. Otter spraint has been observed near Philberds Manor and Roach seen there in the Brook, confirming improved habitat. Volunteer work has been tackling Himalayan Balsam from The Ham in Wantage downstream, so there should be less coming down to Hanney. Mr Cottrell has reinstated field margins adjacent to the Brook near the railway line which should result in less silt and run-off. There is a new map and photographs are available on the LBP website see <http://letcombebrook.org.uk/>

Mark thanked the Flood Group for their enthusiastic help and support. In response Stewart thanked Mark for his knowledge and expertise which helps guide the working party sessions. It was noted there is now a good balance between looking after the environment and minimising flood risk.

Presentation of Accounts – Jane Taylor

Jane discussed the financial accounts for the year ending 30 May 2020, as presented on-screen and attached. Patrick Karney has kindly reviewed the accounts as an independent scrutineer for many years and duly signed off the records for 2019-20. There is one small labelling error in the Main Accounts – the donation of £120 was not from Hanney Fest but from the Michaelmas Fayre.

The Unity bank account has been switched to Lloyds Bank so the Group no longer pays bank charges and now has internet banking enabling more straightforward transactions.

There were some grants and historic donations for specified items, chiefly the grant from SSEN. Income is principally provided by the Parish Councils. The small residual from these restricted funds has now been transferred to the general funds, resulting in a balance £3683.95 at the end of May, approximately about £1000 up on the previous year. However, the Group's insurance premium payment, likely to be increased, has been deferred by the COVID situation and is now due in September. Jane is researching an alternative insurer and asked for any suggestions. Hiscox, Zurich (current provider), CAGs (Community Action Group) or Trinitas were all suggested and will be followed up.

Thanks, were expressed to Jane for her work in keeping the accounts and to Patrick Karney for overseeing the accounts for many years. Patrick indicated that he was standing down and as a token of the Group's thanks, Patrick was presented with a bottle of wine.

Imperial College Project – Dr Simon Moulds and Anthony Wan

Simon Moulds and his MSc student Anthony Wan gave an overview of their project work developing low-cost water level sensors for rural African communities. The Letcombe Brook has been identified as an interim alternative water course to test these prototype development devices to minimise delays in their development and deployment in Africa due to the COVID travel restrictions. One sensor has already been installed upstream of Dandridge's Mill and a second will soon be placed near the Iron Bridge, with a third intended for Lower Mill. Water level data is recorded and will be downloaded every couple of months by Simon or Anthony and shared with the Group. Future phases of this development include live data availability.

Plans and ideas for next year – Clive Manvell

Phil Manvell and Stella Brecknell will continue the Riverfly monitoring when allowed to recommence after Covid 19 restrictions. This monitoring invertebrate numbers gives an overview of the health of the Brook.

Himalayan Balsam continues to require pulling over the next month or so. It is now in flower so easy to spot and remove. Individuals and couples are encouraged to do this when walking alongside the Brook, anywhere from Philberds Manor to the railway line.

Clive Manvell has been attending online National Flood Forum Workshops, one of which covered a mapping project using information drawn from the internet, resulting in flood history and prediction, based on water courses, buildings, and other obstructions. Our parishes need to draw up similar plans and a recording of the demonstration from NFF is awaited. The mapping project intends to map all the water courses in East and West Hanney as well as Letcombe Brook and Childrey Brook feeding into the River Ock. Paul Sayers, Mark Bradfield, David Stubbington and Stewart Scott all volunteered. Simon Moulds also expressed interest, as did Patrick Karney. The Freshwater Habitats Trust has an excellent large-scale map of the area and Clive is trying to obtain a copy.

Water level monitoring project is ongoing. See above.

Regular Working parties will resume when social distancing rules permit. Until then, special forces teams will be formed as and when required.

See additional details in attached report.

AOB

Gill Parry asked about ways of monitoring water quality. In addition to the Riverfly monitoring Mark Bradfield confirmed the EA carry out some chemical monitoring and the sewage works must comply with set targets for water quality discharged to the Brook. The LBP is also involved with Waterblitz, Earthwatch's Nitrate and Phosphate nationwide surveying carried out twice yearly (Covid-19 permitting). Mark monitors upstream and Phil samples sites through East Hanney. Both chemicals are at higher levels in the Brook than they should be. Nitrate is high from source as the aquifer is contaminated and will take some 30 years to clear. Phosphates come from the sewage works and farm run off. Slug pellets (metaldehydes) in the Ock are being investigated. Simon Moulds is also developing a prototype dissolved oxygen sensor, which may undergo testing in Letcombe Brook.

Mark requested help clearing the channel at Lower Mill in preparation for the fish ladder. He will liaise with Clive to set up small teams, probably in August and September.

James Smith commented it had been good to do the work in West Hanney near the woodland and ditch opposite Hanney Spice. Additional work in these areas could be useful small group opportunities as had the small March working party clearing drainage channels alongside Winter Lane. He also asked if work on the Denchworth Road at Botney Meadows would help alleviate the flooding there. Paul Sayers and Stewart Scott have looked at this before and it was considered too big a problem for the Flood Group. It would also require landowner co-operation, but who owns the land alongside Childrey Brook needs to be established. Mark Bradfield agreed to consider if there were any opportunities for habitat improvements north of the Denchworth Road; David Corps, Paul Sayers and Stewart Scott will explore possibilities for flood alleviation work.

Stewart asked about the outcome from David Corps daughter's project investigating insect life in nectar bearing plants, comparing areas with and without Himalayan Balsam. David C will follow up.

Web Site statistics - Adam Kozlowski

The web site, maintained by Adam, continues to be used as an effective method of communication, recording information on activities, and sharing knowledge. Adam reported that there are still about 6,000 visits pa to the website, indicating considerable interest. However, the "membership" list remains static at about 150, even with all the new people in the villages. Website "Hits" attached.

Thanks

Clive summed up by numerous thanks – to Jennifer Scott for facilitating Zoom, Stewart for his stewardship of the Group, Ian and Dickon for turning out to every working party and for towing the old horsebox trailer, Mark for support and advice, Adam for work on the website, East and West Hanney Parish Councils for funding, Michaelmas Fayre for donations, the Tennis Club for co-operation when building the new hut, Keith for engineering input for the hut build together with David Stubbington and to everyone else for their volunteer working party roles.

James Smith thanked Clive for his enthusiastic organisation of the volunteer tasks.

Meeting closed at 9.30.