

14 March 2023 Minutes

Present

Roger Moses. Liz Viggars, Peter Coleman-Smith, Alex Dunn

Apologies

Alastair Blackwell, Di Bunniss, Mark Thompson, Nikki Jones

Minutes from February

All items below were carries forward, except Cuts to the Bristol Parks Budget which have now been reversed.

Water Quality

Peter went through his report, see Appendix 1. Peter has made very serious attempts to get responses from various politicians, so far only Peter's local councillor Katy Grant (Green) has done anything. She tabled a members forum Statement see Appendix 2.

So in Bristol North West for more than 6000 hours in 2021 somewhere an outflow was pouring raw sewage into the river, mainly the Trym. The rest of the data can be found in and via the appendices below.

It was agreed that Peter had our full support and that Darren Jones MP for the Trym and Kerry McCarthy MP should be contacted as should Mark Watson and the three councillors for W-o-T.

Peter has been working with very senior staff in Wessex Water and has developed a positive relationship with them, they have made him aware of their plan to tackle this problem over the next seven years.

If you are willing to contact your local councillor about the sewage in our rivers let Peter know and he will help.

Agree: Peter has our full support is pursuing this.

Butts and Soakaways are two ways that overspills of raw sewage into rivers can be reduced. If the amount of water flowing into the drains is reduced so is the likelihood of overflow. It is proposed that we contact Wessex Water asking if we can have cheap water butts for residents in Trout in the Trym area. Roger mentioned that Bristol Water had offered something similar previously.

Action Peter

We considered if there were other groups like TitT that we could work with. Brislington Brook were mentioned and it was agreed we would contact them Barry Gray was a name given. There is a Facebook Page and a website.

Action Peter

River Cleaning

With the following exceptions all the Trym and Hazel Brook have been cleaned of litter once. Hazel Brook north of Crow Lane Open Space has not been tackled at all. There is about 400m of Hazel Brook at the top end of Crow Land Open Space that needs clearing for the first time.

When the Trym near the Mill House Pub was tackled for a second go, after a very thorough first go, a year ago it was discovered that masses of new litter has been exposed by the winter rains and water flow. It would appear that certainly in some places a lot more river cleaning work is required.

Action Alex will continue to organise River Cleaning events every Friday and most Sundays

Silt Traps

Alastair was unable to attend but has submitted this report.

Needless to say, things have not gone to plan!

Caroline reported at the last minute that it would have to be dealt with by the end of February as the Fix-it Team were being deployed elsewhere, but the Rangers (apparently also essential players in this) were being forced to take leave or lose it in March.

However, everything potentially not lost because I mentioned it to Joe, the Council Volunteer lead I work with on protecting the pond bank, who showed interest in getting involved in the project. He promised to get the key from Caroline and investigate with me “shortly”. Caroline is also going to have another go with the Fix-it Team. So, she is trying but seems to have constant “management issues”!

Separately, I have talked to Simon Hunter from BART who has agreed to come down early April to inspect and advise. I’ll let you know when I get a firm date.

Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership Conference

Peter and Alex attended this half day conference in Keynsham on Tuesday 7 March. Peter made a presentation on behalf of TitT explaining what we did. It was the only talk by a community group and created a big impression. There were three other talks and several hours of discussions in various small groups. There were many non-governmental and governmental organisations there and TitT have been invited by the [Natural History Consortium](#) to be part of their Festival of Nature which runs from 9 to 18 June. Peter has also been invited to talk to the Women’s Institute at their annual conference (?) about the [WI Supporter Options](#) – Coming Soon!

We also learned that beavers were heading our way and had already reached Bath.

Water Voles and Otters

So far nine people have come forward to be trained, in mid April. A teacher from Westbury on Trym Primary School has become involved. Peter will do the training. A Bristol Avon River Trust person will do a survey and report. A budget report will need to go to Liz to comply with the conditions of the grant. Otter spraint has been spotted but the water voles people have seen are actually rats.

WalkFest

We understand the walks have been submitted for this and all is in order. [Here is the walkfest website.](#)

Bird Song Training

At the moment this is only happening in the Greenway Centre, there is no internet connection in the Sea Mills Café so it is not possible to do it there. To be of any use the training has to be completed by the end of April perhaps mid-May so that participants can hear real birds singing. Badock's Wood Primary School are involved. If you want a training event, ask Roger.

Reporting Tools

Liz explained that two teams, Matthew as an IT professional, and five University of Bristol Computer Department year 2 students, were working to develop a phone app that could be used to photograph something, such as flytipping and map is accurately. This information would be stored on a central database so that people could find it using their phone to guide them and they could deal with it. We are nearly at the stage when people will be able to test them both, but the students app is android only. Obviously such an app it could have many uses.

We are awaiting the ability to load both apps on phones so that it can be tested. Should happen this month so we can start testing.

Action: Liz and Alex Liaising with Matt and the Students

Himalayan Balsam

We need to start looking for this soon. Liz has maps of locations that are known to still have balsam or had balsam last year. These will need to be checked thoroughly from April.

There is also known to be Himalayan Balsam on Cribbs Causeway some in peoples houses. This may cause issues if the homeowners like the balsam.

We may be able to use our new app to plot where balsam is found.

We also discussed using the new AI tools to identify Balsam as some people struggle with this. We were concerned that this may be easy enough when the balsam is in flower but when it is small may be harder for the AI to work its magic.

I asked Chatgpt for help, see appendix 3. Seems the most important thing is lots of good photos to compare with.

AOB

Ben Barkers 'My Wild Bedminster'

Ben is looking for material for this. Not sure how to proceed.

Survey Consultation Bristol City Council

This is the link if you want to do this quick survey. Peter has done it and will submit one for Trout in the Trym

<https://www.ask.bristol.gov.uk/managing-more-green-space-for-nature>

Litter Picking Badock's Wood

We have offered to help and are waiting to hear from Sarah Hudson. Roger things litter picking has resumed. Liz liaises with Sarah.

Trymwood Studio Exhibition

Here are the details of the exhibition from Roger



Birds of the Garden
Paintings, Prints
Drawings & Sculptures

Exhibition
9th - 26th March 2023

Open Thursdays - Sundays
11am - 4pm
or by appointment

trymwoodstudios.co.uk
Westbury-on-Trym BS9 3ET

Darren Woodhead
House Sparrows (detail)
Watercolour

Appendix 1

Peter's Note for item 1.

1) Sewage/Wessex Water – I wrote to the Engineering & Delivery Director of Wessex Water, Jan 2023:

1. Confirm Wessex Water's plans for publishing enhanced, timely sewage pollution reporting (like Thames Water has done);
2. Can you amend the Wessex Water Pollution Reduction Plan for Bristol to include all the problematic CSOs on the River Trym so Badock's Wood LNR is significantly improved;
3. Confirm if Wessex Water will consider undertaking, or at least sponsoring and coordinating, a sewage outfall safari type event so the misconnections into the River Trym and the Hazel Brook can be comprehensively investigated and tackled.

He replied with a 2 page letter recognising my points offering a meeting with one of his senior management team. Alex Dunn and I have now met with the Senior Manager and I subsequently talked to a Wessex Water Director face to face at a consultation session they held in Bristol Central Library (part of a region-wide consultation). We have seen their list of CSOs to be fixed by 2030 and its the ones we recognise as problematic, good. We also had a good chat about ways in which Trout in the Trym may be able to partner Wessex Water eg piloting approaches, community campaigns, etc. Further updates tbc.

2) Bristol City Council – I wrote to:

- Nicola Beech (April 2022), then to Kye Dudd, BCC Cabinet Member for Climate, Ecology, Waste and Energy, Nov & Dec 22 and Feb 23: Here are the facts (CSO overflows constituency league table, please hold Wessex water to account for the results each time and for progress Vs their plan). Outcome of this – 'speak to Kye' from Nicola and no reply at all from Kye.
- I also helped 2 Trout in the Trym members write to Darren Jones MP in Nov 22: same request. Outcome: No substantive reply to either of them.

Thereafter I wrote to:

- Mark Weston, local councilor, Dec 22. Outcome: Mark said he will pick up with Kye at his next regular catch up with him. No update and I've chased since and not heard.
- Green Party via my local councillor, Dec 22. Outcome: using the letter I wrote to them and the data within it the Green Group on the Council tabled a formal Members Forum statement (Ref CS04) from Cllr Katy Grant Subject: Water Quality, page 34

[\(Public Pack\) Agenda Document for Member Forum – Questions & Statements from Councillors, 10/01/2023 12:30 \(bristol.gov.uk\)](#)

After this and still no response from Kye I sent a message to Marvin Rees, 8th March (repeating previous points, referring to the Member Forum statement and data, highlighting the 2m visits to Blaise Castle Estate each year (BCC published figures) and explaining that with the BRERC validation now provided the Trym is the UK's newest trout stream). Response from Marvin awaited.

My goal remains: secure confirmation the council will meet regularly with Wessex Water to hold them to account for the latest CSO data (published annually), challenge their plans and challenge their delivery Vs their plans. If I don;t hear from Marvin I'll pick up via my Green councillor again.

3) Bristol-wide water quality – I published water quality and pollution data on FB groups: Trout in the Trym, Friends of Eastville Park, Mina Road Park, Friends of Brislington Brook, etc. I will do so again when new CSO data is published for 2022 – middle of the year. I have a session to brief the Avon Regional Women's Institute reps in April about bathing quality standards and related water quality issues.

4) On-line information – I've started work on a slide-deck on 'Pollution in Bristol's streams'. This will be made available as an on-line document for use on face book sites to help readers recognise different types of pollution, what we can do about it as individuals and why it's important. Hopefully I'll be able to share this in a month or so, with Trout in the Trym and across groups in other parts of the city too.

Feel free to write to your councillor, MP, the Mayor too – information on frequency and duration of Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) pollution here if you want to include some facts: [Bristol CSOs 2021 data](#) (*you will have to search for Bristol-Alex but I managed it*)

Appendix 2 (This is available via the link in appendix 1)

CS04 Members Forum statement from Cllr Katy Grant Subject: Water Quality We have learnt recently from the Trout in the Trym community group (made up of volunteers from Sustainable Southmead, Sea Mills Climate Action, Sustainable Henbury & Brentry, Sustainable Westbury on Trym and others) that sewage in Bristol is a really significant problem. Recent national media on this – a multi million pound fine for Southern Water, a debate in Parliament, etc – didn't affect Bristol and its waterways, but it could very well have done.

Here are figures for Bristol in 2021 (the data is from water companies, collated and published each year by the Rivers Trust): Constituency –

Number of overflows of raw sewage; Duration of overflows (hours); % of combined sewer outflows actually being monitored

- **Bristol East** – 448 Overspills of raw sewage; 302; 75%
- **Bristol North West** – 2,588 Overspills of raw sewage; 6,203 hours of overflow; 95% percent of outflows are being monitored. <<< mainly in the Trym
- **Bristol South** – 169 Overspills of raw sewage ; 277 hours of overflow; 57% of outflows are monitored
- **Bristol West** – 287 Overspills of raw sewage; 361 hours of outflows; 59% of outflows monitored
- **Bristol Local Authority area** – 3,492 overspills of raw sewage ; 7,144 hours of overflow ; 80% of outflows are monitored.

These are all spills of raw sewage into the watercourses within the city boundary. Many children swim and paddle in these streams as well as countless dogs. Warning signs from the Council are not in evidence. The One City Plan (Goal 188) says that all Bristol streams will be healthy for wildlife by 2031 – but without oversight of the main polluter how will this be achieved? It is really important that the Council provides regular, robust oversight of what Wessex Water is doing. Data is published annually, the next due April/May 2023 for 2022; if pollution levels are not improving, Wessex Water need to be challenged on this, on their plans (what, where, when, with what impact) and on their progress. The Council needs to be doing this at least annually and keeping the public informed. Trout in the Trym say that they have sent this data to the Cabinet member for climate and ecology, but have not had a reply. It would be helpful for all of us councillors, and for the residents of Bristol, if the Council could take action on water quality, hold water companies to account – and share more information with the public about this.

Appendix 3

There are several ways you can use AI to identify Himalayan Balsam from a picture:

1. Use a pre-trained image recognition model: You can use pre-trained image recognition models such as ResNet, Inception, or VGG to identify Himalayan Balsam from an image. You can use libraries such as TensorFlow, PyTorch, or Keras to load the pre-trained model and then pass the image through the model to obtain the predicted class.
2. Train your own image recognition model: You can train your own image recognition model using deep learning techniques such as convolutional neural networks (CNNs). You will need a dataset of labeled images of Himalayan Balsam to train the model. You can use tools such as TensorFlow or PyTorch to build and train the model.
3. Use a pre-trained object detection model: You can use pre-trained object detection models such as YOLO or Faster R-CNN to identify Himalayan Balsam in an image.

These models can not only identify the presence of Himalayan Balsam in an image but also locate it with bounding boxes.

4. Use a pre-trained segmentation model: You can use pre-trained segmentation models such as U-Net or Mask R-CNN to segment the image and identify the regions containing Himalayan Balsam. These models can provide a pixel-wise segmentation of the image, which can be useful in identifying the exact location and extent of the Himalayan Balsam.

In any of these approaches, it is important to have a high-quality dataset of images of Himalayan Balsam to ensure accurate identification.