

9 May 2023 Minutes

Present

Roger Moses. Liz Viggars, Alastair Blackwell, Alex Dunn, Di Bunniss

Apologies

Peter Coleman-Smith, Frances Robertson

Water Quality

No update: Peter has continued to engage with local politicians and had arranged a walk along Beehive Brook and the Southmead section of the Trym with Kye Dudd – local councillor for Southmead and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Climate, Ecology, Waste and Energy. Kye is now aware of the problems and the work that has been done. He will provide details of other groups who may be able to support our work in Southmead as Sustainable Southmead is no longer organising activities.

The following questions were raised in respect of water quality – Peter is best placed to answer them:

- Do we need to carry out biodiversity checks as well as water quality sampling.
- Is any DNA testing being undertaken on the Trym?
- What are levels of nitrates and phosphates like?

River Cleaning

Weekly sessions continue on Fridays and Sundays. These will be combined with Himalayan Balsam clearance over the summer. Virtually the entire length of the Trym and Hazel Brook have been deep-cleaned at least once. Approximately 130-140 tonnes have been taken out over the last 4 years.

At the latest river clean, the rubbish was rejected from Avonmouth as overweight. We have been asked not to put rubble in with the general rubbish.

Action Alex to understand the rules and seek resolution to the weight problem – involve Kye Dudd?

Silt Traps

Alastair visited the trap with Joe McKenna from Bristol Parks. Joe did not have the key to the traps. However they cleared the silt from the top of the trap – 7-8 barrowloads which they put in the nettles. It appears that the trap door is held by a couple of screws. No immediate next steps.

Note that Friends of Blaise have applied for a BACP Grant for £7k to desilt the lily ponds. They expect to hear whether they have been successful by the end of the month. Some

initial estimates of costs have been obtained. The grant might cover 4-5 days hire of a dump truck and dredger. Alastair does not believe that the ponds necessarily need to be emptied.

The grant application seems to have renewed BCC interest in improving the water in Blaise. Caroline has been investigating contractors (hopefully we can join the dots). It is understood that Sarah Blazier would prefer to spend money on Tarn Lake rather than the lily ponds. It is good to see renewed interest from the Council in respect of improving the water in Blaise. On the other hand the Ecology officer is not keen to get rid of all the silt. There may be a project to look for Greater Crested Newts.

Festival of Nature

TitT have been invited by the [Natural History Consortium](#) to be part of their Festival of Nature which runs from 9 to 18 June. The Festival of Nature programme includes a 9 June SusWoT-hosted river cleaning/himalayan balsam session.

Actions: Alex and Liz to co-ordinate 9 June session.

Water Voles and Otters

The Vole and Otter training workshop has been scheduled for 15 May. Peter will do the training.

The Ecologist survey of the Trym for water voles is booked for 19th May. He will spend the day looking at the section of the river down near Sea Mills / the Mill House pub, then if we have time head up to Badocks Wood too. This should result in: 1) Confirmation (or not) of their presence and 2) a report noting what could be done to improve the habitat for water voles in case they aren't there but do try to colonise naturally.

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.

A potential vole sighting in Badocks Wood has been reported by a 'reliable witness'.

WalkFest

Friends of Badocks Wood organised a Walk as part of Walk Fest and undertook the City Nature Challenge. Peter accompanied the walkers to talk about the wildlife and take water samples. . There was lots of life in the Pond. The i-naturalist app was used for the City Nature challenge – great for things that don't move. Plant-net and Bird-net were also identified as good apps.

Friends of Sea Mills Meadows also led a walk.

Reporting Tools

The student team have presented their app – WotPic. We will investigate making it available via the Google Play store once the final bugs have been ironed out. WoTPlot is also being tested in the field. Please contact Liz or Alex for further details. If we can encourage widespread adoption then this will help BCC, Wessex Water etc to tackle problems efficiently and enable us to plan our volunteer activities

Action: Liz and Alex Liaising with Matthew (WotPlot) and the University (WotPic)

Himalayan Balsam

Individuals have started checking the usual problem areas – in general they are not as bad as previous years.

Blaise Lower Car Park – Shirehampton Road: Peter identified Balsam, this was largely cleared by Dawn and Liz. Further Balsam to be cleared on the East Bank between The Dingle (graffiti) bridge and the Millhouse. Also odd plants on the banks. The two key stands near the car park are not reappearing as yet (maybe we've finally cleared these!)

The Confluence – John has been monitoring – no Balsam identified so far.

Blaise: Mill – John has been monitoring – no Balsam as yet.

The Royals: This stand still needs serious attention but is away from the river and therefore lower priority.

Action: Liz to put John in touch with Alastair to co-ordinate Balsam activities with Friends of Blaise (who have some keen bashers).

Next Steps for the Trym

Carried Forward:

Now that a lot of the basic work to improve the Trym has been completed (clearing the historic rubbish, flytipping and Himalayan Balsam), we need to work out our next steps. Particular areas of focus include improving the banks – for example with planting and measures to prevent damage being caused by dogs.

We discussed whether it was better to organise meetings of interested parties or events that tackle certain elements straightaway. A combination of both is probably required.

Action: all to give further thought to how we progress.

Grants

Friends of Blaise have applied for a BACP Grant for £7k to desilt the lily ponds.

Peter has submitted a bid to BACP for budget to fund a walkover survey of the Trym / Hazel Brook to identify the top priority obstacles to eel/fish migration. The report from

this will help BCC and other funders to work out where to focus effort for the maximum benefit for eel and fish passage and the ecology of the river.

AOB

None