

Report of the Strategic Director of Place to the meeting of Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 28th September 2021.

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Subject:

Bradford Beck Pilot Study

Summary statement:

The Bradford Beck Pilot Study was first discussed by members in April 2013 and has been before the Environment & Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis since then. It was resolved on 10th March 2021 that the ongoing collaboration between officers and Friends of Bradford Beck be supported; also that the Friends of Bradford Beck be congratulated for the work they have undertaken throughout the years. This report outlines the work undertaken within the catchment since the previous report in March 2020.

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1. SUMMARY

Since the Committee meeting of March 2020 there has been cooperation on a range of projects between Council officers of various services and Friends of Bradford's Becks (FOBB). This report outlines the work carried out over the last year in collaboration to the catchment plan produced by FOBB that was supported by the Environment and Waste O&S Committee in 2013.

2. BACKGROUND

Despite the disruptions of the Covid19 pandemic, during the course of the year there have been work streams and developments involving FOBB and Council Officers in relation to Bradford Beck. An update on existing and emerging projects and initiatives are discussed below:

Yorkshire Region Flood and Coastal Committee, Local Levy Funding

As discussed in previous reports, following the floods of December 2015 it was recognised that there was a need for a long term strategic approach to managing flood risk and associated environmental impacts across the Bradford district. In identifying this need the Council worked with the Environment Agency to scope and develop a Bradford Flood Programme Board. The Programme Board were able to secure local levy funding from the Yorkshire Regional Flood and Coastal Committee to help deliver a range of aspirations that have included river stewardship and reliance projects. The Land Drainage Department have recently been successful in securing further Local Levy funding to develop the initial scoping appraisals required for the delivery of a capital flood risk management scheme for Bradford Beck. The project aims to improve the standard of protection to 77 residential properties plus 158 businesses located within Bradford City Centre. More recently 20 of these residential properties were flooded by Storm Ciara in February 2020.

Initial proposals include providing upstream storage in the Leaventhorpe/Middlebrook area supplemented by the implementation of NFM measures on rapid response catchments such as Pitty Beck and Clayton Beck.

To reduce surface runoff entering the culverted sections of the catchment on Westbrook Beck, Bowling Beck and Eastbrook Beck, the scheme will look to promote the installation of Blue Green Infrastructure assets within these urban areas.

By reducing surface water runoff, the scheme will help reduce the discharge from Yorkshire Waters Combined Sewer Overflows that connect to the Beck improving the water quality of natural environment. These improvements to the river health will help with the progression of the Shipley and Canal Road Corridor (SCRC) Regeneration area. The Corridor is an allocated Spatial Priority Area by the Leeds City Region. This Corridor is one of two priority regeneration areas in the Bradford District alongside the Bradford City Centre and has been identified as one of four Urban Eco Settlement locations within the Leeds City Region.

The first stage of the project will be to strengthen the evidence base of Bradford Beck so a reliable resource is available to support the development of future business cases. The project is due to start in December 2021.

Bradford Beck River Restoration Project Phase 1

CBMDC, The Environment Agency (EA), The Friends of Bradford Beck and the Wild Trout Trust worked in partnership to deliver a £90,000 EA funded scheme to re-naturalise the northern length of Bradford Beck. This including the removal of Invasive Non- Native Species (INNS), habitat creation works including bat and bird boxes and a kingfisher tunnel, Tree, shrub and wildflower planting, pedestrian access improvements and works to improve fish passage. These works are now complete and the appended FOBB report discusses how the fish population is being re-established.

Re-naturalisation of Bradford Beck

Working with the Highways Majors Team in the Bradford to Shipley Improvement Scheme, a section of Bradford Beck between Poplars Road and Briggate has been identified to be re-naturalised by diverting the watercourse around a dilapidated culvert. The Highways Scheme has recently been given WYCA and Council assurances to progress to a full business case. The culvert is in severely poor condition with life expectancy already passed. Failure of this culvert will result in an unacceptably high risk of flooding to surrounding properties, the highway network and infrastructure. Bradford Beck will be realigned to create additional flood water storage which will reduce the impact of climate change through mitigation and adaptation by managing the risk of flooding along the Corridor. This will also open up opportunities for measures to improve the river health of Bradford Beck that will recover water quality in accordance with the objectives of the Water Framework Directive and in accordance with the aspirations of the management plan 'Bradford Beck- A New Lease of Life' undertaken by the Aires River Trust in conjunction with the Friends of Bradford's Becks. The stabilisation of habitats by the naturalisation of the channel will also enhance biodiversity and green infrastructure by strengthening ecological networks particularly within and connecting to Bradford's Wildlife Habitat Networks. The Project will increase the species and habitat diversity by introducing a variety of grassland, woodland and wetland habitat and thus enable the area to support a wider range of species than at present. In this way, the conservation status of the site will be elevated. In addition, the proposal is a key ecological link in Bradford's Wildlife Habitat Network

Land Drainage Investigations

Bradford Councils Land Drainage Team regularly investigate reports of blocked or collapsed watercourses within the Bradford Beck Catchment. Blockages can lead to an increased risk of flooding or environmental incidents.

Land drainage law is complex and is covered within the Land Drainage Act 1991. The Council is able to offer advice about problems associated with land drainage, including ditches, streams, rivers and other watercourses. Essentially, a landowner is responsible for the drainage of their land. If a watercourse passes through land, under the Land Drainage Act 1991, the landowner is classified as a 'Riparian Owner' and is responsible for maintaining the flow within the watercourse and to ensure an impediment to that flow does not exist.

The Council only has a responsibility for watercourse when the Council is the landowner. Other than that, the Council do have powers to act in certain circumstances, to mitigate against the effects of flooding generated from land drainage matters.

If a landowner fails to carry out necessary maintenance on a watercourse, the Council can serve notice and carry out works if ditches have become blocked resulting in a flood risk or health hazard. These powers are contained in the Land Drainage Acts 1991 and Sections of the Public Health Act 1936, but are not instantaneous - the process between first notification of a problem and serving a notice can take years, and further stages are required if the landowner defaults on the notice.

Occasionally investigations reveal blockages on land that is unregistered. In these instances, the Council conduct a review to understand the risk posed by any defects and if quick interventions will reduce the risk and avoid on-going issues that can take up large amounts of resource. One recent investigation on Deep Lane in Clayton has ensured the correct operation of a culvert system that had caused water to flow on the surface of the bridleway for years. Deep Lane is an ancient bridleway between Clayton and Crossley Hall with parts of the lane unregistered. The Council commissioned an investigation and repair of the blocked culvert on unregistered land finally resolving the issue and the path is again fit for use.

European Projects

The Council are within their final year of the sixth year BEGIN (Blue / Green infrastructure through social innovation) project which was approved in early September 2016 to EU North Sea Region Secretariat; The Lead Partner being the Municipality of Dordrecht in the Netherlands. The project is progressing and will help support the aspirations of the Councils Green Infrastructure Study. The emerging approach in respect of Green Infrastructure and flood risk is based on the creation of a Linear Park along the length of Bradford Beck, restoring the natural character of the beck, retaining areas of natural floodplain, introducing new areas and enhancing existing areas of greenspace whilst incorporating sustainable drainage within new developments. The BEGIN projects also aims to engage with communities to increase awareness of the Beck and its catchment.

The Council have started to work on the LIFE Critical European project at Horton Park. LIFE Critical is an EU project that adapts older city neighbourhoods so they are equipped for the effects of climate change. Westbrook Beck, which flows through the ponds and water features of Horton Park, stopped flowing a few years ago. With support from the University of Bradford, the project is trying to find the problem by investigating the reasons why the water volumes have reduced. The Council will work with FOBB to find solutions to this issue during the development of the project. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) will also be installed in the park. These are a more natural way to reduce the likelihood of flooding by transporting surface water elsewhere, slowing the flow of water or using materials to encourage the water to soak into the ground or evaporate.

Sediment Control

Following a series of sediment pollution incidents involving new developments, the Council met with FOBB to discuss if there were any opportunities through the development control and planning process to help prevent future pollution incidents. Although the policy and responsibility for sediment control is complicated, it was agreed that guidance and warnings could be included in pre planning application advice and as footnotes on planning application decision notices with the intention of raising awareness to developers of these types of pollution incidents. It was also agreed that planning condition requiring the details of temporary site drainage runoff would be used where there is a risk of sediment pollution being generated during the construction period of a development.

Bradford Flood Risk Management Workshop- Enabling Collaborative Catchment Management

Bradford Metropolitan District Council Flood Risk Management Team and the Environment Agency, facilitated by the Yorkshire Integrated Catchment Solutions Programme (iCASP), and supported by the Aire Rivers Trust and Friends of Bradford Beck, are hosting a workshop on “Enabling Collaborative Catchment Management” The aim of the workshop is to help catalogue current projects and priorities along the River Aire catchment within Bradford and identify potential future improvements and collaboration opportunities across the Bradford District. This will assist in CBMDC aligning our flood risk proposals with other infrastructure developments in this area to find out how projects might be developed that could help in the delivery of other aims and objectives, not just the reduction of flood risk.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The Friends of Bradford Becks have provided an update to their work streams during 2020/21 and the report is included as appendix 1.

The Environment Agency has been approached on pollution incidents that have been reported on Bradford Beck and its tributaries during 2020/21. This data is included as appendix 2.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

None

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

None

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

None

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

None

7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

None

7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

None

7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None

7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

None

7.6 TRADE UNION

None

7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

None

7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

None

7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

None

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None

9. OPTIONS

None

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Friends of Bradford's Becks and the Strategic Director, Place be requested to work jointly on studies and proposals for the Canal Road Area.
2. That the Friends of Bradford's Becks be invited to report back in a year's time.
3. That this report be noted and that the ongoing collaboration between officers and the Friends of Bradford's Becks be supported.

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Friends of Bradford Becks summary of activities 2020/ 21

Appendix 2 – Environment Agency's reported pollution incidents 2020/ 21

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Bradford's Becks – a New Lease of Life Available online from:

<http://bradfordbeckdotorg.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/bradfordsbecksfinalweboptimised.pdf>