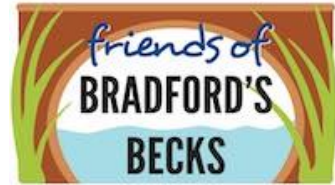


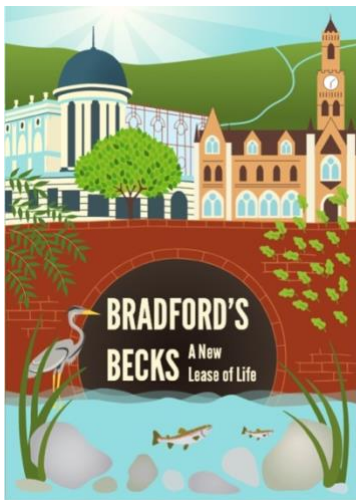
# Friends of Bradford's Becks summary of activities 2020-21



Friends of Bradford's Becks report to Regeneration and Environment O&S Committee, Sept 2021

## Introduction

The Friends of Bradford's Becks (FOBB) is a community group of Bradford based residents and ecologists. We are keen to see the eventual restoration of the Bradford Beck river system as a contribution to the quality of the city. FOBB was formed to achieve the six visions in the catchment management plan<sup>1</sup> which was written after widespread consultation during 2011. The visions are:



- clean (i.e. free of pollution)
- visible
- accessible
- thriving (i.e. good ecologically)
- cared for becks
- in a water wise city

The catchment plan was supported by the Environment and Waste O&S Committee in 2013, and officers were requested to give FOBB assistance with the resulting projects. We have reported back to the Committee in each year since; this is our report for the last 18 months to Sept 2021.

## Good news stories from 2020-21

Despite COVID, we have been able to progress a range of improvements to the Beck.

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<sup>1</sup> Aire Rivers Trust, 2012. Bradford's Becks: a new lease of life. Available from <https://bradfordbeckdotorg.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/bradfordsbecksfinalweboptimised.pdf>

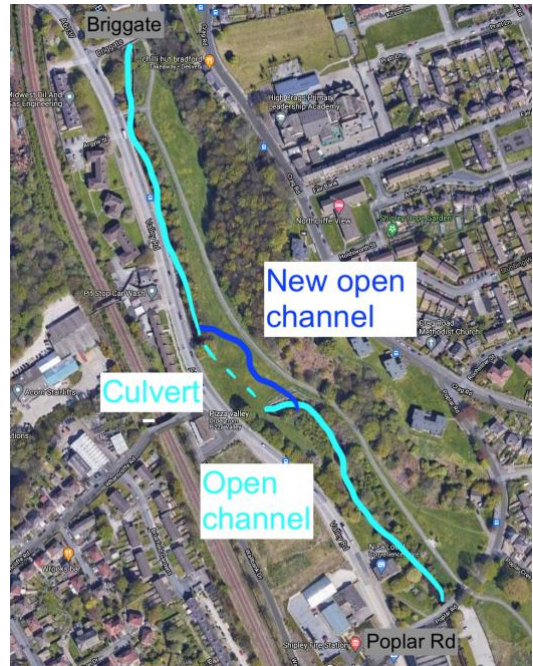
## Valley Rd deculverting

The biggest story is the approval of funding for the deculverting of a short reach alongside Valley Rd. This is jointly funded by ESIF (EU funds) and the Council to the tune of £3.25M. Consultants have been appointed, site investigation is complete, and design is progressing for completion in 2023.

As well as daylighting the beck, there will be footpath and landscape enhancements. There will be no impact on the cycleway.

The high cost is because of (a) the high volume of soil to be moved and (b) the risk of the soil being contaminated by previous landuses.

We look forward to the chance to engage with the Council and their consultants on the actual design.



*Planned deculverting. Map/image from Google*

## PollutionWatch

Our volunteers went out hunting for pollution sources from April 2020 to March 2021 in a collaborative project with Yorkshire Water. They recorded water conditions on 1350 occasions. The key numbers are: 55 misconnected properties or sewers found, 20 fixed already, 17 complex enough for YW to undertake them as capital projects, 18 unresolved.



*Outfall from Holiday Inn to Eastbrook with clear signs of pollution*

YW have no power to fix misconnections within property boundaries and no power to require homeowners to do. These powers rest with the Council's Environmental Health Dept, but following up cases referred by Yorkshire Water or us has not been a high priority. We are pleased to say that, as a result of PollutionWatch, Yorkshire Water has reached an agreement with EH on a procedure to be followed by all parties. It would be very helpful if we (FOBB and YW) could have an annual review of cases submitted with EH.

Despite the relative success of the PollutionWatch project, FOBB does not believe that we have found the main problems. We believe that illegal effluent disposal, misconnections or faulty sewer overflows in the extensive culverts in the city are significant. An example is the recent confirmation by dye testing that the Holiday Inn is connected directly into Eastbrook. Ironically, this building used to be Broadacre House, the headquarters of Yorkshire Water!

More investigation of the pollution sources into the culverts of Bradford's Becks is needed – both YW and ourselves are looking at ways to achieve this.

## Renaturalisation phase 1: River Aire to Briggate

The recent project to install fish easements, improve pedestrian accessibility and carry out planting of native species along the Beck was completed in this period. It was a collaboration between the Environment Agency, Bradford Council (mainly Landscape), ourselves and the Wild Trout Trust. The WTT and FOBB electrofished the reach in June and found that there a fish population is re-establishing after the fish kill by Yorkshire Water in 2018.



*A young trout from the beck near Shipley Station*

## Signage and information boards

Further work was stopped as the Council Signs workshop was rather busy with COVID. They have agreed to return to making our signs for naming becks and an information board.

## SuDS Rising Star

We were very pleased to nominate Saira Ali (Team Leader, Landscape Design and Conservation Team) for this [CIRIA SUSdrain](#) award, and even more pleased that she won! The Council should be proud of its position as a leader in the implementation of Sustainable Drainage Systems.

## Sediment pollution from building sites

In our March 2020 report we requested support to impose and enforce planning conditions which would prevent sediment runoff from construction sites. Following discussions with Planning and Drainage, we understand that the following is (has been?) in use, with the footnote as a new addition:

Condition:- The development should not begin until a temporary drainage strategy outlining the drainage arrangements for different construction phases of the project has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter only proceed in strict accordance with the approved temporary drainage strategy.

Reason: To ensure an appropriate drainage strategy for the construction phases of the approved development, and the prevention of surface water and sediment run-off into adjacent watercourses, in line with EN7: Flood Risk and EN8: Environmental Protection of the adopted Core Strategy.

Footnote:- Construction and maintenance activities in or near water have the potential to cause serious pollution or impact on the bed and banks of surface waters and on the quality and quantity of the water. Surface waters include rivers, streams/burns, dry ditches, lakes/lochs, loughs, reservoirs, ponds, canals, estuaries and coastal waters. It is advised that the applicant seeks specialist advice on how to manage the risk of pollution and comply with the law when planning construction, maintenance or other works in, near or over surface waters. This may include but is not restricted to managing silt, concrete and cement, oils and chemicals, maintaining structures over watercourses, waste management and responding to pollution incidents. Causing pollution of a watercourse may result in committing a criminal offence.

This is not as strong a condition as used by other authorities including Leeds and Calderdale, and there does appear to be a reluctance to take enforcement action when pollution does occur.

## Awareness raising

We continue to push the Bradford Beck (good and bad!) in the conventional media and on social media. There have been:

- Articles in the T&A
  - 10<sup>th</sup> Mar 2020, about this meeting last year
  - 24<sup>th</sup> Mar, 11<sup>th</sup> May, about PollutionWatch project
  - 23<sup>rd</sup> Jun, about electrofishing the Beck
  - 25<sup>th</sup> Mar 2021, about the Bradford Beck deculverting
  - 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> May about litter picks and guided walks
  - 18<sup>th</sup> June and 25<sup>th</sup> July, Saira Ali wins award
  - 23<sup>rd</sup> June, phase 1 renaturalisation completed (also in *Guardian* and *Yorkshire Post*)
  - 14<sup>th</sup> July, electrofishing results from the Beck

We have held 4 litter picks in 2021 and given 2 online talks to local groups.

We made 2 videos for the online Bradford Science Festival in October 2020 (on flooding and on pollution); both had lots of views and we have been asked to contribute again this year.

FOBB has over 800 followers on [Facebook](#) (do join them!).

## New and continuing issues

### Eastbrook

There has been a blockage (waste concrete?) in the Eastbrook culvert for many years, causing upstream flooding. We first brought this to the attention of the Drainage Dept in Feb 2017. It has still not been resolved.

### Pollution hazard from unknown culverts

Virtually all the becks and small streams in the city were culverted during the building of Bradford over the last 200 years. Many of these culverts are unmapped. This creates a pollution hazard as illustrated by the recent fire at a go-kart track in Bowling which polluted the beck via an unknown culvert under the site. There is also a flood risk because they are never inspected or maintained. It is time that resources were allocated to mapping these culverts!

## The coming year

We hope to acquire some water quality monitors which we can use to detect pollution events in the culverted becks. This is through a research project involving University of Newcastle, YW and others in the UK, and a group in Taiwan.

Our other plans for the coming year are to:

- Report pollution whenever we find it
- Engage with planning the deculverting along Valley Rd
- Install more information boards
- Install 'Name that stream' signs
- And other good works!

## Support in the coming year

We ask for continued support in our campaign to improve Bradford's Becks for both the city's and the environment's benefit. We appreciate the continued engagement with the Drainage and Landscape teams.

Our request is that Environmental Health act on domestic misconnections that are referred to them by Yorkshire Water and that we are invited to an annual review with them, which can then be reported in this annual report.

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