

Report of the Strategic Director of Place to the meeting of Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 18th October 2022.

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 28th September 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 September 2021.

Strategic Director:

Jason Longhurst
Strategic Director of Place

Report Contact:

Edward Norfolk
Principal Drainage Engineer
Phone: (01274) 433905
E-mail: edward.norfolk@bradford.gov.uk

Portfolio:

Regeneration, Planning & Transport

Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Regeneration and Environment.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:

The public sector equality duty in s149 of the Equalities Act applies to the Council in the exercise of its functions. Those functions will include most, if not all, of the proposals and other measures referred to in this report. The duty is to “have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under [the 2010 Act], (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share it.”. In summary, this includes the need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons that are connected to that relevant protected characteristic and taking steps to meet the needs of persons who do not share it and encouraging persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to take account of disabled person’s disabilities and makes it clear that compliance with the duties ‘may involve treating some persons more favourably than others’. It is evidence that all of the schemes and proposals referred to in this report have the potential to impact on persons who share one of more of the relevant protected characteristics.

1. SUMMARY

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 28th September 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 September 2021.

2. BACKGROUND

Since the Committee meeting of September 2021 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.

The Friends of Bradford Becks have provided an update to their work streams over the last year and their report is included as Appendix 1.

The Environment Agency has been approached on pollution incidents that have been reported within the Bradford Beck catchment over the last year. This data is included as Appendix 2.

3. REPORT ISSUES

Throughout the course of the year there have been work streams and developments involving FOBB and Council department in relation to Bradford Beck. An update on existing and emerging projects and initiatives are discussed throughout this section.

Sustainable Drainage Systems

Retrofitting sustainable drainage systems into our urban landscapes is now seen as a priority and is the strategy used on redevelopment projects in the Bradford Beck catchment. One scheme currently being constructed is the Top of Town public realm improvements that includes high quality upgrades to the conservation area in the form of highway improvements and sustainable landscaping works at North Parade, Rawson Square, and Northgate. A network of rain gardens is being implemented and these are areas of planting designed to temporarily soak up rain water to reduce pressure on storm water drains, help tackle climate change and reduce flood risk. The scheme will create a safe, healthy, attractive and community friendly environment with high quality public spaces which supports and new and existing businesses. The Council will promote these sustainable drainage solutions in all future city centre regeneration schemes as they provide multi benefits.

By reducing surface water runoff into local sewerage networks, schemes will help reduce the discharge from Yorkshire Waters Combined Sewer Overflows that connect to the Beck improving the water quality of natural environment. Preliminary discussions have begun between the Council and Yorkshire Water at identifying areas where the implementation of nature based drainage solutions will reduce flood risk, improve urban water body quality and reduce combined sewer overflow discharges.

Bradford Beck River Restoration Project Phase 1

CBMDC, The Environment Agency, The Friends of Bradford Beck and the Wild Trout Trust worked in partnership to deliver a 3 year £90,000 EA funded scheme to re-naturalise the northern length of Bradford Beck. The project included measures to improve fish passage, facilitate public access and deliver habitat creation measures on a length of beck between Briggate B6149 and the River Aire. The project is now complete and the all outputs have been delivered. The scheme has delivered valuable improvements to support the Naturalising Bradford Beck scheme.

Naturalising Bradford Beck Scheme

CBMDC secured £3.25m of funds from the Wet Yorkshire Transport Fund and the European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF) to 'daylight' a length of Bradford Beck between Poplar Road and Briggate. In March 2021 WSP were appointed to work in partnership with the Council to design and deliver the project. Following the testing of various options, a preferred outline design was developed. This allowed hydrological modelling to be completed which indicated the scheme would deliver the flood mitigation outputs required by ESIF. This was to reduce the incidence of flooding on the A6037 Valley Road from 20% in any one year to less than 2%.

Following this modelling and cost estimating work the design was taken forward to the planning stage ahead of the detailed design being developed. As such a full application was submitted for planning at the end of August. We anticipate the major application will be determined in around 12 weeks.

In August this year BAM Nuttall were appointed to provide early contractor involvement on the scheme. This has allowed their experience on the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme to be used to ensure proposals are deliverable on the current budget and programme. CBMDC, WSP and Bam Nuttall will now work collaboratively with stakeholders to develop the detailed design whilst the planning process progresses. Depending on the outcome of the planning process we hope to be on site in December with completion in June next year.

Pitty Beck Environmental Improvements

CBMDC is working in partnership with JUMP to deliver a range of environmental improvements across the district to promote physical activity in the 5-11 age group. The lottery funded project is one of 12 local delivery pilots currently being implemented across the country. The Pitty Beck scheme has a value of £100k and involved developing a network of paths and supporting infrastructure aimed at encouraging young people to take part in active outdoor recreation. In addition to crushed stone paths and a footbridge a number of seats, a picnic area, signage and habitat creation was implemented. The phase 1 scheme was completed last year with the installation of a new footbridge. We are currently in the early stages of a second phase to install informal play facilities on the site.

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, risk of environmental pollution incidents and impacts on the amenity quality of an area.

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. Land Drainage investigations have led to the removal of abandoned vehicles in Bull Greaves Beck, a tributary to Bradford Beck, helping to reduce flood risk, improve amenity and prevent pollution to the watercourse.

LIFE Critical

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 Beck Hydraulic Modelling

Bradford Beck is a heavily culverted, non-main river, watercourse and given the urban nature of the watercourse, it is important to know the current and future flood risk that the Beck poses. Managing flood risk in the catchment is a key tool in reducing pollution incidents but also to manage biodiversity and ecology within a watercourse that is heavily modified from its natural course.

The Council have recently commissioned a specialist consultant to create a new build computer model of Bradford Beck and its tributaries. The completed model will be ready early next year and will provide computer generated flood outlines and depths in the Bradford Beck Catchment. The model will be used as the evidence base for the emerging Level 1 and Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment updates for this catchment and the Council will also use the new model for evaluating flood risk management options in future capital works schemes. As part of the project the Council will be undertaking a full structural and geometric survey of the culverted sections Bradford Beck. This will be achieved by using remote laser scanning technology that will provide a full three dimensional computer model

of the culvert structure allowing this data to be used for a multitude of projects. This 3D model can be incorporated into the Virtual Bradford 3D city model helping visualise flood risk scenarios and engage with elected members and the public.

Respecting our Rivers Motion

Members of Bradford Council earlier in the year approved a motion “Respecting Our Rivers”,. The report for the motion noted every river in England is now polluted beyond legal limits and The Environment Agency rated only 14% of rivers as ‘Good ’in 2019. This pollution is mostly caused by sewage discharges from water companies, the run-offs of nutrients from farms and persistent organic chemicals. 36% of English rivers have been damaged by water companies. that had released untreated human waste directly into our waterways over 400,000 times for a total of 3 million hours in 2020 alone.

Government funding to the Environment Agency to monitor river quality, and regulate farms and water companies has dropped 75% since 2010/11 and in 2020 just 3.6% of pollution complaints made to the Agency resulted in penalties.

In addition, tyre particles, metals from brake pads, and hydrocarbons from vehicle emissions wash off road surfaces and into rivers introducing potentially carcinogenic material into the water supply.

The Council commended the work of the Aire Rivers Trust, the Friends of Bradford Becks, partners and the many volunteers who are working hard to meet the Good Water framework Directive status or Good Ecological Potential for all of the Aire Water bodies by 2027.

Within the motion the Council report stated that, the UK Government should commit to:

- Restoring Environment Agency budgets to deliver the necessary oversight.
- Increasing inspection regularity of water companies and farms, taking rigorous enforcement action against offenders.
- Ring-fencing fines for water pollution events to be spent on river quality improvements. Funding local and highways authorities to introduce systems to prevent road pollutants from entering our water courses. Council resolves to request the Chief Executive write to:
 - The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs calling for the Government to make these commitments and to revise down the consents that allow sewerage discharge into our rivers.
 - The Chairperson of the Parliamentary Environmental Audit Committee to advocate for greater enforcement of existing regulatory powers.
 - The Chief Executive of Yorkshire Water calling for urgent action to address the impact of waste-water discharges on our local rivers.
 - The Regional Director of the National Farmers ’Union requesting clarification on the action being taken locally by farmers to prevent nutrient run-off.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

None

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

None

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

None

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

None

7.2 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

None

7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None

7.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

None

7.5 TRADE UNION

None

7.6 WARD IMPLICATIONS

None

**7.7 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS
(for reports to Area Committees only)**

Not applicable

7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

None

7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

None

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None

9. OPTIONS

None

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree that:

1. The Friends of Bradford's Becks and the Strategic Director, Place be requested to work jointly on studies and proposals.
2. The Friends of Bradford's Becks be invited to report back in a year's time.
3. This report be noted and that the ongoing collaboration between officers and the Friends of Bradford's Becks be supported.
4. The Committee express Bradford Council's support and appreciation to Friends of Bradford's Becks for the work to tackle pollution, promote community engagement and restore and improve the beck and its catchment.

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Friends of Bradford Becks summary of activities 2022.

Appendix 2 – Environment Agency's reported pollution incidents 2022.

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Bradford's Becks – a New Lease of Life

Available online from:

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