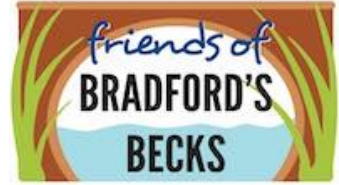


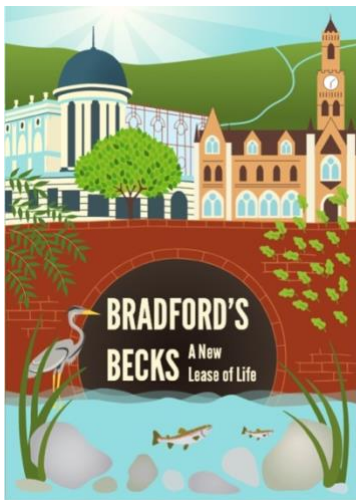
Friends of Bradford's Becks summary of activities 2021-22



Friends of Bradford's Becks report to Regeneration and Environment O&S Committee, October 2022

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 plan¹ 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 12 months to Sept 2022.

Good news stories from 2021-22

Respecting our Rivers

We were gratified that the Council passed a resolution entitled 'Respecting our Rivers' which called, among other things, for:

- Environment Agency funding for pollution investigations be restored
- FOBB to be thanked for their work on behalf of the rivers of Bradford
- The Chief Executive to produce a report detailing the action the Council is taking to enforce the rules for water protection on the land it owns

We had a nice letter from Kirsten England and continue to have good working relations with Council officers.

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

Bull Greave Beck

A combined team from Aire Rivers Trust, FOBB and Bradford Council undertook 4 days of clean-up around Bull Greave Beck, a delightful but neglected green valley between Clayton and Scholemoor Cemetery. 300+ bags of rubbish and 100+ tyres were taken out. Council staff have arranged barriers to prevent unauthorised access by quad bikes, car thieves and flytippers, and have even managed to remove the rusting car hulk from the beck.



1 Top: the car (now removed) in Bull Greave Beck. Bottom: Some of the team with their spoils. Right: Fly-tipping at Hunters Park Ave

One of the worst flytipping spots is on Hunters Park Ave, on a piece of land owned by Yorkshire Water (see photo). Can they be persuaded to put up an anti-tipping fence? Could a letter be written to their Chief Executive?

Eastbrook – blockage and pollution

The blockage which was causing flooding around Gibson St has finally been removed – well done to the Drainage Dept, especially Wasim Siddique for organising this.

We reported last year that the Premier Inn was sending sewage directly into Eastbrook; this fault in the drainage dates back until the conversion of the building to a hotel and possibly back to the initial construction. We understand that they have finally agreed to correct the sewer alignment and connect to the foul sewer. This example shows how important it is to have a final building-inspector check on the sewer connections from all new developments and major changes of use.

Yorkshire Water £1.6M fine for pollution

In July 2022, Yorkshire Water were fined £1.6M (after reductions for pleading guilty) for a 22-month series of pollution incidents and permit breaches. This culminated in a sever discharge of sewage into Eastbrook and thence to Bradford Beck which killed all fish and most invertebrates. FOBB reported the pollution in August 2018. YW were found to have been reckless, and to have not reported the problems to the Environment Agency during the 22 months when pumps were not working.

This may not sound like a good news story, but it has had the benefits showing that FOBB's watching, reporting and pestering can have results; giving YW a serious kick; and starting a higher level dialogue between YW and FOBB.



2 Bradford Beck upstream (Tumbling Hill St) and downstream (Ambler Mill) of the sewage release into Eastbrook, Aug 2018

Natural Flood Management projects

As part of their Climate and Environment Plan, WYCA are minded to make contributions of £30k, £102k and £78k towards work on three projects in the Bradford area – at Chellow Dene, Pitty Beck and on Red Beck/Northcliffe Dyke. They are agreed in principle and are essentially natural flood management projects that also offer substantial other water quality and environmental benefits. The Aire Rivers Trust is currently writing Business Cases to allow the money to be drawn down as soon as they receive formal approval and Friends of Bradford's Becks will be involved in the final design and delivery of the projects.

New and on-going issues

Should Bradford Beck be main river?

There is a growing problem with flooding in Bradford. In February 2020, houses were inundated for the first time in living memory in the Fairweather Green area. Problems will only increase with climate change and the continuing impermeabilization within the city.

The Environment Agency (EA) designates all watercourses as either "main river" or an "ordinary watercourse". Main rivers are the responsibility of the EA and ordinary watercourses are the responsibility of the local council. As well as the obvious rivers (Aire and Wharfe), many smaller becks with Bradford are main river such as Backstone Beck (Ikley), Silsden Beck, River Worth and North Beck (Keighley) and Nab Wood Beck. But not Bradford Beck, despite the size of the city and the flood risks!

Our analysis shows that Bradford is probably the only city in England with a river where the local council is responsible for managing flood risk. We understand the Council receives no significant funding for this. Isn't it time to make a case to the EA to make Bradford Beck main river?

One of our members raised this issue with the Chief Executive. He received a reply on behalf of Jason Longhurst to say that it would be considered after the summer and taken to a committee – what is the timetable for this?

City of Culture

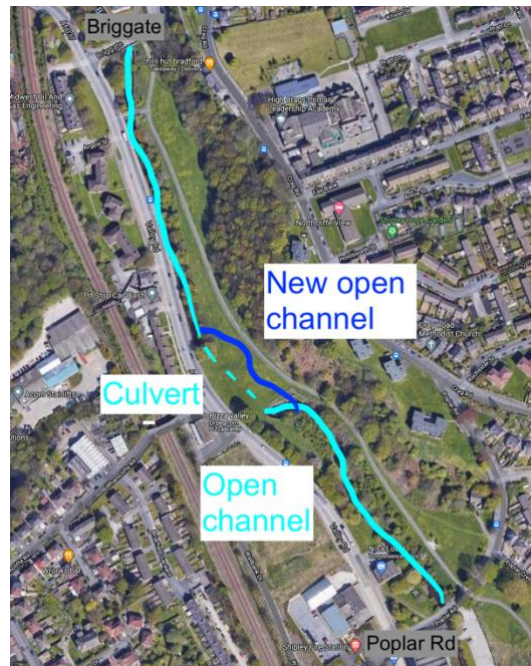
Bradford Beck is a big part of the 'origin story' of Bradford so there must be a role for a celebration of the Beck in the City of Culture activities in 2025. But what? Suggestions welcome!

Valley Rd deculverting

This is the project to deculvert and renaturalise a short reach on the Beck alongside Valley Rd. This is jointly funded by ESIF (EU funds) and the Council to the tune of £3.25M. As well as daylighting the beck, there will be footpath and landscape enhancements. There will be no impact on the cycleway.

Design seems to have taken a very long time and is still not complete. A planning application was recently submitted has since been withdrawn. We are concerned that the scheme will start so late that it will miss the funder's deadline for completion, and the Committee might like to seek reassurance from Officers.

Planned deculverting (the new location may change from this 2021 sketch). Map/image from Google



PollutionWatch22



3 Pollution from a surface water drain on Bolton Beck (photo Joy Crampton)

Our volunteers went out hunting for pollution sources from June-August 2022 in a collaborative project with Yorkshire Water (YW); this follows on from the longer survey in 2021. They recorded water conditions on 302 occasions, found pollution 102 times of which 25 were serious enough to report to the Environment Agency and/or YW. Polluting outfalls were found on: Red Beck, Bolton Beck (multiple locations), Pinch Beck, Barnsley Beck and Middlebrook.

All of these are being investigated initially for misconnections by YW and then reported to the Environment Agency, Bradford Council or householder as appropriate. We have a good working relationship with YW over such pollution and this system of burst of volunteer monitoring gives them plenty of work to do.

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 (see for example the Premier Inn case above). Bradford Beck and its tributaries will not become an asset to the city until more systematic investigations are undertaken.

Signage and information boards

With the help of the Council Signs workshop, an information board has been installed on the Beck on Valley Rd, and naming signs put on eight bridges; FOBB has paid with funds from the Coop.

Pollution hazard from unknown culverts

Last year we noted the absence of mapping of the many becks and small streams that were culverted during the building of Bradford over the last 200 years. These are pollution hazards, for example from chemical spills and fire-fighting water. There is also a flood risk because they are never inspected or maintained.

Awareness raising

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

Sandy Toksvig had a segment about the culverted beck and FOBB in her show at St George's Hall on May 12th.

The 'Mucky Beck' is the title of a chapter in a new book about rivers by Amy-Jane Beer, 'The Flow'. She will be talking at the Ilkley Literature Festival on October 9th.

Articles in the T&A

- 8th Oct 2021, Premier Inn pollution
- 16th April 2022, Bull Greave Beck cleanup
- 23rd April 2022, Bull Greave Beck cleanup
- 4th May 2022, PollutionWatch22
- 8th May 2022, Bull Greave Beck cleanup
- 18th July 2022, Yorkshire Water fine

We held 2 litter picks in addition to the Bull Greave Beck days.

We ran two stalls in Community Centres for Bradford Science Festival in October 2021, a stall at Scholemoor Beacon, and 4 school events.

FOBB has over 900 followers on [Facebook](#) (do join them!).

The coming year

We will continue to campaign to make the Beck and its tributaries assets to Bradford and the environment. We will:

- hunt out pollution and work as closely as possible with Yorkshire Water, Bradford Council and the Environment Agency to stop it.
- seek opportunities re-naturalise and improve access to the beck, especially engaging with the proposed de-culverting along Valley Rd.
- campaign to make the Beck main river.
- look for ways to include the Beck in the City of Culture.

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.

We have three specific requests:

1. Write to Yorkshire Water and encourage them to fence off their land on Bull Greave Beck to reduce fly-tipping.
2. Support our campaign to make the Beck main river.
3. Back our efforts to include the Beck in the City of Culture.

Barney Lerner
Chair, Friends of Bradford's Becks
BradfordsBecks@gmail.com