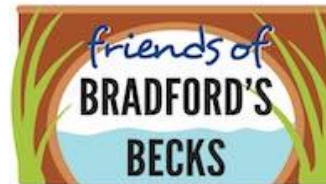


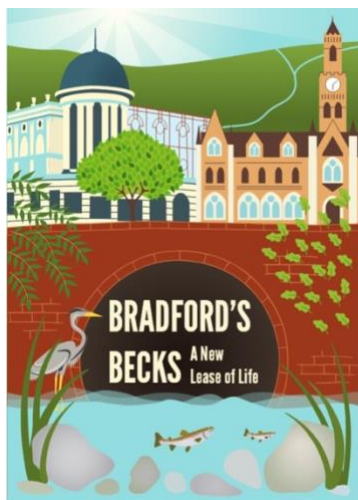
Friends of Bradford's Becks summary of activities 2022-23



Friends of Bradford's Becks report to Regeneration and Environment O&S Committee, November 2023

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 13 months to October 2023.

More about us at www.bradford-beck.org and Facebook @BradfordsBecks

Good news stories from 2022-23

Beck Festival 2023

We put on a Festival near the Beck by Valley Rd (Shipley) in August. Despite clashing with the Women's World Cup final, we had over 300 visitors to discover and celebrate with music and stories, making art and models, and learning about Bradford Beck and FOBB. The feedback was very positive. The Festival is summarised in a 3-minute video on our YouTube channel (search @BradfordsBecks). Thanks to Bradford Culture & Heritage for the grant.



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

Trout in the Town



FOBB has been awarded Silver Chapter status by the Wild Trout Trust's Trout in the Town initiative. This reflects our work with the Environment Agency and Bradford Council to improve the river for migratory fish and other wildlife.

<https://www.wildtrout.org/content/trout-town>

Bradford Beck film

We commissioned a film describing the state of Bradford Beck and the work of FOBB. It was premiered at the Festival and has now been viewed over 1500 times to entirely positive comments, including from some of your fellow Councillors! Make a cuppa, as its 13 minutes long, and take a look; it's on our YouTube channel. Thanks to Bradford Culture & Heritage for the grant.

Donation to FOBB

As a result of our reporting of their pollution of Pitty Beck (see photo) from 2016-18, Keepmoat Homes and Applebridge Construction signed an Enforcement Undertaking with the Environment Agency to behave better. It included donations totalling £135K to FOBB. Most of the money has been used to create a Water Quality Office post in the Aire Rivers Trust. This will enable us to be more effective in tracing pollution problems.



Japanese Knotweed

FOBB volunteers have been working with Aire Rivers Trust over the past few years to treat Japanese Knotweed along the becks. The worst area is a dense thicket of



on Bradford Council owned land around Bull Greave Beck. Here it is spreading to neighbouring land and into the watercourse and so further downstream. I'm pleased to say that, as a result of our reporting, a contract has been issued for treatment to start in the spring.

Awareness raising

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

There have been at least 10 articles about the Becks/Festival/FOBB in the T&A in the period.

We held 4 litter picks, including a new location on Haigh Beck (Thorpe Edge).

We have given 6 talks to local groups and have more arranged up to next summer.

The Bradford Beck film (see above) continues to attract new viewers.

New and on-going issues



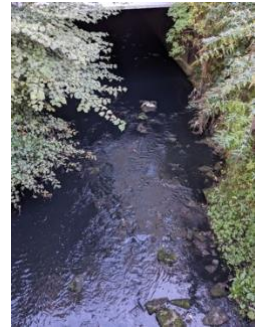
Valley Rd deculverting

This is the project to daylight and renaturalise a short reach on the Beck alongside Valley Rd. Last year we reported that there were delays in completing the design. We were very sad to be told that the entire project has been put on hold because costs had exceeded the budget. This was to be a major new chapter in the history of the Beck and a commitment to enhancing 'blue-green' spaces in the city in time for the City of Culture. We are told there is still a desire to proceed but we are not optimistic.

To help out, we have asked friends in the business to review the current designs to see if significant cost reductions are possible.

Pollution continues

Despite our pollution spotting and reporting over the last eleven years, serious pollution still occurs. The photo shows black septic water in the Beck on 17th Oct 2023, graded as a category 2 incident by the Environment Agency. It is similar to the sewage pollution that wiped out the beck in 2018 for which Yorkshire Water was fined £1.6M. We believe that illegal effluent disposal, misconnections and faulty sewer overflows in the extensive culverts in the city are significant. Bradford Beck and its tributaries will not become an asset to the city until more systematic investigations are undertaken.



In 2021 we reported pollution of Eastbrook to you. This pollution is still happening more than 2 years later. It happens because Broadacre House, originally the headquarters of Yorkshire Water, is misconnected directly to Eastbrook instead of the sewer. The main part of Broadacre House was converted into a Premier Inn, and the annex into flats. Premier Inn is keen to correct the drainage but the developer and freeholder of the block of flats (LIV3 West Street LTD, sole Director Kissun Parmar) is not cooperating. This is scandalous and we would appreciate any pressure that can be brought to bear.

We are developing a 3-year strategy to find and report the sources of pollution in the culverted system. It will require a partnership between the Environment Agency, Bradford Council, Yorkshire Water and us. We would appreciate an agreement to work together from the Director of Place and the Drainage Section including, for example, sharing mapping and surveys, assisting with access for monitoring water quality, and follow-up on any sources that fall within the Council's remit for enforcement.

Should Bradford Beck be main river?

Whether the Beck is enmained is a question of the capital and maintenance resources for flood protection available to Bradford Council versus the Environment Agency. Areas on the Beck (Middlebrook estate, around Shipley station) are already being flooded. Many of the culverts are probably beyond their design life and under capacity. For example, the culvert alongside Valley Rd Shipley was condemned some years ago, and some of the very old culverts alongside Thornton Rd are probably at risk of collapse. Matters are only going to get worse as climate change brings more extreme weather; government guidance is to design for at least 23% increase in peak flow in the 2080s compared to the 2000.

The questions we would ask are:

- Does Bradford Beck meet the criteria for enmaining? *We believe it does. Bradford is the **only** sizeable urban area in England where the central waterway is not main river.*
- Why was it not enmained in the early 2000s when the criteria were drawn up and many other waterways were?
- How much budget is allocated to capital repairs and maintenance by Bradford and how does this compare with the Environment Agency's average spend on open and culverted main rivers?
- Has the Environment Agency been consulted about possible enmaining?

Plans for wetlands

Last year we reported that WYCA would make contributions to the Aire Rivers Trust towards work on three wetland projects in the Bradford area – at Chellow Dene, Pitty Beck and on Red Beck/Northcliffe Dyke.

These got bogged down in planning and budget issues, but planning permission was granted for the Chellow Dene work in early November.

We have been exploring the possibility of creating a wetland and fish pass at the large weir on Middlebrook. Yorkshire Water have generously assisted with this work and funded a feasibility study. The next step is to engage with the landowner of the Woolcombers Mill in Fairweather Green. Could the Director of Place help?



Damage to plaque trail



The route of the culverted beck in the city centre is marked with a trail of 15 pavement plaques. Plaque 4 in Millergate has been destroyed by persons unknown (a crane foot?). It will cost about £1500 to replace.

Plaque 1 will finally be installed in Thornton Rd by Bradford Live in the spring; it has been held in storage so that it doesn't get damaged during the building works.

More on the trail at <https://markingbradfordbeck.org/>

Beck Festival 2024

We are planning a festival for 2024. We hope to have an event which is centred on the tributaries and involves community centres and groups across Bradford.

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.
- create a festival to celebrate the tributary becks, and plan for an event in 2025.

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 one specific request:

A formal agreement to work together to develop and enact a strategy to find pollution sources in the culverts.

Barney Lerner
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