

rCllr Chris Turley H&RPC – Full Council Report

Agenda Item 2: Apologies as I am attending a T&WC ExOrd meeting

Agenda Item 13: Cabinet meeting of Thursday 14th February Agenda items:

- 2018/19 Financial Management Report
- Service & Financial Planning 2019/20 – 2021/22
- CSE Inquiry Update
- Superfast Telford Broadband Programme
- School Admission Arrangements 2020

Agenda Item 16: Cllr J Creed to update meeting and his reports attached below if not present.

Agenda Item Parish Matters: Nothing above the norm to report.

Randlay Brook meeting 5th February 2019

Summary for Facebook Page

This year we have set ourselves the major task of sorting out the Randlay Brook that runs through the valley. Today we met with Mark Latham (Telford and Wrekin Council Ecologist), Katie Piercy (Shropshire Wildlife Trust) and John Bellis (local flood risk manager/drainage team) to discuss some of the task ahead. Well the first thing we found out is that opening up the brook to improve drainage may not actually be the best thing we could do for the valley as a whole. In fact it could actually be detrimental to some of the wetland habitats we have.

Although we didn't follow the entire course of the brook, we followed the first two sections of it, where it starts to the picnic bench just after the Hollinswood underpass and then through the wetland area to the next picnic table. Our view of the project has now somewhat changed, but we have a number of mini projects we can do in these two areas that will benefit the valley.

We also believe we now know the origin of the path we cleared last year, designated as Bridleway 1. This goes from the picnic bench below the valley car park and comes out at Stafford Park Way (the footpath from Randlay to Stafford Park). Having seen the drainage maps showing us the drainage pipes running beneath the valley, we now believe that Bridleway 1 was simply the route dug out to put the pipes in.

Further Details of Meeting

John Bellis said he would make enquiries about cleaning out the culverts on the school side of Queen Elizabeth Avenue and the valley side. He pointed out it was a known issue and attempts to clear

blockages had been attempted in the past, with minimal success. Nevertheless, enquiries would be made and he would keep us informed.

Pollution in run off from the roads was identified as an issue in the brook. We saw signs in Sections 1 and 2, but nothing further on, although we did very little exploration further on due to time constraints. Section 1 shows patches of pollution and has a series of blockages that could be helping prevent it's spread. Section 2 is designated as a wetland and could be filtering out more of the pollution, although this section seems to just feed into the main sewer system, leading ultimately to Homer Lake.

Opening up the brook could lead to the increased spread of this pollution through the valley. A suggestion was made to install a series of retention pools on Section 1 with purposely installed blockages to further reduce the spread of the contaminants. Planting in, or around, these pools of specific plant species could further aid the reduction in pollution reaching further parts of the valley. This could be a task the volunteers could do.

Culverts leading under the path from Section 1 to 2 are blocked with silt and vegetation. It would be beneficial to open these up, to an extent, and remove some of the vegetation. Poor likelihood of TWC or Severn Trent carrying this out, due to low priority and cost. Was pointed out a professional team might open up a larger area than really necessary and potentially cause harm to the wetland side. This could be a task the volunteers could do quicker, easier and with better results for the valley.

Section 2 is designated as a remnant of ancient woodland as well as wetland. Poor water flow through this area will have begun the change from woodland to wetland, partly due to poor maintenance of the drains and culverts, but also due to lack of management of the site as a whole. This wetland is now home to many wetland species of both flora and fauna. Most of the older trees seem to have fallen now. This is likely to be due to the excessive levels of water here, destabilising the ground and causing direct damage to the trees.

Opening up the brook through this section would help to stabilise the ground and prevent further tree fall, but it was pointed out that there weren't any really old trees left here now. Any remnants of ancient wood in this part may no longer exist, although there could well be examples further up the slope from here and are certainly other patches still remaining in other parts of the valley. The opinion was there would be very little benefit in opening up this section and there could be hugely detrimental effects to the wetland by doing so.

At the end of Section 2 was a grilled drain feeding directly into the drain system running beneath the valley. This seems to be where all the water goes, so the question was asked, where does the water in the next section come from? This drain was heavily blocked with branches and the surrounding area was heavily silted. It was suggested by John that the branches over the grill could be removed, but not to remove all the silt, as this could drain too much water away from the wetland. This is a task the volunteers could do.

On the other side of the footpath from this drain, near the picnic bench, John found a buried manhole cover. This tied in with his map. Approximately 10m away we found the continuation of the brook. Fairly

dry and not in a well defined channel. There was a section of wall with a pipe opening into it, but this appeared dry. Again we wondered where the water was coming from for this part of the brook?

As the next section was very overgrown and impassable, we moved further along and found the point where it takes a right angle turn (heading East). This was some 20m from the SE corner of the valley car park. Here the water ran clearer and we saw no visible signs of pollution. The channel had a very shallow incline, with the water showing little movement. As things seemed to be running quite smoothly, it was suggested we would be better to leave alone.

Further investigation is required of the rest of the brook. John expressed a desire for a second visit to explore at a future date. Hopefully Katie and Mark would like to join us again?

Following Meeting

Need to research retention pools and associated vegetation.

Message The Friends of Dothill Local Nature Reserve. (DONE)

Revisit section 1 of The Brook and look for sites for retention pool/s.

Get water testing kits and monitor the quality of water at the sites chosen for the retention pool/s. Do this weekly until work is carried out, then keep monitoring to see if any improvement.

Add pools and natural blockages to section1.

Plant the pools with suitable vegetation and continue to monitor water quality to see if any improvement.

Remove vegetation from second culvert and clean out.

Open up channel in third culvert and monitor. Keep reopening channel.

Remove debris from grill over drain.

The Brook

Introduction

For the purposes of The Friends of Hollinswood and Randlay Valley we are only interested in the section of the brook that lies within the valley. Approximately 0.75km to 1km in length. This brook has become

blocked, overgrown and covered with fallen trees.

History

Drainage - TWC -Severn Trent? Or natural channel connected to drains?

The valley has an extensive series of sewers running beneath it. Some parts of the brook are clearly man made, culverts, drains, pipes. At one point the brook flows straight into the sewer. Although I don't know for certain I am beginning to believe the brook is a mix of both man made and natural. The first two sections may have been originally man made, but with time, and a lack of maintenance, their flow has altered. This has given rise to more natural channels and the wetlands we now see. Most of the feed for the start of the brook would appear to be runoff from the roads and a feed coming under the road from the school. All the sewers are the responsibility of Severn Trent Water.

Section 3 and 4 I suspect are natural remnants of a brook, although they do have pipes feeding into them now. Although where the pipes originate is anybody's guess.

Route

Exists in four rough sections. Each section split from the next by a footpath.

Starting upstream, the first section goes from the Queen Elizabeth Avenue to the path from Hollinswood underpass (near picnic bench).

The second section goes roughly from the picnic bench, near the Hollinswood underpass, to the picnic bench near the start of bridleway 1.

The third section heads from near the picnic bench, near the start of Bridleway 1, towards the Queen Elizabeth Avenue. It reaches a point roughly 20m East from the SE corner of the car park, where it turns East, heading roughly alongside Bridleway 1, and is joined by a channel that goes through the woods, parallel to the car park, heading towards the Queen Elizabeth Avenue. It continues on to the major footpath known as Stafford Park Way.

The fourth section roughly goes alongside Bridleway 2, turning towards the A442 about halfway along its length. John Bellis (TWC local flood risk manager?drainage team) has confirmed it goes through a culvert under the A442 and off into The Nedge.

Proposal

To clear out the brook and remove obstructions, i.e. fallen trees, to improve the drainage in the valley.

Impact

Section 1

Through section 1 there is a well defined channel. Heavily silted in places, stagnant, contaminated by road runoff and covered with vegetation and fallen trees. I suspect opening it up would improve drainage from the school playing field (as long as some clearance and silt removal is done on the school side). Although damp this section isn't waterlogged, with little sign of wetland vegetation. Opening this up could be possible using volunteers and I believe would have an overall positive impact.

Following a meeting on Tuesday 5th February 2019, with Mark Latham (Telford and Wrekin Council Ecologist), Katie Piercy (Shropshire Wildlife Trust) and John Bellis (local flood risk manager/drainage team), I propose a change to my original way of thinking. Opening up this section would probably not be of benefit to the valley. Increasing and improving the flow of water will take any pollutants further into the valley, where they could adversely affect wildlife. Retaining the water here for longer periods, possibly using pools, would help filter out the pollutants and create new habitat.

Section 2

This area is heavily silted, with a poorly defined channel. In most places no channel exists at all and the surrounding ground is very waterlogged. I would define this area as wetland. This is not a recent development, having been like this for at least a decade. The vegetation in this area is suited to the conditions. I did note there were a lot of large trees here, some of which have become uprooted. I suspect due to the excessive water logging. Opening up a channel through here could affect the flora and fauna adversely, but may help to stabilise the remaining trees. The water here is also polluted with road runoff, so improving drainage may help reduce this. More information is needed regarding the impact of improved drainage and the affect on flora and fauna. My opinion at this stage is to clear out the culverts where the brook enters and leaves the section, a task the volunteers may be able to do. I believe this will improve throughflow, but not necessarily impact the area in a negative way. Please bear in mind that by opening up section 1 and the area in the school field we should see an increased volume of water passing through. The culvert where it leaves this section is quite large and sounded as though it fed into a sewer/storm drain system.

Following the meeting on the 5th Feb I have again changed my thinking. As already mentioned, improving the flow will increase the spread of pollutants. Clearing out the culverts fully will adversely affect the wetlands. Most of the larger trees have already come down, so trying to protect the remaining ones may cause more harm to the wetlands than good. The fallen trees have now become part of the wetland habitat. Advice is to do as little as possible in this section.

Section 3

The beginning of the channel here is totally hidden and largely inaccessible. Not entirely sure all the water from section 2 is fed through to here. The first bit is largely flat, with a poorly defined channel. The area was so overgrown it was impossible to follow the brook. Many large trees had fallen, blocking passage. These would require a chainsaw to cut, so not within the capability of the volunteers. The passage of the brook was found about 200 yds further up and was in a very well defined channel. The channel was very overgrown and covered with fallen trees and branches. At a point further on it turns 90 degrees and roughly follows Bridleway 1. Although I haven't walked the entire length, it does appear to be a good channel, in need of clearance and silt removal. This is the longest section and although largely manageable by volunteers, would take many months of work. I believe opening up this section would improve footpath drainage, largely along Bridleway1, and would have minimal impact on flora and fauna.

Following the 5th Feb meeting it was again suggested to leave alone, as the water course is functioning nicely. A more detailed look at this section will be needed in the future.

Section 4: Not yet explored.

Recommendations

Section 1

Add a series of retention pools in Section 1. Each of varying size and depth to encourage different habitats to form. Plant suitable species to help filter out the pollutants and create varying aspects to the habitat. Remove some trees to allow more light to reach the pools, benefiting the wildlife. Clean out the culvert at the picnic table end and remove vegetation. DO NOT ask Severn Trent Water to do this, as they may cause damage to the existing habitats. This is a project for the volunteers.

Contact TWC about clearing out the culvert under Queen Elizabeth Avenue. (N.B. John Bellis has agreed to enquire about this for us and will update us on the outcome. May need to periodically chase up.)

Also obtain water testing kits and carry out regular tests. This will give evidence of pollution and show any improvements due to the project. (Katie Piercy has been contacted about obtaining the kits). This is a job for volunteers.

Section 2

Open up a channel in the silt at the culvert, channeling the water to the right where some flow can be seen. DO NOT remove all the silt, as this will not benefit the habitat. DO NOT ask Severn Trent Water to do this, as they will cause damage to the existing wetlands,(if we could even get them to do the job in the first place). This can be done by the volunteers.

To the side of the culvert is a section of wall with a pipe in it. As long as the bottom of the pipe is clear of any obstructions leave alone. This can be done by volunteers.

At the end of this section the brook flows into the sewer system. There is an open drain with a grill over the front to catch debris. The end is very badly silted. DO NOT remove the silt, as this is helping to restrict the flow of water away from the wetland. DO NOT ask Severn Trent Water to do this, as they will cause damage to the existing wetlands,(if we could even get them to do the job in the first place). Remove the debris from the grill, this is a job for volunteers.

Also carry out water quality tests at various points in this section, again as evidence of the improvements brought about by the project in Section 1.

Section 3

Only a short part at the beginning of this section has been viewed. At the meeting on 5th Feb, the consensus of opinion was to leave alone. A future visit will be made to see if this is still the case.

Section 4

No data available yet as no visit has been made.

Further Research

Retention Pools and associated vegetation. (Begun. Some notes have been made. Waiting to hear from Katie Piercy).

Arrange a meeting with Mark Latham, Katie Piercy and John Bellis to further explore section 3 and 4.

Contact Graham Statham. This was a suggested project back when he was with the volunteers. Could be useful to find out his thoughts and any data relevant that he may have.

Look up wetlands. What defines the habitat. Associated flora and fauna.