

What's Beane Happening?

The newsletter of The River Beane Restoration Association
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Welcome



It's that man again!

Martin Ketcher, Water Vole Conservation and Non-Native Invasive Species Officer for Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, featured in our last issue pointing out evidence that an otter had visited the Beane. Otters are great, but mink are not. Both will prey on water voles (Ratty from 'Wind in the Willows') but the poor little rodents have no defence against the mink. One mink, over

time, can wipe out an entire population of water voles. For this reason we have stepped up measures to ensure that any mink that do appear are quickly removed.

Here Martin is shown leading a training session for RBRA volunteers who will be surveying the entire length of the river so that a suitable site for the possible reintroduction of water voles can be decided upon. Surveying will start in the Spring and is likely to take two years to complete. Any release will happen after the reduction in abstraction in April 2018. If you are interested there is still time to join the group as there are plans to train future recruits on the job. Pub lunches (to compare notes...) are also on the agenda.

News from Affinity Water

Ellie Powers and Di Hammond from Affinity water came to our last meeting and gave us the welcome news that the pipeline from Sacombe to the hub at Whitehall is virtually complete apart from some pumps and treatment works. This means that the 90% reduction in abstraction is on schedule for April 2018. Less welcome news is that over the last six months we have had less than 50% of the average annual rainfall, so no wonder the river has been suffering.

Di also put some flesh on the bones of plans to improve the river. These included:

- A channel to bypass The Broadwater once it has been repaired and refilled
- Removing or bypassing weirs. (Silt builds up behind weirs and, of course, they slow down the passage of water, both not good ideas in chalk streams.)(see below)
- Bank side fencing to prevent destruction of the bank by cattle (see opposite)
- Re-meandering the river where it was straightened many years ago.

One of the main overall objectives is to allow fish to move up and down the river without encountering artificial barriers.

In this Issue

- More news about Martin
- An update from Affinity Water
- Threat to the Beane valley
- 2017 calendar sales
- A new walk
- Date of the next meeting



Two beautiful supermodel water voles that appeared on the 2016 BBC Countryfile Calendar.



Cattle damage on the Frogmore Hall Estate, causing erosion, silting and the destruction of the burrows of bank dwelling creatures.



Weir and sluice structure at The Broadwater on the Woodhall Park Estate.

Weir at The Rookery

The Environment Agency (EA) is also working on a weir improvement plan at Waterford. Follow the link below to see details of the feasibility study.

<http://riverleacatchment.org.uk/index.php/river-beane-cmp/river-beane-projects/997-waterford-weirs-feasibility-study>

Many thanks to Lauren Billington of the EA for the update.

Threat to the Beane Valley

Consultation on the plan to provide additional housing by East Herts District Council (EHDC) has now closed. It was published much later than originally expected and, from our point of view, was a bitter disappointment. In particular we regarded the proposal to build on the green belt in the upper Beane valley to the east of Stevenage as flawed and probably a precursor of further development into the Beane valley. This is a reversal of previous long standing EHDC policy to protect the Beane valley, in fact, quite recently EHDC spoke of the importance of The Beane and its valley in an objection to development proposals by Stevenage. The RBRA have formally objected to this plan. Our letter can be viewed on our website. The inspector's comments on the plan are expected during the summer. This part of the plan has apparently received more comment than any other. Let's hope the inspector takes note of that and agrees with us.

2017 Calendar

The calendar has virtually sold out! (At the time of going to press the number left was in single figures). If you would still like one they can now be purchased for only £3. (Contact Dave Stimpson address below.) Don't forget to keep taking photos of the Beane for our 2018 calendar competition.

River Walk – Beginning at Stapleford Church 6th May 10.00am

Hertfordshire Countryside Management Service has created a new circular walk at Stapleford which is 2.5 miles long and includes a stretch of river with a return across fields. The RBRA will lead a walk using this route on the above date. Hope to see you at Stapleford Church at 10.00am for what should prove another enjoyable occasion.

Date of the next meeting

Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday 11th April at 8.00pm in the Methodist Church Hall, High Street, Watton at Stone. Just come along if you are interested.



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