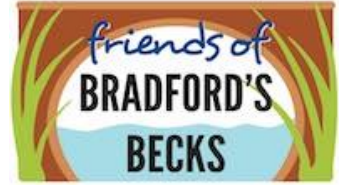


Friends of Bradford's Becks summary of activities 2019-20



Friends of Bradford's Becks report to Regeneration and Environment O&S Committee, March 2020

Summary

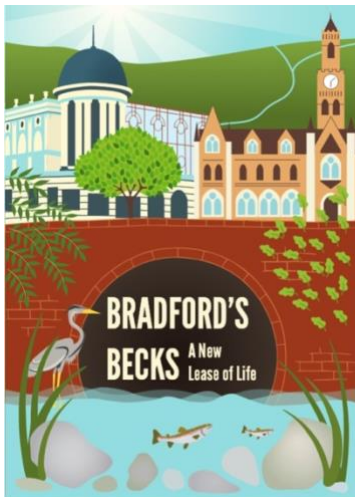
It has been a fairly good year for the Beck. The renaturalisation project has started. Most of our signposts have been installed.

However, the pollution problems remain serious, with various becks polluted almost every day, sometimes seriously. A particular concern is sediment runoff from construction sites which blankets the stream bed and destroys the ecosystem, often for several years.

Our main request this year is for the Council's support to impose and enforce planning conditions which would prevent sediment runoff from construction sites. This section of the report is highlighted in a box below.

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, and this is our report for March 2020.

Highs and lows in 2019-20

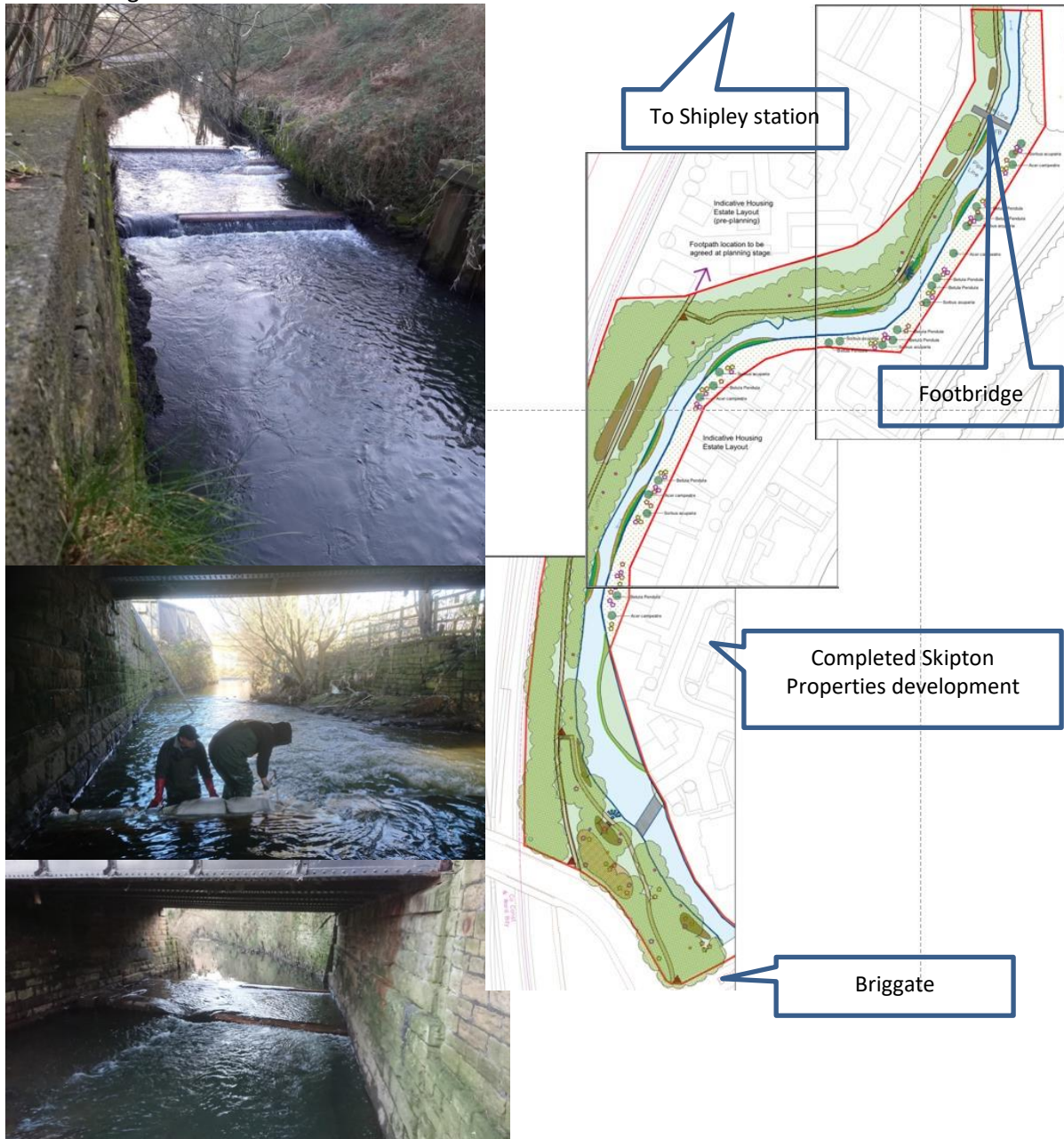
It has been a good year and we can report some real physical improvements. However stubborn pollution problems persist.

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

Renaturalisation: Phase 1

A collaboration between the Environment Agency, Bradford Council (mainly Landscape), ourselves and the Wild Trout Trust has seen work begin to improve the ecology and riverside of the Beck between the River Aire at Shipley and Briggate. Two streams of work will be complete by end of March, with more to follow next year:

1. Modifying a weir and two bridges (Leeds Rd, Dockfield Rd) to make it easier for fish to pass upstream – see photos. This work has been undertaken by the Wild Trout Trust with the help of FOBB volunteers.
2. Improving the morphology (shape), creating footpaths and bankside planting to improve habitats, accessibility and visual amenity – see plan. This work has been contracted out by Landscape Planning.



*Left: Fish easement works under Leeds Rd (Shipley station) a nearby weir and Dockfield Rd
Right: landscaping and planting plan between Briggate and footbridge. Both activities are part of a collaborative project between Bradford, the Environment Agency and FOBB.*

Renaturalisation: Phase 2

Renaturalisation of the Beck between Briggate and Stanley Rd is included in the Bradford-Shipley Route Improvement Scheme. FOBB does not have a position on the road scheme itself, but we are delighted that funding is included, together with a parallel bid to ESIF (European Structural Infrastructure Fund).

The proposed work includes (all details still to be decided!):

- taking the beck out of the unnecessary culvert and so daylighting it (photos),
- sloping some of the banks to make the Beck more visible,
- improving the morphology of the bed (photos) and banks to encourage wildlife,
- planting, viewing points and footpaths.

We have been consulted about the plans – thank you – and have been invited to join a Peer Review group to keep an eye on detailed design and progress. We will be delighted to help.



Daylighting the Beck. Left: The unnecessary and failing culvert alongside Valley Rd
Right: How the Beck might look after daylighting.



Improving the bedform. Left: there is a km of brick lined channel in which nothing lives and which fish can't swim up. Middle and right: a similar channel in Germany given some bedform to encourage wildlife

Signage and information boards

Finally, after our appeal for help at last year's meeting, we have seen ~20 finger posts and 3 information boards successfully installed by the Signs Dept to our designs. Here is a selection.



Top: Signs in city centre drawing attention to the hidden Beck and plaques trail

Bottom: Examples of the finger posts to bring the smaller becks to attention. All signs designed by FOBB and Mick Long, made and installed by Bradford Signs Dept and funded by Co-op customers.

Pollution

Is there any point in making these physical improvements when pollution continues to be such an issue? Downstream of the city centre, the beck is discoloured and smelling most days.

Sewage. We are starting in April on a project with Yorkshire Water to try and identify the sewage problems – mis-connected drains and malfunctioning YW assets. This project has come about by instruction of the Environment Agency as a result of FOBB's evidence gathering on pollution over the last few years. We will report on progress next year.

Sediment. A pollution problem that is proving very difficult to resolve is sediment pollution from housing developments. It is illegal to allow construction sediment to discharge into a watercourse but the major housebuilders seem to be oblivious or uncaring. The Allerton Lane (Keepmoat) site has been a problem for several years; the Environment Agency has finally taken action but only after years of pollution.

We are very concerned about the mess that is being made of Fagley/Carr Beck. Here there are 4 major housing sites and none seem able or willing to control sediment releases with the result that the beck is frequently completely turbid and coated in fine sediment.



*Sediment pollution of Fagley Beck. Left: confluence between unpolluted and polluted streams
Right: Amateurish and ineffective attempts to control sediment from a major building site in Fagley
(Photos: Rob Hellawell, Ann Wallace)*

Such pollution can be pursued as an offence after the event, but by then it is too late. To bring a prosecution, the Environment Agency needs high quality evidence but they don't have the resources to continually monitor all the building sites. Even if there is prosecution, the fines (typically £100,000) are trivial compared to the environmental damage and the value of the houses built. An alternative approach would be to include a planning condition requiring silt trapping works to be constructed before the site is stripped of topsoil. We understand that Kirklees Council include this provision for exactly this purpose:

31. Development shall not commence until a scheme, detailing temporary surface water drainage for the construction phase (after soil and vegetation strip) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall detail phasing of the development and phasing of temporary drainage provision and include methods of preventing silt, debris and contaminants entering existing drainage systems and watercourses and how flooding of adjacent land is prevented. The temporary works shall be implemented in accordance with the approved scheme and phasing. No phase of the development shall be commenced until the temporary works approved for that phase have been completed. The approved temporary drainage scheme shall be retained until the approved permanent surface water drainage system is in place and functioning in accordance with written notification to the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: *In the interest of the satisfactory drainage of the site and to accord with the guidance contained in part 10 of the National Planning Policy Framework "Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change".*

We have had a preliminary discussion with Drainage (Ed Norfolk) and Planning (Mark Hutchinson) who are looking into the feasibility of doing the same in Bradford. We appeal for your support for this move.

Other FOBB activities in 2019-20

Awareness raising

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

- Two appearances on Look North
 - August 2019, about pollution
 - January 2020, about the fish easements
- Articles in the T&A
 - 19th April, about this meeting last year
 - 19th Dec, about the signage project
 - 4th Jan, about daylighting rivers
 - 8th Jan, about the Bradford Beck part of the Canal Rd scheme
 - 23rd Jan, about the fish easements
- An article on Bradford Beck and daylighting rivers in the online magazine [The Conversation](#)
- A story about Bradford Beck in [Yorkshire Post](#).
- An [appearance](#) on Start the Week with Andrew Marr, discussing Bradford Beck and daylighting
- FOBB has over 500 followers on [Facebook](#) (do join them!) and over 400 on Twitter (@BradfordsBecks).

We continue to organise litter picks and give talks to local groups.

And our **Pollution Hunting** continues, reporting multiple problems to the Environment Agency. Most of these have been sewage misconnections, with others being sediment from construction sites.

The coming year

Our plans for the coming year are to:

- Continue to lobby for sediment control on building sites
- Report pollution whenever we find it
- Engage with Canal Rd planning
- Engage with Transforming Cities Fund planning
- Install more information boards
- Install 'Name that stream' signs
- River Corridor plan?
- Continue to support the phase 1 renaturalisation
- Carry out the joint pollution hunting project with YW
- And other good works!

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. **Our key request is for the Committee's support to impose and enforce planning conditions which would prevent sediment runoff from construction sites.**

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