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What's Beane Happening?

The newsletter of The River Beane Restoration Association – Issue 6 Winter 2014

The Wettest Winter for 200 Years

When will it ever stop raining? Well, of course we need the rain, but a more reasonable balance would be good. On the plus side, it has restored the aquifer, the natural underground reservoir, which feeds The Beane. This is now almost at its highest level since the RBRA began taking readings. On the negative side, some residents living alongside the lower Beane have become concerned about the possibility of flooding. Whilst these fears should not be taken lightly, particularly in view of what has happened elsewhere in the country, some reassurance should be taken from the fact that, despite the wettest winter for 200 years, as far as we know no properties have been flooded so far. Thank goodness! Due to heavy runoff, the river has risen for brief periods by as much as a metre, making fords impassable, but it quickly goes down again. It also helps to remember the point made by Charlie Bell, our Living Rivers Officer that healthy rivers actually reduce the risk of flooding by carrying away large quantities of water more quickly. The dried up and choked river beds of the upper Beane just don't do the job efficiently (see below) they need a constant flow of reasonably fast water to keep the bed scoured.



An Update from Affinity Water

Rob Sage from Affinity Water attended our last meeting on 6th February. He thanked RBRA members and friends who had responded to the consultation exercise (See the autumn edition of WBH) and told us that the feedback they had been getting from OFWAT was very encouraging. Even better news, Affinity are now saying that they can achieve all of the environmental improvements, including the **90% reduction in abstraction from the Whitehall pumping station** (key to the recovery of The Beane) with below inflation price rises for the whole of the 5 year planning period. Frustratingly, OFWAT won't give a final decision until the end of this year, but Affinity is hoping for a clear indication by April. If they get it they will start work on their plan then which will bring forward the benefits by 6 months.

Web site

There have been many false dawns for our web site, however, we now have the offer of a sponsored site. The site is being constructed at the moment and should be available before too long. More news to follow.

Film

Many hours of filming are now being edited down to a film which will last approximately 40 minutes. We are very pleased with the results so far and we are looking forward to its first showing which will take place in Hertford on a date to be arranged in late Spring.

East Herts District Plan

This was published in February and sets out where additional housing will go in the period 2015 to 2031. In it East Herts Council have made much of the need to be sustainable in their development plans, but have stated that they have no control over water supplies. Water is the responsibility of the regulator OFWAT, and EHC have no authority over OFWAT. EHC also state that the district is one of the driest in the UK and the rivers are already under stress.

This plan is a draft issued for a 12 week public consultation. After that the comments will be reviewed, and the plan issued as a final document in the summer. It will then be adopted by the government unless it is challenged, for example by government inspectors.

The message for RBRA is clear. We must continue our political liaison with MP's, Councils etc., to keep the issue of over abstracted rivers as high as possible in the public mind. Your Parish Council will have copies of the plan, it can also be seen on EHC website and copies will be available to view in libraries.

Beane and Mimram Catchment Plan (CNTRL + click [here](#) to see the full plan.)

Waterford Marsh (Project Led by Hertfordshire's Countryside Management Service, CMS)

Waterford Marsh is an area of wet land bordered by the River Beane. Since July extensive works have been carried out to improve the quality of the environment both for wildlife and leisure purposes as this is an area open to the public (and well worth a visit). In fact CMS, in conjunction with Stapleford Parish Council, organised a guided walk of the area to advertise the project for local residents. Works have included clearing out the culverts that carry the water under the railway embankment. Network Rail are to be thanked for organising this. Trees and shrubs have also been pollarded and overhanging limbs from large trees have been removed to improve the amount of sunlight reaching the water. The watercourse itself is being cleared of much of the vegetation which had been choking it which should improve the flow and make the river bed a more suitable environment for both fish and crucially the river fly on which they depend for food. Although, recently the work has been hampered by the wet weather a great deal has been achieved.



The marsh in summer

To find out more CTRL + click on www.hertslink.org/cms

We still need a logo. Any ideas? If so then please send your sketches to our chairman, Dave Stimpson. It doesn't have to be a work of art. All ideas gratefully received.