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Charles Walker champions chalk rivers in parliament.

Beane and Mimram catchment plan is launched and work starts to improve the parts of the river we have left.

Frustration as the Environment Agency delay their announcement about the White Hall Pumping Station.

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What's Beane Happening?

The newsletter of The River Beane Restoration Association – Winter 2013

Welcome

So, what has 'Beane' happening since our Autumn newsletter. Well, so much, at both a local and national level, that it's difficult to fit it in to a two page newsletter – but we'll have a go.

Firstly a big thank you to you for reading this newsletter. Hopefully, you will be able to tell others about the sad plight of chalk rivers like The Beane and contribute to the pressure for change which is slowly, but surely building. A good example of this was the speech in parliament on 1st February given by Charles Walker, MP for Broxbourne. He spoke eloquently and passionately about the damage to our rivers and mentioned The River Beane. He said it was, **'...environmental vandalism on an extraordinary scale.'** He also said, **'...how dare we lecture the developing world on its responsibilities to its natural environment when we so casually disregard our responsibilities to our natural environment'**. How True. If you would like to read the full speech you can find it at [Ctrl + click here](#)

Locally, the response to our protest walk on 12th October was encouraging, but as yet The Environment Agency has not made any definitive statements. We know that Affinity Water have included a 50% reduction in abstraction from the Whitehall Pumping Station in its plans from 2015 and complete closure of the station from 2018. However, these plans are dependent on funding to source water from elsewhere. The Environment agency supports the reduction to 50% (dependent on a satisfactory financial agreement) but has not yet announced the result of its 'cost benefit analysis' for full closure. The RBRA is continuing to press for a positive outcome.



Aston End (Stoney) Ford, where over 50 campaigners gathered on the dry river bed to press The Environment Agency to close the Whitehall pumping station. After the wettest summer for 100 years, melting snow and heavy rain, the river is using its natural flood plain. It's a shame that it will be dry again next summer, and without a continual flow will remain dead.

A Year of Extremes!

The ground water levels at the beginning of January were amongst the lowest on record. If it hadn't started raining in April and turned into the wettest summer for 100 years then we would probably have had stand pipes in the streets. Instead, by the end of the year water levels had risen by 6 metres, which is unprecedented. The clear message is that we need to do more to retain and store water when it is plentiful and stop taking it for granted. (See the Environment Agency's plans for watering the greens at Stevenage golf course in The River Basin Management Plan.)

Beane and Mimram Catchment Plan

This is really good news. For the first time we have a plan to enhance and improve the river we have left at the same time as campaigning to get flow back along the whole length of the river. The Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust produced the plan with active support from the RBRA and other partners including The Environment Agency who are also providing funding. It is a web based plan and can be viewed at www.beaneandmimrampartnership.org.uk. You can see what projects are planned and what progress is being made. Stevenage Brook joins The Beane South of the Whitehall Pumping Station and is currently the effective source of The Beane during the summer. Recognising this, Stevenage Borough Council have agreed to take steps to improve the quality of water entering the brook as run off from the road network.

Another project which is well advanced is the **Waterford Heath Project**. This can also be seen on the above link. Great strides forward have been made under the management of the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust. It involves work to reduce the canopy cover over the river. The work has been carried out by Andy Gardner who has recently joined the RBRA. It has been completed on the west bank and funds are being sought to do the east bank.

Calling all artists. We would like a logo for the RBRA. Any Ideas? All suggestions gratefully received.

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East bank



West bank

It is important for sunlight to reach the water. The west bank looks rather barren at the moment. However, as new species colonise it a much healthier transition zone will develop between the land and water increasing habitat and species diversity.



Left - Sun now reaching the water and the river bed.

Right - A rare water milfoil covered riffle. This is what sunlight will encourage. Good for invertebrates and fish.

Check out the web site for **The Lammas project** which will be underway soon.

Mink have been seen on the river. If you spot any contact Bob Thornton on antheaandbob@hotmail.com