

The Wraysbury Drain – an ‘ordinary watercourse’?

A brief report to Wraysbury Parish Council from Ewan Larcombe 9/10/2019

Background: The Wraysbury Drain is over two miles of very ancient and legally protected watercourse that is an important part of the local network of land drainage infrastructure. Starting near Wraysbury Railway Station the channel takes a steadily curving route downstream running generally parallel to Station Road, the High Street and Staines Road and finishing in Hythe End. The channel is designated ‘ordinary watercourse’ but has dimensional cross-sections **specified by legislation over 200 years ago.**

Changes - starting in the 1980’s: The area between Douglas Lane, Station Road and the railway line was quarried for gravel and the channels entirely removed. After ignoring warnings the railway bridge collapsed in 1988. Upon completion of partial backfilling the local drainage channels were reinstated **on different routes.** It became necessary to install a weir in order to ‘drive’ (i.e. provide sufficient head of water) the now relocated Wraysbury Drain. The original stoplog weir was then replaced with an adjustable metal weir in about 2006. There are images of the two weirs available.

The current situation:

- a. Despite expenditure of at least £125,000 and the recent best efforts of local volunteers the Wraysbury Drain **is still not flowing.**
- b. The failed weir at Wraysbury Station was identified as a major problem and reported in September 2018.
- c. After a long list of reasons why maintenance works could not be started the weir was eventually repaired (by RBWM?) in mid-July 2019.
- d. There is still no means of weir adjustment. A ‘key’ is required.**
- e. The channel is blocked with gravel at both sides of and beneath the bridge at the entrance to the Dive Centre in Station Road. **The gravel needs to be cleared. Who is responsible?**
- f. The Diving Centre Bridge design/construction shortcoming allows vehicles to displace the gravel into the channel. **The bridge needs fixing otherwise the problem will continue.**
- g. From the Dive Centre Bridge upstream to the junction near the weir - flow is restricted **by thirty years of tree growth.** This new section of channel was created along a different route after the Wraysbury Station Railway Bridge collapse in 1988. **This length of the Wraysbury Drain has**

not been maintained for 30 years. Who is responsible? Apart from the cost there will be issues relating to access and/or responsibility!

- h. At Feather’s Lane the channel is now entirely blocked, having been filled to ground level with rubble and fenced over. The channel has also been culverted without permission. **Action is required now.**

The big questions: Who is responsible for the monitoring and maintenance of the Wraysbury Drain?

Reach Identity	Monitoring	Inspection	Capacity	Level	Quality

(Riparian, Wraysbury Parish Council (WPC), RBWM (planning enforcement or designated LLFA), Environment Agency and/or Thames Water.)

My conclusion is: We still need to identify who is responsible for monitoring and maintaining this channel. Land ownership is an issue. The planned River Thames Scheme makes no allowance for what will be a number of truncated watercourses. **If the Wraysbury Drain is not immediately evident and demonstrable as a living, working watercourse it will be lost forever. This will influence groundwater levels, land drainage capability, local ecology, visual appearance and security.**

I intend to submit this report to the RBWM Flood Liaison Meeting scheduled for 31/10/2019. I now have copies of the Environment Agency booklet ‘Living on the Edge’ – the riparian owner’s guide.

The two images below show the Wraysbury Drain route both ‘before and after’ 1988. The two red arrows on the lower image indicate the positions of the current Dive Centre restrictions and the Wraysbury Station Weir. In my opinion **the channel between the two arrows (about 250m) requires re-engineering in terms of channel width/depth and gradient. This is a major project.**

Maps: Wraysbury Drain at Station Road, Wraysbury.



END