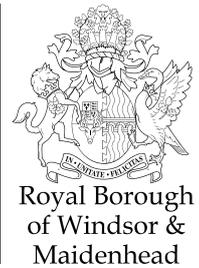


Subject:	Battlemead Common; flood management update briefing for the Flood Liaison Group
Reason for briefing note:	The Flood Liaison Group has requested an update
Responsible officer(s):	Anthony Hurst, Parks and Countryside Manager
Senior leader sponsor:	David Scott, Head of Communities Chris Joyce, Head of Infrastructure, Sustainability and Economic Growth
Date:	13 th January 2021

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SUMMARY

This note updates the Group on progress with the management of Battlemead Common, with particular reference to flood management issues. The note summarises work carried out to date, and further work that is planned over the coming year.

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In December 2018 the Council purchased 110 acres of former farmland at White Place Farm, adjacent to the river Thames to the north of Maidenhead. Part of the site lies within Cookham Parish, and part is within Maidenhead Riverside ward. The site has since been named Battlemead Common. The site was purchased for the dual purposes of providing for public access and protecting and enhancing biodiversity: some parts of the site have been open to public access since August 2019, other parts of the site have been fenced off to protect sensitive wildlife habitats.
- 1.2 The land at Battlemead Common includes a section of the White Brook (main river), and a section of the North Maidenhead Flood Bund, which forms part of the Windsor, Maidenhead and Eton Flood Alleviation Scheme.
- 1.3 Following purchase of the land, the Council established a stakeholder group, the 'Friends of Battlemead Common' (FoBC) to engage with and advise the Council on management of the site. The most recent meeting of FoBC was held on 9th December 2020.
- 1.4 A number of FoBC sub-groups have also been established, including a 'White Brook sub-group', to advise on management of the White Brook and wider hydrological issues. The other sub-groups focus on Biodiversity, Access, and Information/Communication. The White Brook sub-group includes representatives from the Environment Agency, Maidenhead Waterways, Cookham Parish Council, Maidenhead Civic Society, The Cookham Society, Wild Maidenhead, Wild Cookham and the East Berks Ramblers. The White Brook sub-group's most recent meeting was held on 4th November, (minutes attached in Appendix 1 for reference).

2 KEY IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 In consultation with the FoBC, a 'Battlemead Common Masterplan' is being produced, setting out how the site is to be managed, both for public access and to protect and enhance

the biodiversity and landscape value of the site. The Masterplan is informed by an Ecological Management Plan, produced by specialist consultants Austin Foot Ecology.

- 2.2 This Masterplan is currently being refined, and further work will be taking place over the coming months, in discussion with the various sub-groups, with each looking in more specific detail at their respective areas of remit.

3 DETAILS

- 3.1 The work of the FoBC White Brook sub-group includes consideration of flood management issues. Although some management work has already taken place to the brook, and further work is planned (see 5.1 below), it is recognised that a 'Battlemead Common Hydrological Management Plan' needs to be produced, to sit alongside the Ecological Management Plan produced by Austin Foot Ecology.
- 3.2 The scope of the Hydrological Management Plan will need to cover three related areas: biodiversity, water flow (both in-channel and out-of-channel) and flood risk. The Plan will need to be informed by, and dovetail with, South East Water's 'Asset Management Plan 2020-2025' (AMP7), and discussions have been held with SEW to ensure that the sub-group members are consulted on the SEW plan as it is developed over the coming months.
- 3.3 In early March 2020, trial desilting and reed removal works were carried out over a 30m length of the White Brook; this work was carried out in partnership with Maidenhead Waterways, following discussion with the Environment Agency, and the issuing of the necessary permit. Additionally, a number of fallen trees and branches have been cleared from the White Brook, and from an area of wet Willow woodland in the southern part of the site, during the course of 2020. Some of these works have been carried out by volunteers from Maidenhead Waterways, and some by contractors appointed by the Council.

4 RISKS

- 4.1 As a riparian landowner, the Council has responsibilities relating to management of the White Brook. The Council as landowner also has responsibilities to ensure that the North Maidenhead Flood Bund is protected from any damage, and has responsibilities to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the site. The Battlemead Common Masterplan that is currently being developed, together with the Ecological Management Plan, and the Hydrological Management Plan that is to be commissioned, will ensure that the Council gives due consideration to these responsibilities.

5 NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 An application has recently been submitted to the Environment Agency for consent to undertake further de-silting works along the White Brook; the Council's ability to undertake these works will be dependent on the outcome of this application, and any works will need to be implemented in accordance with the permit conditions. In addition, further removal of fallen trees and branches from the brook is currently being arranged, in partnership with Maidenhead Waterways.
- 5.2 A further meeting of the FoBC White Brook sub-group will be arranged for February/March 2021; this meeting will include further discussion of the scope of the Battlemead Common

Hydrological Management Plan, in light of any further information received from South East Water on AMP 7, as well as discussion on the next phase of White Brook de-silting works proposed for 2021.