

## White Brook at Battlemead Common sub-group

Meeting Notes  
4<sup>th</sup> November 2020 2.00pm  
(Via Microsoft Teams)

### Attended by:

Anthony Hurst (AH) RBWM (Chair)  
Ann Darracott (AD) Maidenhead Civic Society  
Graham Scholey (GS) Environment Agency  
Lauren Giddings (LG) Environment Agency  
Ian Rose (IR) Maidenhead Waterways  
Brian Clews (BC) Wild Cookham  
Mark Hemmings (MH) Wild Maidenhead  
Dick Scarff (DS) The Cookham Society

### Apologies:

Ian Caird (IC) Maidenhead Waterways  
Gordon Marrs (GM) East Berks Ramblers  
Jane Perry (JP) Cookham Parish Council

### 1. Maintenance of the White Brook at Battlemead Common

**IR** presented his paper "*Update on the White Brook at Battlemead Common*" which had been circulated in advance of the meeting, including a report on the trial desilting and reed removal carried out over a 30m length of the White Brook in March 2020.

Measurements of water levels taken before and after the trial indicated that the water levels in the brook and in the wetlands followed the head level in the Thames, with no significant differences resulting from the desilting/reed removal. Therefore, it is not considered that the works had any adverse impact on water levels in the wetland; however, neither did the works have any measurable beneficial effect on the White Brook flow, suggesting that there are other obstructions in the White Brook impeding water flow. It was noted that during the test period water levels in the Thames were high, and there was a period when the water in the brook was flowing in the reverse direction to the normal direction of flow.

Maidenhead Waterways propose that, in order to increase flow in the White Brook, further machine clearance of silt and in-channel vegetation is carried out along a 3m wide central channel, extending for approximately 80m north of the Causeway bridge and approximately 50m south of the Causeway bridge, prior to the beginning of March 2021 (it is recognised that this work would be subject to a further EA permit). Additionally, MW propose to undertake selective removal of tree trunks and branches that have fallen across the channel.

**GS** noted that it is difficult to fully assess the impact of the March 2020 desilting due to prevailing water levels in the Thames, but recognised that MW had used their best endeavours to conduct the trial as effectively as possible in the circumstances. Consideration should be given to the timing of the works proposed in the new permit application, the possible use of herbicide as an alternative option to desilting/reed removal, and how/where the removed silt should best be deposited.

**GS** also confirmed that any flood risk implications would be taken into account as part of the assessment of the permit application.

#### **2. Feedback on site meeting held with Maidenhead Waterways, Environment Agency and South East Water 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

**LG** reported that on 30<sup>th</sup> October a start-up meeting was held on site with Debbie Wilkinson from SEW and their consultant hydrologist from Cranfield University, Marc Naura, also attended by **IR** and **AH**. This meeting was part of a wider study of the White Brook and connecting watercourses that will form part of SEW's Adaptive Management Plan (AMP 7) implementation project (2020-2025), setting out mitigation options resulting from SEW's groundwater abstractions.

Stakeholder consultations on this Plan will be undertaken over the coming weeks and months, so that options can be shared and developed, and this will provide opportunities for members of the sub-group to have an input to the AMP options, both from biodiversity and water flow perspectives.

**AH** has passed on contact details of the sub-group members to Debbie Wilkinson, who will be co-ordinating the stakeholder consultation process.

#### **3. Scope of proposed Hydrological Management Plan for Battlemead Common**

It was noted that there was a widely-held view from the 16<sup>th</sup> September 2020 meeting of the Friends of Battlemead Common that a 'Battlemead Common Hydrological Management Plan' should be produced, to sit alongside the Ecological Management Plan that has been produced by Austin Foot Ecology in discussion with the Group.

It is considered that the Hydrological Management Plan will need to cover three broad areas: biodiversity, water flow (both in-channel and out-of-channel) and flood risk. However, the Plan will also need to be informed by and dovetail with the SEW Adaptive Management Plan, which as noted above is to be consulted on over the coming months. It would therefore be premature to commission the Hydrological Management Plan until the SEW Plan is further developed. However, it was agreed that in advance of both plans being produced some interventions could reasonably be carried out at Battlemead; this would include further reed removal and desilting of the White Brook referred to above (subject to the necessary EA permit), and also the removal or cutting up of fallen tree trunks currently laying in the area of Battlemead Common adjoining the Thames Path, to the north of the wet woodland, which may potentially form an impediment to the flow of flood water.

**AD** and **DS** questioned whether the proposed dog-proof fencing and hedge in the East Field, and proposed dog-proof fencing alongside the Causeway, shown on the latest Battlemead Common Masterplan, could impede the flow of water in the event of flooding; **AH** confirmed that this point had been discussed with the EA and the advice received to date was that given the wide mesh of the fencing (150mm), and the general openness of the site, the proposed fencing and hedge would not have a significant impact on water flow. **LG** and **GS** confirmed that this was also their understanding. **AH** will discuss this further with the EA with regard to any necessary consents.

It was noted that the aquatic fauna and groundwater surveys undertaken by **AD**, circulated to the sub-group in advance of the meeting, are likely to be of relevance to the Hydrological Management Plan, and these will therefore be made available as/when required.

#### **AOB:**

**BC** reported on some notable bird and damselfly sightings recorded at Battlemead Common which included; Great White Egret, Cetti's Warbler, Variable Damselfly and Willow Emerald Damselfly. This information, together with other sightings, will also be shared with Jason Mills, who Chairs the Biodiversity sub-group.

**Next Meeting:** Early February 2021, exact date to be confirmed.