



Leighton-Linslade Ouzel Valley Park Steering Group

9 December 2021 at 10:30 am

1. Introduction and Apologies

Present: Cllr Tony Morris (LLTC), Cllr Victoria Harvey (LLTC/CBC), Cllr Clive Palmer (LLTC), Cllr Steve Owen (remotely LLTC), Pauline Hey (Local Access Forum), Jon Balaam (remotely Greensand Trust), Howard Hughes (remotely CBC), Ian Haynes (LLTC), Mellony Jahn (LLTC), Clive Beckett (remotely Local Access Forum), Peter Bate and Rosalind Bacon (remotely Sustrans), Susannah Miller and Spencer Green (remotely Canals & Rivers Trust, Steve Lakin (CBC joined meeting remotely at 11.25 am).

Apologies: Councillor Versallion

2. Approval of Minutes of 2 September 2021

The notes of the previous meetings were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters Arising

All matters arising would be picked up later in the agenda.

4. Review of action list

See attached updated action list with the latest comments in **brown**.

5. Leighton Buzzard Towpath Improvement Project

Susannah Miller and Spencer Green from the Canal & River Trust and Rosalind Bacon attended the meeting to give an update on the towpath improvement project. This project would improve the quality of the towpath allowing all year-round accessibility with better surfacing in a traffic free environment. It was hoped that this work would start in early summer with sections of the towpath being closed and diversions where needed. A community information event would be held in February/March to inform the public of the improvements and timescales of the project

A question was raised regarding whether this would cause problems at the Canal Festival at the end of July. It was hoped that the contractors could look at this and complete or reschedule works in this area to limit impact on the Canal Festival.

Members agreed this was a welcome project and hoped it would improve and enable greater use of the towpath by all groups. Contact would be made with disability groups over the next few months to ensure their preferences were taken into account. Councillor Harvey agreed to provide contacts for local groups for this purpose.

A suggestion was made regarding the use of information panels along the canal whilst this work was being carried out which would point out areas of historical interest to the community. Susannah Miller agreed to have a conversation with Phil Emery, Heritage Adviser regarding the placement of information panels at the appropriate locations.

Thanks were given to all for an informative presentation and members looked forward to the improvements and a more accessible towpath.

6. Information updates

CBC

Howard Hughes confirmed 3 wildflower areas had been planted at Riverside Walk and works to trees carried out to make them more manageable. Litter clearance had taken place in August with another planned for December and LLTC planned clearance in the New Year.

Clipstone Brook had trees felled which would be replaced and litter clearance in November.

Steve Lakin joined the meeting at 11.25 am. The southern Leighton Buzzard bus link/footway had been held up for legal reasons. The designs for South Street to Hockliffe Street adjacent to Clipstone Brook were in process of being determined and the designs for a footway on Grovebury Road near the industrial development would be commissioned in the near future.

It was confirmed that designs for the new visitor car park at Southern Meadows were still being reviewed and when a decision had been finalised a planning application would be submitted.

A meeting was held with Buzz Cycles re the Eastern development and progress depended on negotiations with landowners concerned.

A question was raised regarding access to the towpath at the Leighton Road Canal Bridge. CBC Plans and funding were already in place for this and would be available to review. To be added to the Action List for Steve Lakin.

A request was made by Councillor Harvey regarding the Woodman Close Link as to whether the designs could be shared with Lyndsey Bignall for the cycle path. Steve Lakin agreed to copy Lyndsey in.

LLTC

An itree survey would be taking place and members agreed this would be helpful to link to all groups and note what had been achieved and what was planned. Groups would need to specify what they wanted included in the tree survey and then a conversation could take place to begin this process.

Jon Balaam suggested consistent monitoring of trees would be helpful and training for volunteers could help to sustain any improvements made.

GST

The project to improve surfacing of Firs Path had now been completed and had been well received by members of the public.

The draft designs for the Greensand Ridge walk gateway at the bottom of the High Street should be received shortly and the signs for the Ouzel Valley Meander were nearly completed.

The mapping for the Green Wheel masterplan had been looked at and work was still needed before it could be signed off and endorsed by Central Bedfordshire Council. This document would assist with planning applications discussions and obtaining funding.

Members were informed that a training programme would be launched to provide training for river wardens to monitor trees and habitats around rivers. This could help identify issues and problems before they became more serious.

Also methods on how to manage surface water flooding had been discussed at a workshop with Anglian Water and Central Bedfordshire Council.

7. River Ouzel – sewerage and over extraction

Members were informed that this was a national issue and water companies were looking into the effects. Anglian Water were leading the way in these discussions as the biodiversity along the river had reduced as the water quality had changed. It was agreed collective working was the way forward and public awareness needed to be raised to emphasise what happens to water when it goes into the drain and what pollution results. Jon Balaam informed the committee that any sampling of the water was only a snapshot of the quality and a more detailed survey by the Environment Agency would give more informed results. More active monitoring was needed and funding needed to provide this training to take place.

A suggestion was made to use the Canal Festival as a platform to provide information to the public on pollution in rivers.

8. Leighton Buzzcycles Cycling Strategy

Members agreed the Cycling Strategy should be discussed at the next meeting and moved up the agenda so more discussion could be had on this topic.

A suggestion was made to have a meeting which involved more of the Buzzcycles Committee to explore the topic in more detail prior to the next Ouzel Valley Steering Group Meeting. Peter Bate confirmed he would get back to the Chair once he had spoken to his other committee members.

9. Any other business

Howard Hughes confirmed he was working with Assets to confirm ownership of parts of the river which at present were unknown.

A request was made to add to the membership of the Steering Group by including members of South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth - Gill King, Liz Hooper and Ruth Mundy.

Also agendas and minutes should be sent to the Canal and River Trust and Sustrans.

10. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 2 March at 10.30 am,

Meeting ended 12.13 pm.