

Wallingford Town Council
Parks, Gardens, Allotments & Open Spaces Meeting Monday 18
November 2024

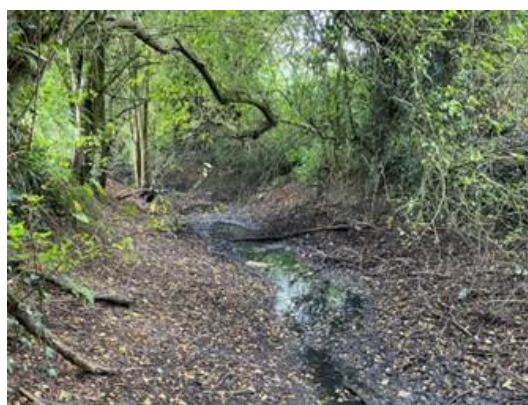
Restoring the Mill Brook

Recommendation:

To endorse the Mill Brook restoration initiative and approve Councillor Mike Acreman as the lead.



The Mill Brook c 1958 (Croft Villas Park)



The Mill Brook summer 2024 (Sports Park)

1. Executive summary

The Mill Brook no longer evacuates flood water effectively from the Sports Park and no longer supports wildlife, history or amenity. Wallingford Town Council is invited to endorse restoration of the Mill Brook adjacent to the footpath from Fir Tree Avenue to the by-pass (past the Sports Park).

2. Background

The Mill Brook is important historically to Wallingford as it used to bring water to the moats, castle and mills. It is important culturally as many older residents remember swimming and fishing in it when they were young. It used to have good water quality and to support amphibians, fish, and possibly otters. The Brook should also evacuate flood water from Fir Tree Avenue and the Sports Park. It fails on all these counts today.

3. Issue

We believe that both the culvert taking the Mill Brook under the by-pass and the flood-relief pipe into the highway drain are blocked, which we feel exacerbated flooding of the Sport Park pitches for 6 weeks this year. We have asked OCC highways engineers to investigate the blockage but they have not replied yet. The blockage also stops freshwater entering in the summer. Lack of freshwater has rendered the Brook stagnant with residents complaining of swarms of flies and bad smells. This has been reported to the Environment Agency as a pollution incident

several times recently but no action has been taken. The riparian vegetation along the Brook has not been managed and has become very dense, preventing light reaching the water, further degrading the freshwater ecosystem. OCC is planning to resurface the footpath alongside the Brook and is recommending complementary riparian improvements adjacent to the path. The Sports Park is proposing extensions to its facilities and will need to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain.

4. Options

Option 1 (preferred) to restore the Mill Brook between the culvert headwall (near Fir Tree Avenue) to the bypass culvert. This will involve unblocking the culvert and flood-relief pipe, removing much of the dense vegetation along the Brook and increasing the diversity of the Brook's channel habitat. CIL or other funding will be sought. No funds or staff time are required from Wallingford Town Council.

Option 2. Do nothing. The Mill Brook will continue to decline ecologically and will not evacuate flood water.

5. Proposal

Councillors support Option 1.

5. Supporting information

The Mill Brook restoration initiative current partner organisations:

Wild about Wallingford

The Sports Park Trust

The Environment Agency

Chilterns National Landscape

Action for the River Kennet (local catchment partnership leads).

South Oxfordshire District Council (biodiversity)

Oxfordshire County Council (biodiversity and footpath)

Likely future partner organisations

BBOWT

Thames 21.

The Environment Agency is exploring the idea of a wider whole catchment partnership or Mill Brook Trust, which would include the parishes of Brightwell, Cholsey, South Moreton, Upton and Blewbury.

Author: Mike Acreman

Role title: Councillor

Date of final version: 11 November 2024

Reviewed and approved by Town Clerk