

To: John Fullbrook
Subject: FW: Notes from Abbey Rd, Steyning. meeting. 26th Aug 2020

ITEM 8.1.1

Notes From Meeting at Abbey Rd Open Space. Wed 26th August.

The following people were in attendance.

Tony Whitbread. President of the Sussex Wildlife Trust and nationally recognised ecology expert.

Rachel Paget. Senior Project Officer of the Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust, particularly to look at the Tanyard Stream together with..

Glyn Wells. Adur Catchment Area Officer for the Environment Agency.

Deborah Hanson. Cllr. Chair Communities Cttee, Simon Alexander. Cllr, Dep Chair.

Sarah Sullivan. Cllr, Rodney Sullivan. Cllr.

John Fullbrook. Parish Clerk, Jo Gordon. Steyning for Trees

Dave Bucket. Steyning for Trees/ Steyning Community Orchard, Roger Brown. Steyning Community Orchard and Abbey Rd 'project coordinator' (for want of any official title!)

After introductions and *brief description of the site, Roger explained the purpose of the site visit.
(*appended at foot of this message)

1. to better understand the responsibilities of the various agencies regarding the Tanyard Stream that borders the site, and how that impacts SPC's plans for future management of that area.
2. how to best manage/develop the winter pond area.
3. how to develop a wild flower meadow in the open grassy area.
4. what scope is there for future tree planting here

1. Tanyard stream

Glyn explained that the stream here is regarded as a 'main river' (up to the Model bakery in the High St according to their map), and the EA's main responsibility is for flood protection. So they clear debris from the siphon at the bottom of Mouse Lane, clear vegetation from the stream (by hand) from the Star Pub to Breach Close, and clear the AR part of the stream of weed annually, around October. This is currently done by a cutting machine that drags the weed and dumps it on the bank. Needs 3-5m space on the bank for the machine to operate, with an 8m clearance at the entry to the area. At the same time they clear vegetation from the banks.

This process inevitably causes some damage to the stream bed and disturbs the the gravel there.

Glyn did state that this clearance was probably not as essential as keeping the culverts and grills on this stream clear of debris. These are upstream and downstream from Abbey Rd. So if we would prefer the stream bed and/or stream banks not be cleared, then this could be an option, but would need to be discussed.

The EA requires a Flood Risk Activities Permit for any work done within 8 metres of a 'main river'. So we need to bear this in mind if we are planning any work near the stream.

Rachel said that the OART had previously planned to place willow baffles in places along the stream bed, These create stronger currents that wash sediment off the gravel, forming ideal spawning areas for the Brown Trout that use this stream. But this was not done at the time, and if this plan is brought forward again it would need to be in collaboration with the EA.

Having some stretches of the stream more open to sunlight is a good thing, as it is mostly shaded upstream from here. This creates a different habitat that suits a different range of plants and aquatic life.

Tony's view was that the Abbey Road Open Space is very lovely as it is. The whole area is a mosaic of different valuable wildlife habitats with tree canopy, long grass, damp grassland, stream and bank sides etc,

Regarding the stream, if it is not an absolute necessity, do we need to cut the weed at all, or could we at least only cut part of the stream at a time? We shouldn't feel we must 'improve' things. He confirmed what Craig Dater (SDNPA) had said to us on his site visit back in March that we only make small changes at a time, step back, monitor the effects, then make another small change.

2. Winter Pond

The footpath that runs from Abbey Rd towards the by-pass, parallel to the stream but about 10m from it, is on top of a bank that seems to have been created at the time the houses were built. It is about 1-2m higher than the land to the left bordering the stream. But at a point opposite the winter pond area, for a few metres, the path drops down to be almost level with that land. Was it designed that way to allow water from the stream to enter the pond area in times of flood? Glyn suggested trying to contact the developers who would have carried out a full site survey at the time the houses were planned. Tony thought that opening up this gap could certainly be an option worth pursuing in order to get more water into the pond.

There is possible scope for tree planting alongside this raised bank, and putting Willows nearer the stream, where their roots would help bind the bank and deflect the water flow.

Tony mentioned the Black Poplar project. There were just 38 trees left in Sussex when SWT and Kew (Wakehurst) started raising Black Poplar saplings for landowners to plant in suitable floodplains around Sussex. A few could possibly be added here.

We walked the perimeter of the winter pond (now dried up) It is approx 65m x 35m in area.

(Pic taken in March 2020 attached)

As we walked the path nearest the by-pass we walked under the clump of mature Willow trees. There are also trees here planted 10-15 yrs ago, such as Oak and Italian Alder.

Tony reminded us of the value to wildlife that especially Willows and Oak give.

We stopped at the end of the pond where willow cutting and treatment had recently been done. New growth was emerging from some of the willow stools.

It was agreed that removing these in the next few months would be good.

A possibility is hauling out some of the willow roots. This would create natural holes that water might collect in. But if any part of the willow root is left behind, it will regrow.

Creating a few scrapes (c2m x1m and 12" deep) in this cleared area would also be good, to see how much longer some standing water might be retained into the Spring.

The huge amount of willow/goat willow remaining in the pond basin was seen as a resource that could be used, with help from the Community, to reinforce the stream banks, create willow structures around the site etc. Tony said this was one of the fastest growing trees in the UK, growing up to 4m per year, and could be cut annually to provide this material.

Tony pointed out the different grasses and vegetation growing between the pond area and the mown grass path. These included Cock's foot, Meadow Foxtail and Yorkshire Fog (? tbc)

These provide good cover for invertebrates and small mammals.

3. Meadow

Rachel and Glyn left us as we moved to the meadow area.

The current cutting regime for this area is 2 cuts in early Spring, and a late cut in Sept/Oct. All the cut material is now removed and dumped in a corner of the site. Tony agreed that this was a good first step to creating a wildflower meadow here.

If the late cut creates enough bare patches of soil, then some Yellow Rattle seed could be sown this Autumn to germinate next Spring. Yellow Rattle is an annual that flowers in May and seeds by the end of August, so you don't want to be cutting where between early May and August. If there is not enough bare soil exposed, it may need scarifying before the seed is sown. (Yellow Rattle is semi-parasitic on grass roots which weakens their growth and allows other wildflowers to thrive). Once the grass is weakened, then a suitable flower mix could be sown.

Tony said that we will need to manage expectations, especially of local residents. Creating a wildflower meadow takes many years, and for the first few years Docks, Fleabane, or Ragwort may dominate. But in time, the number of different species should increase and the flower meadow develop.

4. Tree planting

The consensus of group was that we already have some impressive trees already on site.

The Black Poplar, already mentioned, could be introduced, and possibly some more willow along the stream line.

Many thanks for your time and contributions, especially to our three experts.

Regards

Roger

***Abbey Road Open Space was donated to the PC by the developer in 1994**

AR north was described as "low lying and has a natural appearance, with a pond surrounded by small trees and water meadow"

Local conservation group worked here in the early 2000's and planted many trees, (we have found oaks, willow, blackthorn, Italian alder - all around 15-20 yrs old)

Local school children sowed Wild flower seed on the soil hump. No wild flowers remain unfortunately.

AR was registered as a Village Green in 2016

Divided by Abbey Road itself, into AR North and South . We are only looking at North today comprising 2.75 acres. (south is 1.75 acres). The South part is mainly recreational with mown grass.

Abbey Rd pond. March 2020.

<image001.jpg>

Roger Brown