



Friends of Bradford's Becks

Annual report for the year to July 2014

We held our first meeting in Feb 2013, and agreed our constitution in July 2013. A brief summary of our activities is as follows:

Membership

There are about 160 who have signed up to the Facebook page, with typically 40 people looking at each post. The email list partially overlaps the FB membership, and has about 150 people in it. So perhaps 250 people are taking an active interest in the group.

Working groups

We have hard-working groups on:

- Walks
- Signage and interpretation
- Invasive species
- Diffuse pollution
- Activities (litter picks and Becknics)
- Renaturalisation

Bradford Council

After a sticky start, we have good relations with Bradford. This started with endorsement of the catchment plan by the Environment Scrutiny Committee in April 2013, and the allocation of James Brass as liaison between FOBB and council officers. He's been great, arranging meetings and encouraging officers to help. There isn't any money, and there is sometimes reluctance to encourage developers to take action, but overall there is a good relationship and cooperation.

Walks

The Walks group has designed a series of walks along or to the various becks and is just waiting for funding to produce a booklet of these and put up signs on the footpaths. In the meantime, the draft walks are on the website.

Signage and interpretation

This busy group has several projects on the go:

- Waymarking signs to place on footpaths to help people find the Becks; a funding bid has been submitted, covering these and the walks booklet above.
- City Centre signage; the group is planning a HLF bid for this project for pavement plaques, interpretation boards and a sound sculpture (and maybe more). The Council is supportive.

- Photo competition; this has been launched, closing date 31st August. Eleven prizes have been donated by Asda, Environment Agency and individual Friends. If we can find the funding, we will produce a calendar of the winning photos.

Invasive species

This new group is tackling Japanese Knotweed. The first stage, which is well underway, is to map the occurrence of knotweed around the Becks. Two volunteers have been trained in pesticide handling in preparation for the next stage which will be treatment.

Diffuse pollution group

This is the second new group established in 2014. Its remit is to identify the sources of discolouration of the Becks, usually due to misconnected drainage, and to try and spot any pollution incidents so they can be reported. Two investigations have already been initiated by Yorkshire Water in response to the group's reports.

Activities

A successful series of litter picks have been held in springtime in both years, before the vegetation grows too high. The Becknics have been more problematic because of their vulnerability to weather, so that only one of the three planned events has taken place.

We have had presences at a variety of events, including Shipley Rivers Day 2013, Rae Gala 2014, opening of Rodley fish pass 2014.

We have collaborated with the Nisa store to make no littering signs in Polish and English to put out at the back of the shop.

Renaturalisation

We have had discussions with several developers and landowners about renaturalisation of the Beck in their areas. These include:

- The Odeon. Discussions with Bradford One, Bradford Live and the Council about deculverting the Beck on site as part of the preparation of the site. There are hints that we have influenced the design, but we are unlikely to see any significant daylighting.
- Bradford University Beehive Mills site. Initial discussions were positive but have not progressed further.
- New Bolton Woods. Sympathy but no action. Site constrained by space and money.
- Shipley Exchange. Very positive engagement which should develop into a real change on the site. By linking to this, we should be able to submit a major bid for renaturalisation of the adjacent reach from Briggate to Poplar Rd. Now that the planning appeal has been withdrawn, this is the best opportunity.

Conclusion

We are young but have achieved a lot already. It's been a pleasure making new friends and working with so many enthusiastic people to improve the Beck and the city of Bradford. My heartfelt thanks to all the busy people who have volunteered to join the group and do things! Of course it would be nice to have more people, more money and faster progress, but we'll get there!