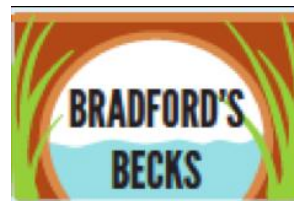
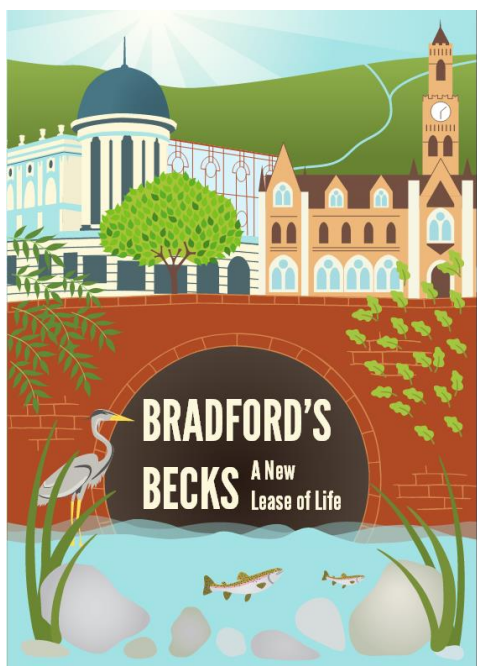


# Friends of Bradford's Becks summary of activities 2014-15



Friends of Bradford's Becks report to Environment and Waste O&S Committee, April 2015

## Introduction



The Friends of Bradford's Becks (FOBB) is a community group of Bradford based residents and ecologists who are keen to see the eventual restoration of the Bradford Beck river system. FOBB was formed to achieve the six visions in the catchment management plan<sup>1</sup> which was written after widespread consultation during 2011. The visions are:

- clean (i.e. free of pollution)
- visible
- accessible
- thriving (i.e. good ecologically)
- cared for becks
- in a water wise city

The catchment plan was supported by the Environment and Waste O&S Committee in 2013, and officers were requested to give FOBB assistance with the resulting projects. We reported

back to the Committee in April 2014, and this is our report for April 2015.

## FOBB activities in 2014-15

FOBB has been running **Awareness** and **Improvement** projects during this year, as well as responding to planning applications.

In order to raise awareness of the Beck, we have had litter picks, Becknics, a photographic competition which received good coverage in the T&A (see right), and a poetry competition.

The poetry competition has been very successful with 29 entries which will be turned into a published book, and good T&A coverage (next page). We have also created a travelling exhibition which will tour the city's libraries and other locations.

NEWS

Atmospheric shot wins becks photography competition



<sup>1</sup> Aire Rivers Trust, 2012. Bradford's Becks: a new lease of life. Available from <https://bradfordbeckdotorg.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/bradfordbecksfinalweboptimised.pdf>

**Bradford Beck poetry competition gathers pace**



The Friends of Bradford's Beck with illustrations of how the stone plaques will look. From left, Graham Glover, Ed Butterworth, Colin Fine and Dagmara Kepczynska

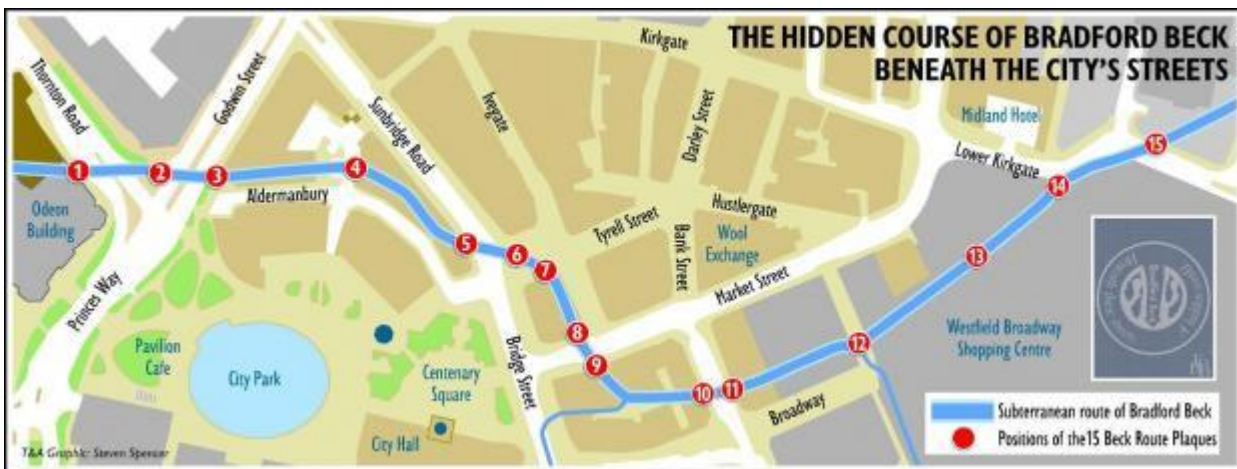
**Winning entry in Bradford Beck poetry competition announced**



The winner of the Bradford Beck poetry competition Jane Callaghan, middle, with chairman of the Beck group Barney Lerner, left, and middle right Kevin Flaherty, and far right Christine Appleby



**Marking the Beck:** Our major awareness project is to mark the course of the Beck where it runs under the city centre with a set of 15 pavement plaques. They will be carved by Pat Walls and each will carry a line of the poem by Jane Callaghan which won the poetry competition. So far Westfield (3), Bradford Live, Anchor Housing, Yorkshire Water, Napoleons Casino, and one anonymous donor have agreed to sponsor plaques; we need 7 more sponsors. We have had excellent support from Council officers with this project.



(Map from the T&A)

**Pollution monitoring:** Our major project on improving the Beck this year has been to monitor and report on pollution incidents. The Beck still suffers from these due to a variety of sources, include:

- poor construction practices releasing large quantities of sediment.
- Occasions when large volumes of polluted water are released deliberately or accidentally. There was one incident when the Beck turned orange for a day due a mine water release, and at least two occasions on which it turned white, probably due to an illegal industrial discharge.
- Misconnections in sewer systems, which can be in houses, commercial premises or in the sewers themselves. Over the last few months, FOBB volunteers have been monitoring selected sites visually and reporting pollution problems to the Environment Agency and Yorkshire Water. This has resulted in a number of investigations and corrections by YW.

Our evidence on misconnections was presented to an informal group of representatives of the EA, YW and CBMDC in October 2014. They agreed there is a significant problem, and that a joint effort should be made to investigate further. A project has been developed for the coming year – see below.

NEWS

VIDEO: Why has Bradford Beck turned bright orange at Shipley?



The orange water of Bradford Beck at Shipley today



## Activities planned for 2015-16

We will continue with our awareness projects, with the addition of publication of a booklet of walks related to all the main and tributary becks. We expect the Marking the Beck project to be completed by this time next year, with the continuing assistance of the Bradford Council.

The two major projects for the coming year are (1) Pollution monitoring and (2) Renaturalisation of a river reach.

**Pollution monitoring:** Funding is expected from the Environment Agency, via the Aire and Calder Catchment Partnership, to enable FOBB to formalise the pollution monitoring project using a new technique developed by the University of Sheffield (see right). Volunteers will use the simple method to determine at which locations and times misconnected drainage is polluting the Becks. These will be reported to the EA and YW. The tampon technique can also be used in sewer systems to help locate the source of the pollution. YW and Bradford Council are responsible for ensuring that the misconnections are corrected.

A major role for the Council in this project is in understanding the drainage system in areas where it is not recorded in Yorkshire Water’s databases. Tony Poole has had preliminary discussions with YW on this, and we look forward to an arrangement to make the archive data available.

NEWS

Glowing tampons to be used to detect pollution in Bradford Beck



Professor David Learner carrying out tests in the Tongue Gutter in Parsons Cross

We also hope to be able to develop a school science pack based on the idea, which can be used to introduce pupils to their local river and some of the issues around keeping it clean and ecologically thriving.

**Renaturalisation of a reach:** Our big ambition to get renaturalise the Beck wherever possible. We propose to start with the reach between Poplar Rd and Briggate, alongside Canal Rd. Our plan is to submit a Heritage Lottery Fund bid within 2 years. As a first step, we have had an outline design and costing prepared by JBA, a local firm on Consultant Engineers; the study was co-funded by the Environment Agency. During this year, we will consult on this design with the Council, residents and other interested parties, as we work towards a more detailed design and the HLF bid.

We have found it very hard to engage the Council in this project, despite its clear synergy with the Area Action Plan, Shipley Exchange and New Bolton Woods developments. A meeting was eventually held with Julian Jackson and Cllrs Val Slater and Alex Ross-Shaw on 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb, at which we noted the following actions:

1. FOBB to contact Bhupinder Dev to get an update on the AAPs for both Shipley-Canal Rd and City Centre, and make sure our ideas integrate with these. - DONE
2. Julian will have internal discussions to identify whom we should liaise with and make introductions. Probably includes drainage (Ed Norfolk?), land management (Highways?) and others.
3. Julian to update us on Shipley Exchange when possible.
4. Val to consider holding a discussion with other Executive portfolio holders on 10th March to gain political approval for the project (subject of course to details and consultations). JBA and FOBB can provide a briefing paper if required.
5. JBA and FOBB to prepare their feasibility study by end of Feb so that it is available to brief Executive members and ward councillors. DONE

We have not had any feedback or response on actions 2, 3 or 4.

## Support in the coming year

We ask for continued support in our campaign to improve Bradford's Becks for both the city's and the environment's benefit. We are not asking for Council funding, just for a little time of officers to guide and support us. In particular:

- Marking the Beck. Support has been excellent here, and we foresee no problems.
- Pollution monitoring. Although misconnections are normally dealt with by Environmental Health, the most important supporting activity for this project will be, as noted above, for the Drainage Engineers to help understand the drainage system, in cooperation with Yorkshire Water.
- Renaturalisation. We would appreciate being introductions to those officers and Departments with whom we should liaise as we move forward with design. Once the elections are over, we will approach the relevant Councillors for political support.
- Please invite FOBB to report back in a year's time.

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