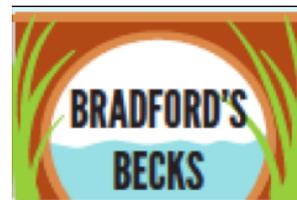


# Friends of Bradford's Becks summary of activities 2017-18



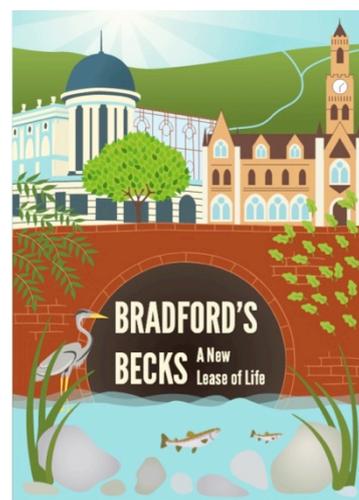
Friends of Bradford's Becks report to Environment and Waste Management O&S Committee, April 2018

## Introduction

The Friends of Bradford's Becks (FOBB) is a community group of Bradford based residents and ecologists. We are keen to see the eventual restoration of the Bradford Beck river system as a contribution to the quality of the city. 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 have reported back to the Committee in April each year since, and this is our report for April 2018.



## FOBB activities in 2017-18

FOBB has had most success this year on **Pollution Hunting** projects, with continuing activity on **Awareness** raising and the beginnings of progress on renaturalisation. We have had good engagement from Council Officers in many areas.

**Pollution Hunting:** Pollution by industrial discharges, failures in the sewer network and misconnections continue to be serious problems. They are often intermittent, making it harder to locate the sources. We completed our pollution hunting activities in which we employed an *Urban Pollution Hunter* to inspect outfalls and open sections of the becks at frequent intervals and gather data on pollution incidents. Four important developments have resulted from this intense data collection:

1. Multiple incidents were followed up by the Environment Agency with about half of them resolved.
2. A special investigation was commissioned by the Environment Agency of Westbrook (where frequency curry pollution was occurring). Eventually a food preparation facility was found to have



Figure 1 Curry in Westbrook

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

its waste pipes directly plumbed into Westbrook; they have now been re-plumbed!

3. An informal Working Group (Environment Agency, Yorkshire Water, CBMDC and FOBB) has been created by Bradford's Drainage Dept to tackle the ongoing pollution issues, as a result of lobbying by FOBB.
4. A project to review the capacity of Bradford's sewers will be included in Yorkshire Water's next investment period (2020-2025), subject to approval by OFWAT; this is a major achievement for FOBB after 8 years of lobbying.

Our **Awareness** activities have included:

- **Saltaire Festival.** We ran a workshop and information tent on the first weekend of the Festival (9-10 Sept), on the lawn outside Victoria Hall. Several hundred people called in learn more about the Beck and the Listening Sculpture.
- **River of Light.** As part of the Festival of Light event in the city centre (13-14 Oct), we opened up a manhole in Tyrrel St to show hundreds of passers-by the hidden Beck.



Figure 2 (left) The Beck open in Tyrrel St for the River of Light, and (right) workshop at the Saltaire Festival

Last year, we produced a 32-page booklet with six walks around the becks with the support of the Environment Agency. It includes background on the becks, flora and fauna, and a guide to identifying and reporting pollution. We have distributed about 4000 copies, and still have some left.

**Miss Connection** is our educational project for schools. Our storyteller, Irene Lofthouse, is going into primary schools to give them assemblies about mis-connected drainage and why it is important to only put rain down the drain. She would be happy to deliver the session to any school or community group.

We have written a history of the Bradford Beck which has been published in *The Bradford Antiquary*.

**Listening Sculpture.** A major disappointment this year has been our decision that we should stop actively seeking funding for the Listening Sculpture. It became clear that it would consume too much of the group's energy and distract us from our priorities.

**Renaturalisation.** Our big ambition continues to be renaturalisation of the Beck wherever possible. Following out from FOBB's outline design and costing prepared for us by JBA, a local firm of Consultant Engineers, we have had series of discussions with CBMDC Landscape Dept and the BEGIN project (Saira Ali) and the Environment Agency. We are attempting to build a partnership and work together to progress funding and action.

## River Stewardship

The Aire Rivers Trust is managing a River Stewardship project for CMBDC, funded through the flood local levy. The overall aim is to create a sustainable and active network of citizens looking after Bradford's rivers and supporting flood risk and resilience activities on behalf of the community. The objectives of Phase 2 of River Aire Care (i.e. 2017-18) are:

1. Create or support at least six "Friends" groups in different areas.
2. Engage with local business owners to get involved in River Stewardship. Establish a programme of clean up days in combination with business owners.
3. Develop strategies for the groups which combine flood resilience with environmental aspects.
4. Successfully bid for continuation funding for 2018-19 and beyond.

ART's project officer is Nick Milsom, and the project is being managed by Barney Lerner and Kevin Sunderland of ART, with support from Kirsty Breaks (CBMDC) and Jenny Barlow (EA). Initial activities include supporting the Higher Coach Rd Residents Group, supporting FOBB, exploring options for Ebor dam in Howarth, and organising litter picks on the Aire at Baildon, Apperley Bridge and Rye Loaf.

## Activities planned for 2017-18

**Pollution hunting:** We will continue with our pollution hunting work, although we no longer have funds to employ anyone to make regular checks of the state of the watercourses.

**Footpaths:** We plan to complement the walks booklet with signposts on the network of footpaths that run along and across the Becks in the Thornton Valley. The Co-op stores in Allerton have made us one of their charities for the year, which should provide enough funding to carry this out in the first part of 2019.



**Event in city centre:** We are hoping that there will be another city centre awareness event involving the Beck; we are supporting Brickbox which have submitted a proposal and funding bid.

**Walks and litter pick:** We have a series of guided walks, all welcome. See the website for details:

Sat 19<sup>th</sup> May. Pinch Beck and tributaries circular

Thurs 24<sup>th</sup> May. Chellow Dene and reservoirs circular

Sun 10<sup>th</sup> June. Loadpit Beck and Little Beck circular

Sat 23<sup>rd</sup> June. Five becks circular.

And a litter-pick, Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> April, Chellow Dene.

**River Stewardship:** We will continue to support the Aire Rivers Trust project.

**Renaturalisation:** And our big hope is that the renaturalisation project will make real progress – this coming year is probably the critical moment when multiple funding opportunities coincide.

## 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. The most important aspects are:

- To continue the campaign against pollution.
- To move the Canal Road renaturalisation project forward.

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