Newsletter July 2014

I am writing this as thunder rumbles over the house and lightning illuminates the lowering clouds. We have not been lucky enough to have any rain yet but the garden lives in hope! I have set myself a task of getting a newsletter out before my holidays as otherwise there is a danger it will drift still further into the year.

In some ways we are in a bit of a hiatus as we are between projects and in others we are really busy as our voluntary activities are at their seasonal height. Most of these revolve around our catchment initiatives as part of the Catchment Based approach. You can read more about this on our website under the What We Do tab. This link will take you to it

http://www.bristolavonriverstrust.org/what-we-do/

.

Catchment Initiative Updates

We have produced leaflets for each initiative which can be loaded down from the website – please take a peek and send them to anyone you think would be interested – or should be interested in what we are doing.

Upper Avon Catchment Initiative.

Our work placement student Maxine Goodey has walked a good few miles within the catchment recording what she has seen as she goes. Maxine has made a lot of contacts who have added colour and local knowledge and will be producing an overview report when her placement ends at the end of August. The report will be used both for wider engagement but also to identify where local projects can make a difference, particularly where volunteers can be involved.

Maxine on the Tetbury Avon in Malmesbury

Highlights along the way have been the people we have met and the interest they have shown in what we are doing. Maxine and BART are indebted to Leslie Bennett in particular who has given hours of her time showing Maxine the intricacies of the river system around Malmesbury. We have also had a good reception at the Wild Sherston event where our stand and talks have “spawned” an evening discussion meeting led by Prof Mark Everard talking about how local people might make improvements to their local river. This is being followed up by a river walk in August to further this objective.

The closest we found maize planted next to the river in the area was 3 feet – anyone lost a tractor?

August will also see BART holding a further River Fly Monitoring event. We will be training local people and volunteers at Cowbridge near Malmesbury. Those trained will receive fly monitoring kits which have been purchased with funds provided by Wiltshire County Council. We intend setting up formal sites which will be regularly monitored with the data collected being shared with the EA , local records centres and interest groups Thanks go to Riverside Angling Club for arranging the use of some of their waters to hold this event.

flymonitoringinitiative.pdf

Somerset Frome Initiative.

We have been fortunate to make “friends” at the start of this initiative who we hope will help to spread the word over time leading to wider involvement. Our “friends” so far include Friends of the Frome who have also agreed to be one of our “Beacon” groups, FWAG SW, Somerset Wildlife Trust, and the EA and all the angling clubs on the Frome led by Frome AC.

BART are very grateful to Ahern Technology who have donated several days work carrying out a walkover survey for us which has really helped progress this initiative (it is currently unfunded and entirely dependent on volunteer input). Ahern have carried out a walkover of the main river from Witham Priory to Rode. The report they have produced will be of great help to BART and other groups. BART have funded the completion of this piece of work by completing the walkover from Rode to Freshford, producing a further report using the same methodology.

BART are also thankful to the EA who have helped by providing information and helping familiarise us with the area – which saves days of exploration and getting lost.

Frome AC and the local angling clubs are producing an Angling Plan which will be shared with others highlighting what they feel needs to be done to improve the river, what they can do themselves and where they may need help.

We hope to meet this Autumn to review the information we have collected and to discuss next steps.

In the meantime Friends of the Frome have been tackling the Himalayan Balsam which is rife along the river. In July Friends of the Frome and BART have enjoyed a Balsam Pulling day organised by Neil of the Avon Invasive Weeds Partnership. There is a great physical satisfaction gained from clearing a patch of Balsam!

Wellow & Cam Initiative.

Our work on the Wellow & Cam has built on a foundation of information provided by the EA and has consisted so far of volunteer efforts on the Snails Brook and Kilmersden stream. We have walked and mapped these areas and identified where we can make significant improvements through habitat and general in stream work. We hope to progress these during the remainder of this year and into next Spring. Maxine and Vickie, two of our volunteers, have also carried out some river fly monitoring and found a wide variety of invertebrates which was topped off by filming a hatch of Mayfly earlier in the Summer. Whilst carrying out their surveys a good number of bullhead were found.

Melissa Hoskings our catchment officer will be extending this initiative in the coming months as we will be working closely with the Wild Trout Trust on a number of small projects in the area. One such project, which has taken considerable effort to date, is to help the Wellow Fly Fishers develop a stretch of their trout fishing by planning the removal of three boulder weirs and then improving the river by carrying out in stream work and coppicing banks to encourage more light to reach the stream. BART and the Wild Trout Trust have freely contributed their time to developing and obtaining consent for these plans and will be working closely together to help raise funds to ensure these works can be completed for the club concerned who have done a tremendous job keeping the fishery viable after a pollution in recent times resulted in a loss of most of their wild brown trout stock. Thankfully things seem to be on the mend.

These initiatives are the very early stages of developing local improvement plans for the areas concerned. At present they are concentrating on finding out what local people need and want from their rivers and sharing the information we have collected about the river from research. We hope to find some local projects along the way but will be concentrating more on producing local reports by the year end which will lead to a much wider engagement exercise and the formation of stronger project ideas which local people can take forward.

Other Projects

We are close to signing off paperwork for a phase 2 project on By Brook and a partnership project on the Wellow Brook so look out for more details in the next newsletter or on the website. We are also working very hard to secure funding for other work in the catchment. Until then we are pressing ahead with our catchment initaitives. Please get in touch if you would like to take part in any of these.

We recently received a welcome sum in respect of an agreement between Wessex Water and the Environment Agency regarding a problem that arose on the River Trym in Westbury on Trym near Bristol. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/first-enforcement-undertaking-accepted-from-water-company

Our Catchment officer and volunteers are currently working to identify where we might help on the Trym and how best we can use these funds both there and elsewhere in the Catchment.

That's all for now – we will provide an update again in the Autumn.

BART Beacons are the way we are establishing a community of interest groups across the catchment who feedback news from across the catchment like old fashioned radio masts. They will be the "eyes and ears" of BART identifying problems or opportunities on their local stretch of river or stream. BART will share this information with other Beacons and look for opportunities to bring these together on logical projects to improve the health of the river. Local knowledge and interest is all you need to become a beacon; whether you are an individual who has something to share or a community or interest group we would love to hear from you.

Beacons are not necessarily volunteers but are independent partners with a mutual interest in sharing news about the rivers and streams within our catchment area. If you know of clubs, community groups , walking groups or indeed any groups who care about our rivers and streams and who might wish to become beacons please forward this newsletter to them.

Please take a look at our website – www.bristolavonriverstrust.org and follow us on Facebook and share this Newsletter with any friends who have an interest in the river.

Feedback or questions are welcome – just give me a call on 07411488084. Ian