

Botesdale Streams Project Update



Sunday morning working parties re-commenced in early October, with the plan for the forthcoming season being one of care and maintenance. The site gets plenty of usage during the summer months but inevitably the autumn legacy is one of empty bottles and cans, which are left littered across the site. Sadly the memorial bench located alongside the top stream was further vandalised to a point where it was deemed beyond repair.

Following an unprecedented period of prolonged heavy rainfall throughout most of the summer and early autumn, water levels have been very high. The recently excavated inter-connecting stream running North West down the slope now has a gravel bottom along the first part of its length as the rapidly flowing water has removed the silt sediment. However the top stream remains heavily silted despite the concerted efforts of the volunteers. The use of a mini or micro-digger along this stretch would resolve this issue if access could be obtained.

Botesdale Parish Council has exchanged correspondence with Anglian Water concerning the possibility of community use of the land surrounding their pumping station in Fen Lane. This half an acre site, although very boggy, would benefit from some care and attention, perhaps being planted with some suitable native species of plants and trees and would also provide an ideal site for the erection of nesting boxes. To assist with the drainage of this plot a short stretch of ditch was excavated by a Payback Team working party.

The NSPT Payback Teams have been extensively used since the commencement of the project in January 2010. They have carried out most of the heavier labouring tasks and have also 'strimmed' the nettle beds twice each summer. Unfortunately this service will no longer be available as the Norfolk and Suffolk Probation Trust have advised us that for all future usage of the teams a charge of £75 per visit will be levied. For a voluntary body such as ours without an income, this was totally out of the question.

Much remains to be done. The main stream bed is blocked at times by debris that gets entangled by boughs and even complete trees that have also toppled in. Two volunteers have recently acquired waders, to supplement the essential wellies, when we are required to remove such obstacles from deeper water. The January 2013 floods (see image) highlighted this when the whole area was submerged under as much as a foot of flood water, which was not only caused by heavy overnight rain and a sudden snow melt, but also by a serious blockage further upstream. Our plan for the year ahead is to progress further with the silt removal from the bed of the top stream and to trim back the vegetation on its easterly bank. A replacement for the destroyed wooden bench is an agenda item for the parish councils, while the absence of Payback Team support is of much concern.

This report was being prepared in February 2013 some four months prior to it being printed and distributed, which is unfortunate as the streams area is at its best throughout the spring months. As I write the snowdrops and aconites are in bloom and despite the recent snow the daffodils will follow very shortly. A walk down Fen Lane, toward the bridge, on a sunny March or April day is well worth the effort and is rewarded by a sensory avalanche of sights, sounds and smells that I suspect could only be found here in this corner of the United Kingdom.

If you are interested in the activities of our group and would like to find out more then please visit our website <http://www.botesdalestreams.webeden.co.uk> or call me on 01379 897053.

