

Wilbraham River Protection Society Committee Zoom meeting

January 22nd 2021 at 7 pm.

Present: Richard Townley (chair), Brian Jackson, Tony Goryn, Jackie Beadsmore, Ray Tilbrook, Rebecca Lomas, David Lomas.

Apologies : David White, Jane Gaskell, Pat Simpson, Susan Simpson.

Minutes of last meeting accepted as a true record.

Treasurers report. No changes since the last meeting.

Secretaries report. Nil to report

1 Matters for discussion.

The committee agreed that Tony Goryn would draft a letter to the EA offering to provide regular information about flow in the river. We will also offer our help with any data collection that may allow them to improve augmentation of the river flow. He will liaise with Brian Jackson on this.

2 Water reports. Above average rainfall in two of the last three months has resulted in good flow in the river and the expectation is that the Cherry Tree Stud borehole will be above 14 AOD.

Weather & Groundwater Review October 2020 TO December 2020			
	October	November	December
Rainfall	Notably high. 111mm or 212% ofLTA	Dry month. Below normal rainfall. East Anglia 38mm or 65% LTA.	Very wet month. Av. rainfall 108mm or195% LTA.
Soil Moisture/Deficit /Recharge	Now notably Low SMD.	Improving but below Normal.	Improvement continues Now better than Normal.
River Flows	Increased flow at all indicator sites.	Increased flows at majority of sites.	Increased flows at all indicator sites.
Groundwater	Recharge has started. Majority of sites at Normal or higher GW levels.	Levels increased at majority of sites.	Recharge continues. Levels rising.
Cherry Tree Stud	30/10 11.61 AOD	30/11 12.28 AOD	06/12 12.43 AOD

LTA: Long Term Average / AOD: Above Ordnance Datum / CTS: Cherry Tree Stud.

3 Chalk Aquifers Association meeting. Attended by Tony Goryn and Rebecca and David Lomas.

The meeting was reported as representing a new and well organised society which has representatives from both environmental and engineering backgrounds. The society is large and seems to be a useful conduit for representing our river. WRPS to continue contact.

4 Chairman Appointment.

Richard Townley will continue as chair for the next few meetings. Tony Goryn and David Lomas will support him. Alan and Eileen Cody to be approached regarding membership with a view to Chairing the Society in the future.

5 Cam Valley Forum.

The new issue is a good summary of current projects and forums that are underway at present.

Individual registration forms have been made available to the committee to subscribe to the CVF if required.

6 New Project Proposals

David Lomas (a member of the society) proposed some projects that he would like to undertake. These could provide material for the website. David was invited to join the committee.

- 1) To review the society's minutes, from inception, to create a summary record all projects and initiatives that have been undertaken over the years.
- 2) Mapping the river's course, and its changes, where possible from before the enclosure acts to the present day. RT requested that this include the Caudle Ditch.
- 3) Document the course of the rivers, photographically and by drone. The very high water levels at present and the absence of foliage make this a good time of year to achieve this project.

7 WRPS website.

It was agreed that the WRPS webpages could be improved Tony will ask Alan Cody for his help with this.

8 Water Resources East (WRE) statement of resource need document.

The scoping consultation will run until Wed 10th February 2021. RT will draft a response from the WRPS to the following questions.

Environment in WRE plan-making questions:

A. Do the proposed Natural Capital Assessment, Biodiversity and Environmental Net Gain approaches provide confidence that WRE's plan-making is taking a *natural capital approach* in line with the expectations of the Environment Agency's National Framework and Water Resource Planning Guidelines?

B. Do you consider that the proposed environmental metrics – e.g. environmental flow, carbon and ENG – provide an appropriate basis for WRE to develop its *Best Environmental Programme* – as anticipated in the Environment Agency’s draft WPRG – Supplementary Guidance: The Environment and Society?

9 Greater Cambridge Chalk Streams project.

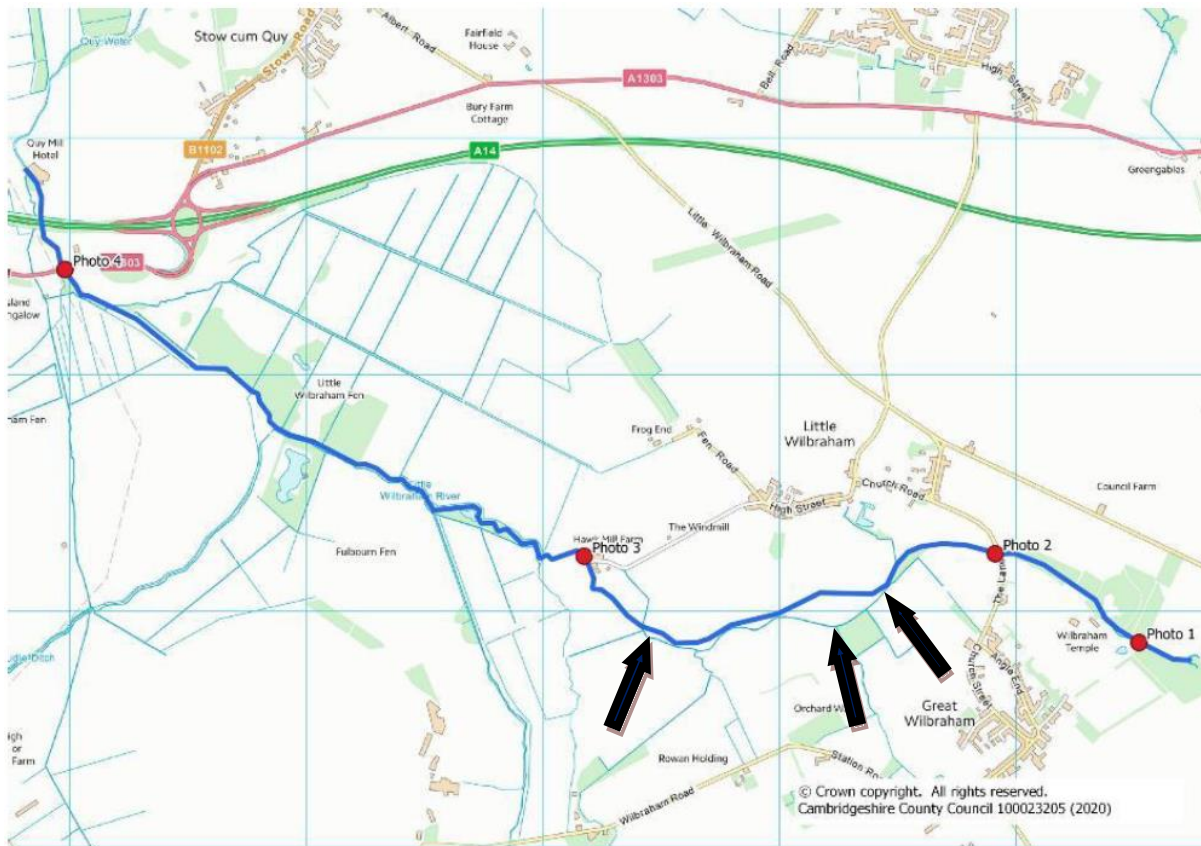
This was undertaken on behalf of Cambridge City Council and Cambridge Water as an audit of all the chalk streams in the upper Cam catchment area. It was co authored by CCC, Cambridge Water, The Wild Trout Trust and the Bedford, Cambridge and Peterborough Wildlife Trust.

The entry for the Wilbraham River is reproduced below.

Little Wilbraham River		Watercourse length 6.8km
River assessment feature	Comment	Red/amber/green
Species of biodiversity importance	Limited fish, aquatic invertebrates and plants due to repeated drying of the watercourse in the last few decades. Fen pond weed (a specialist of lowland fens) was recorded in past but not in 2015 survey. The river is becoming dominated by common reed which appears to be able to tolerate the land drainage management and drying out the channel.	Red
Brown trout presence	Unlikely to support due to frequent drying of the river, lack of connectivity and non-existent spawning habitat.	Red
Community group present	Wilbraham River Protection Society	Green
Public access	Footpath runs along parts of the river in Wilbraham Common.	Green
Nature reserve / designated site	SSSI through Wilbraham Common and Fen sites, and parts are also a CWS.	Green
Connectivity / fish barriers	Quy Mill and Hawk Mill present barriers to fish passage, as may some culverts.	Red
Invasive species present	None known	Green
Presence of gravel / natural geomorphic features / mature trees with roots	The river is part of an unnatural drainage and mill river system. The river has been straightened and deepened to the point where it is little more than a fen drainage system. Almost no coarse substrate exists. No meanders with pools, and there are negligible mature trees.	Red
Flow regime	Very prone to drying out.	Red
Effluent / run-off inputs	None known	Green
Watercourse receives management	SCDC maintains this edge-of-fen system to support adjacent low-lying farmland. Land drainage is given priority and it will remain so with current farming practices and the Council's obligation to maintain land drainage needs.	Amber
Habitat enhancement potential	Potential would be greater given certainty of flow. Limited habitat restoration potential given the narrow nature of the channel and general lack of gradient.	Red
Supportive landowner(s)?	Unknown	Red

Further Comment:

- The Little Wilbraham River has been severely affected by repeated low flows and poor physical habitat. The river’s flow has often declined to the point where it depends entirely on the EA compensation flow in most summers. This can result in the river flowing near its source, the Wilbraham Temple Springs, but flow seeps into the ground a short distance downstream due to the lack of water in the chalk aquifer to support the river from beneath.
- Note that in October 2020 the river was entirely dry from the gauging station to the A1303, a distance ~6km.
- The river has been managed as a fen drainage system for many decades which has removed habitat features such as gravel and bedform variation.
- There is little scope to restore the river due to the low-lying nature of the adjacent farmland and the legal obligation of SCDC to maintain the current drainage network.
- Due to the combination of low (or non-existent) flows and poor physical habitat without a current opportunity for change, there are no habitat improvement projects proposed for this watercourse.
- If reliable flows were reinstated, this river would have multiple project opportunities.



The committee questioned the accuracy of the report for the following reasons

- A) The map shows the course of the river running along the New Cut. The river was diverted back to its original course in October 2012. The report infers that little of the river flows in its original bed. This fact is disputed by the committee.
- B) Information appears to have been taken from the river survey of 2015 and the river has since been cleared of weed by the EA.
- C) The landowners are present on the WRPS and form an active group.
- D) The Fulbourn tributary of the river is not mentioned at all.
- E) Every other river surveyed had suggested projects proposed. There were none for the Wilbraham River.

It was noted that the final statement regarding “reliable flows” indicated the importance of achieving all year round flow.

It was agreed that RT, RS, DL would draft a reply.

An interim committee meeting to be scheduled for **Thursday Feb 4th 2021 at 7PM** to discuss draft responses to the WRE and GCCS project also TG’s letter to the EA. This will be held by zoom and all members are welcome to attend

Dates for 2021 meetings. All at 7pm on a Thursday.

April 22nd, July 22nd, October 22nd, AGM November 25th.

Wilbraham River Protection Society Minutes meeting

Thursday April 22nd 2021

Present. Richard Townley, Brian Jackson, Ray Tilbrook, Jane Gaskin, Tony Goryn, David Lomas, Rebecca Lomas.

Apologies David White, Jackie Beadsmore

Minutes of last meeting accepted as a true record.

Treasurers report. Balance October 2020: £1505.57

Paid in: £25 (sale of books)

Balance April 2021: £1525.57

Secretaries report. We continue to be updated with the cam valley forum newsletter.

Jackie Beadsmoor has tendered her resignation from the society and Rt will write to thank her for her support .RT

Matters for Discussion.

Correspondence with the Environment Agency.

RT will respond to Amanda Mumford's letter drawing on points made by TG and DL. He will request a meeting to discuss how flow in the river may be preserved or improved. The committee feels this meeting should be held soon to capitalise on current interest, investment and change to the water planning for this area.

Water Resources East letter from RT accepted and action awaited.

Greater Cambridge Chalk Streams Project. RT DL and RL reported back from a meeting held at Fulbourn and the Temple Springs in March with Ruth Hawksley from the Wildlife Trust. The river was in good flow at the time, the springs running well. The river was observed at its Fulbourn source and across the Temple land. Alexander Wright has done a lot of work to improve the river health over his land.

It was agreed that the CCCSP entry for the Wilbraham River was in parts inaccurate and that projects to improve it could be realised. However over all the most important step is to improve flow and water levels in the river.

Ruth Hawksley had been invited to join tonight's meeting but due to an email glitch had not received the Zoom Link. She subsequently received the agenda. RH suggested that the CCCSP was due to be revised in May 21 and that we should organise a follow up meeting after this and after our meeting with the EA. RT DL RL. RH to consult the WRPS on any second report or addition.

Water Report.

Jan Feb and March 2021 had the highest rainfall since records began, 169% of the LTA The AOD rose to 16.8 in March but already is beginning to drop.

The land surrounding the Great Wilbraham gauging Weir is reported as waterlogged . This is a longstanding feature of this area. The boreholes dropped here by the WRPS need to be reidentified and read. However as it is SCDC responsibility to maintain the river here and it is partially blocked with weed and reed. TG will inform CA (tenant farmer) as he may wish to arrange clearance of this stretch.

List of WRPS events

Review of WRPS events since inception by DL . Suggested additions all the river walks and attendance at public gatherings. DL

Website.

DL presented a list of suggested documents that could be to a website and the committee approved these. It was agreed that adding links to other chalk stream and conservation websites was appropriate. That adding the PDF of Dr Hawkins latest edition of the River Handbook was a good idea as we have his son's permission.

It was decide to approach Alan Cody to put together a test website for the WRPS and review if this is a practical suggestion as it will require long term update and maintenance. The alternative is to improve the WRPS entry for the Wilbraham Villages website including links to Fulbourn PCC and Fulbourn Forum. A decision to be made at next meeting. DL AC

TG will contact David Smith to update the bird sitings on the SSSI and along the river. These could be included on the website and Mr Smith could be approached as a speaker for this years AGM.

River Video.

DLs film of the LW river will be available on the website and he was congratulated on its production.

Cam Valley Forum.

The WRPS continues to attend these events and to maintain links with the forum.

Wildlife sitings.

Increasing numbers of Roe deer and bird species along the river and on the bordering SSSI . This is due to the conservation farming practiced by DW, the increasing environmental awareness of the landowners and this year the high water levels. However this year due to Covid there has been a much higher footfall on he footpaths bordering the river.

Suggested to invite landowners to join the society if they are not members. RT

River Walk.

Discuss at next meeting a river walk in September 2021.

AOB.

RT introduced the **Fulbourn Forum** plan to produce a film that would include aspects and histories of the river through to the Cam. The society agreed that this sounded like a good idea but would be a different production to the one DL has recorded. DL to continue with his film showing the Great Wilbraham river course.

Overview of the projected **draft plans** for this area of Cambridge and how it might affect the river and the surrounding SSSI. Significant changes are being discussed locally. These include Honey Hill sewerage works. Wicken Fen Project(NT) and the Nature corridor (WT). The planning development of Cambridge, SCDC, including the planned resiting of Cambridge United football stadium and recreation fields in Cambridge East close to the SSSI. It was agreed that the committee needed to be alert to changes that might affect the river adversely.

DJL will be meeting the EA to discuss management of Wilbraham Fen SSSI as unit one of the SSSI is deteriorating. This area is owned by LW parish and borders the river toward the A14.

Letter from local resident regarding sewerage dumping into rivers nationally to be redirected to the Cam Valley Forum as it does not affect our river RT

AGM suggested focus on wildlife and the environment. Invite Mr David Smith and discuss any other speakers at next meeting.

Next meeting July 22nd 2021 at 7 pm by Zoom at present.

Wilbraham River Protection Society Committee Meeting: July 22nd by Zoom.

Present: Richard Townley. Brian Jackson. Jane Gaskell. David Lomas. Rebecca Lomas.

Apologies: David White. Ray Tilbrook.

Minutes of last meeting: Minor corrections to be made.

Treasurers Report: No changes to society finances.

Secretary's Report: Tony Goryn has tendered his resignation from the committee. He will continue as a member and monitor the river flow and liaise with the Environment agency. His resignation has been accepted and we will continue to work closely with him.

Matters for discussion:

Response from Jennifer Meadows of the Environment Agency to BJs letter from the committee. The reply provided some answers to the following issues. Full e mail attached.

1 Why over 3 decades has the augmentation scheme intermittently, but consistently, failed its objectives and in so doing damaged the flora and fauna of the river?

2 Is there now an imbalance between the permissible abstraction from the aquifer in order to preserve a continuous flow in the river?

3 Some improvements have been made to the river in recent years (including the diversion of flow in the New Cut (WRPS initiative). Have there been any other improvements?

4 Is it possible to have access to the RSA groundwater modelling to assess the effect of abstractions from the aquifer through pumping? Also can we have access to the RSA investigation report? Were there any agreed measures?

5 Whilst RSA has focused on droughts, was there any consideration of failure of flow during dry periods in a year?

6 We are interested to learn why the decision was made to commence augmentation at the Nature Reserve for the Fulbourn stretch of the river. It effectively ignores all that is upstream of the Nature Reserve.

7 We offer to gather information from the gauging stations (and otherwise, if we can agree additional points) and report them to you immediately. We hope you can arrange access in real time, for us, to local groundwater level data, river flow rates and pumping rates, plus abstraction rates for the 5 or 6 closest wells to the spring sources for the river system.

The responses were discussed and in some cases it was felt they should be challenged and further details/clarification obtained. It was agreed that BJ would arrange a meeting with the EA in early September ?6 7 8 10 to discuss the EA's response to these questions. It was felt an interim committee meeting should be scheduled in early September to discuss our responses to the reply - ahead of meeting with the EA.

DJL agreed to check back through some of the EA data as our main concern is that abstraction disproportionately affects our river and for thirty years since the augmentation scheme was started it has consistently failed to maintain all-year flow - even in the absence of a drought situation as

alluded to in the letter.

WRE:

No further information circulated to us at present

Water Report.

Flow is declining in the river as the water table falls after less rain. TG will monitor this weekly collecting the water levels at specified sites on the river and liaising with Rebekah Morris the technical officer, hydrology and operations at the EA. The aim is to make pumping more responsive to falling flow levels. See TG chart below for most recent update of the information supplied.

Website update.

The website has been set up by Alan Cody of Little Wilbraham to whom we are most grateful. DJL is updating and adding documents etc and will look into the cost of an appropriate domain name? wrps.org. Removing adverts from the site will require a regular subscription and DJL will further investigate the costs. The website will need to be maintained and updated and it would be helpful to find a volunteer for this.

The current website link is below but this is likely to change as it gets further developed

<https://wilbrahamriver.wixsite.com/wrps>

Cam Valley Forum

RT visited the Granta River where Rob Mungovan has received a grant and has made changes to the river to improve flow and retain and improve wildlife habitats. In 2002 when Mr Mungovan surveyed the Wilbraham River he drew up similar plans that we could implement. The 2002 survey can be found on the river website (link below)

Improving river flow through the year is the society's first objective and if we can move forward with this in our meeting with the EA then a subsequent meeting with Ruth Hawksley of the WT and Rob Mungovan to discuss implementing some of his suggestions. To be arranged.

Wild life sightings.

The SSSI was cited on the presence of six plants . To collect details of these and see if still present>

River walk

Jane Gaskell to map a route from Fulbourn for the next walk in ? Spring 2022. Land owners will need to be consulted especially if it involves the start of the Caudle ditch.

Update on Wilbraham Fen SSSI

DJL noted that the SSSI has been significantly reduced in size twice since its initiation in 1959. Areas of important habitat are not included in the current SSSI. DJL held an initial meeting to discuss the history, preservation and management of the SSSI with Monica O'Donnell (Natural England), Rob Pitkin (Environment Agency) Dave Humphrey Chair of LWPC (who own unit 1 of the SSSI which is "deteriorating") and Henry Barbour (Quy Estates owner of Units 2,3,4). The impact of changes to the fen and SSSI water levels may have implications for the river flow but are not directly connected as the Fen and SSSI drain into the Black Ditch through a culvert under the river. DJL plans further meetings to gain more information and consider actions to protect and possibly enlarge the SSSI. Henry Barbour is to be invited to join the WRPS as the SSSI abuts the river.

It was noted that threats to the SSSI are the "Cambridge East" plans including: moving the park and ride east from its current position, resiting of Cambridge United Football Stadium, and the impact

of construction traffic access for the Honey Hill Waste Water Treatment Plant Site.

It was agreed that the WRPS needs to maintain involvement with larger initiatives/groups such as Cambridge Nature Network (Cambridge Past Present & Future), Cam Valley Forum and the Wicken Fen Vision (National Trust), to protect our river and the land that surrounds it.

AGM

Mr David Smith to confirm he is happy to speak at AGM on November 25th 2021.
RJS to book hall. To decide later if the meeting should be by Zoom.

Next meeting October 22nd 2021 7.30 by Zoom

Table of River Water Gauging Stations/Boards – Levels (courtesy of TG)

	Fulbourn ODN	Fulbourn Crest	Wilbraham ODN	Wilbraham Crest	The Temple	Well cm
21.3.21	-	-	13.36	10.53	-	- 421 (24.3.21)
29.3.21	-	-	13.36	10.54	-	- 433 (6.4.21)
20.4.21	13.36	10.44	13.36	10.54	-	- 432 (17.4.21)
1.5.21	-	-	13.33	10.53	-	-
9.5.21	13.38	10.46	-	-	-	-
10.5.21	-	-	13.32	10.50	-	- 459 (11.5.21)
23.5.21	13.38	10.46	13.28	10.47	-	- 455 (19.5.21)
30.5.21	13.37	10.46	13.22	10.42	38	-
6.6.21	13.31	10.40	13.18	10.38	36	- 480 (7.5.21)
13.6.21	13.25	10.35	13.14	10.36	-	-
20.6.21	13.26	10.36	13.13	10.33	35	-
27.6.21	13.21	10.31	13.08	10.28	-	-
4.7.21	13.16	10.26	13.04	10.24	-	-
6.7.21	Augmentation commences at Fulbourn - small amount					
11.7.21	13.11	10.21	13.00	10.20	-	-
18.7.21	13.06	10.16	12.95	10.15	16	-
		Very low surface flow downstream of Fulbourn Crest 18.7.21		Apparent stationary surface flow immediately downstream of Wilbraham crest 11.7.21 & 18.7.21		NB this column 0.5 m approx up on 2020
19.7.21			Augmentation commences at Wilbraham - (50% of the time I believe)			
20.7.21	-	-	12.98	10.18	-	-
21.7.21	13.10	10.20	12.99	10.19	-	-
23.7.21	13.04	10.14	12.99	Kingfisher 10.19	-	-
25.7.21	13.03	10.13	12.99	10.19	-	-
27.7.21	13.00	10.10	12.97	10.17	-	-
29.7.21	-	-	12.97	10.16	-	-
1.8.21	13.00	10.10	12.96	10.15	-	-

Wilbraham River Protection Society Committee meeting October 28th at 7 pm by Zoom.

Present Richard Townley Jane Gaskell David Lomas Rebecca Lomas.

Apologies Brian Jackson Ray Tilbrook Susan Simpson Pat Simpson David White

Minutes of the last meeting accepted as a true record.

Treasurers report. No changes to the societies finances

Secretaries Report. Ray Tilbrook has tendered his resignation from the committee after many years due to ill health. RT to express the committee's thanks.

There has been difficulty booking the Village hall as the AGM falls on a Thursday when the hall has a weekly booking for the choir. To explore other options but to consider a day change for next years meeting.

The number of mails to the secretary has escalated dramatically in the last six months. Relevant reports are multiple and currently links are stored on the agenda or in the records. DJL will attach the reports to the website ,for future reference and improved access.

Environment Agency Meeting. BJ has had no response to his letter in September to Amanda Mumford requesting a meeting he will continue to chase this.

Water Resources East meeting in October 21. BJ and RT attended this meeting working towards a draft plan in January. There will be further individual catchment workshops and the society should continue to be involved. Most of the other stakeholders are larger organisations.

WRE aim to decrease abstraction and have a number of alternatives that may be introduced to provide for future water needs.

The Fenland Restoration project will be initiated when the Marshalls site is redeveloped and the Society should aim to participate with this if possible.

The following link connects to fact sheet summary of information from the meeting.

https://wre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/PR2-S_2359-WRE-factsheets-clickable-pdf-FINAL.pdf

Cambridge Water round table Oct 13th. RT attended.

CW are producing their own plan to run concurrently in publications with WRE. This meeting had a smaller number and more local participants . The CW agenda focusses more actively on reducing abstraction and decreasing water abuse through reducing leakage, education on water use, smart meters and possible unit price increase.

RT will write to Lucy Fraser to promote the principle of changing water use behaviours.

The society will support further meetings.

Water reports. BJ submitted the data from Cherry tree borehole for the last three available months. Document attached .

TG has compiled a report on river flow as a result of augmentation tailored to water levels and fed back to the EA on a frequent and regular basis. The river has not run dry this year and this appears to show that early intervention with augmentation of pumping has maintained the river levels in the little Wilbraham and Fulbourn branches.

DL noted that although this was a very encouraging result last winter was one of the wettest winters on record and this may have influenced the result.

TG has committed much time and energy to report and undoubtedly the result is significant. It was suggested that having live telemetry at the gauging stations might produce the same result with less work. To be discussed with the EA at next meeting.

Website update. The website is up and running. The domain name has been purchased for 1 year £93.60. DJL has uploaded numerous documents and links to associated organisations, the river video and information on joining the society.

River walk. Suggestions for next years walk include: requesting David Smith to lead the walk maybe with Rob Mungovan and talk on the river, its management to improve habitats and flows and the wildlife and birds.

Wilbraham Warbler RJL to contribute a piece including date and speaker for the AGM.

Membership New members are needed. RT remains as honorary chairman and wishes to step down. RL has been secretary for 13 years and would also be happy to step down. However currently water management is a fast changing area and the committee will remain in post until new members can be recruited.

Suggestions to attract new members. Leaflet? Stall at farmers market RL to discuss with Paul Lambton.

Promote the website

Local school contact promote walks.

Representation on committee from WEG or Parish Councils. Fulbourn film club night will promote the river.

Attend community functions.

Update on Wilbraham Fen DL has organised several meetings discussing plans for the ecological improvement of unit one owned by Little Wilbraham Parish Council. This lies along side the river and a WRPS member will be invited to further meetings regarding the future of the Fen.

AGM Nov 27th. Plan David Smith to talk and the AGM to follow. TG to be invited to report his augmentation project to the AGM with questions to follow. It was suggested that his summary should be circulated in advance of the AGM.

River dredging. TG arranged a meeting with, Pat Matthews , Dave Humphries and Lee Hiram to discuss the background to the river dredging and its ecological impact and no changes to current management are planned.

Next meeting AGM 27th November 2021 at 7 pm

Committee meetings 2022: Jan 27th April 21st July 21st October 20th

AGM November 24th 2022