

## **Abbey Ponds Working Group**

A MEETING of the ABBEY PONDS WORKING GROUP took place on **Monday 12 January 2025 at 6.00pm** at Fry's Halt, Station Road.

**Present:** Cllr Jones (EJ), Crawford (JC) Coulter (EJ), Mike Brownlow (MB), Angus Davis (AD), Ross Dixon (RD), Roger Gallannaugh (RG),

**Officers:** Town Clerk

**Meeting started at 6.05pm**

### **MEETING NOTES**

#### **25/18: Apologies for absence (LGA 1972 s85(1))**

Apologies received from Gordon Fry (GT, Vice Chair) and Ed Tickner (ET).

#### **25/19: Declarations of interest**

Declarations of Interests Members to declare any interests, including disclosable pecuniary interests, they may have in agenda items that accord with the requirements of the Town Council's Code of Conduct and to consider any written requests from members for dispensations that accord with the Localism Act 2011 s33 (b-e) (This does not preclude any later declaration).

None.

#### **25/20: Notes from the previous Working Group meeting, held on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2025 (LGA 1972 sch 12 para 41 (1)).**

To agree the Notes from the meeting on 13 October 2025 as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Agreed.

**25/21: Level Access: “Connecting Abbey Ponds”**

- a. To receive and update progress, towards installing:
  - i Pedestrian wayfinding signage to-and-from Bruton Station, via Abbey Ponds and the Durslade Community Garden.

The information on the way finding signage was made available today. EJ summarized the options. Initial positions are opposite the station entrance, and at the entrance junction to the station. Two contractors have been approached to supply the signage (finger post style). One contractor is unable to quote, and has referred us to back to the second contractor.

Quotes have been obtained. Consider the fingers post style signage for both of the two locations,

- ii Accessible gate and ramp for the bottom of Abbey Ponds.

Thank you to the contractor, Tom Yeoman, and also to Ross Dixon (Hauser & Wirth Operations Manager) for the professional management and delivery of the footpath and ramp. This part of the project has come in under budget which is excellent news.

RD reported that the contractor has reinstalled the ‘wash out’ material twice since the area has flooded which is incredibly generous, thank you.

Further discussion continued, including the importance of avoiding actively discharging water onto the main highway, along with the movement of material from the surface of the footpath. Discussion about enlarging the lower pond to attenuate water, which does not solve the issue of the capacity of the culvert being insufficient.

A survey has been received, that was conducted by Network Rail, about the capacity of the culvert, which shows the issues within. The survey was undertaken in July 2025. Thank you to GF for driving this, and obtaining a copy of the report which was sent to the clerk.

The clerk has approached Network Rail regarding the survey, and it is understood that the Network Rail contact will respond this week (w/c 12/01/26). A joint approach from the Town Council with Kings School to Network Rail could help move things forward. RD confirmed that there is a Highways drain in Durslade Farm that also outpours into Abbey Ponds.

The clerk to send the survey report to Kings (Estate Manager and Bursar), to be done this week.

The clerk, with two councillors and RD are meeting with an engineer on 13/01/2026 to discuss the drainage further.

iii Information signage on Abbey Ponds.

Following the last council meeting EJ and Cllr Anderton have met with the signage designer and the design is almost finalized. There will be three locations; at the entrance, at the top of the Dovecote path and then gate into the adjacent field (within the Scheduled Monument). The estimated cost is now under £4,000, along with the £3,000 design fees. Final colours to be determined once the stone colour is known. Thank you to the design team from H&W.

iv Improving the surface of the Hoggin Path extension through Durslade Community Garden. No longer relevant.

b. To review the project progress against budget.

The good news is that the project is coming in under budget at the moment.

**25/22: Habitat management**

a. To consider the scope of the Abbey Ponds Maintenance Tender 2026-29 and make recommendations to the Town Council.

Cutting was discussed at length, with debate about when cutting started in the year and the length of time left between cuts. Requirements marked up on the grounds maintenance schedule by the clerk.

RD raised the point that the Wild Sauna has increased footfall through Abbey Ponds, and might create more comments about the appearance of the area generally.

Questions were posed about how would the contractor work with the volunteer network? It was felt that it needs to be separate from volunteer works, but the contractor needs to be aware of what volunteers are doing. Communication, as well as a flexible approach, is important, and making sure that each knows what the other is doing.

Recommended for a budget provision of £1500, to Finance and Resources Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> January.

b. To note recent work parties of King's Bruton student volunteers, led by Roger Gallannaugh, under Bruton Town Council's Section 17 Management Agreement for the Scheduled Monument with Historic England.

Thank you to RG who co-ordinates the volunteers from Kings (currently there are 4 of them). There is an agreement that the Wild Shed Sauna that they take the wood away, which has not been happening regularly. It's possible that the offcut wood may get to the level where it needs to be chipped. The plan for the rest of the term is to clear the dead elm and the bramble.

JC requested that the ivy to be removed from the hawthorn trees. There was debate about the habitat that the ivy is now at an overpowering level. Selective pruning to take place.

c. To note the recent works taken place on the outfall, led by Hauser and Wirth. Thank you to RW and his team for recent works on the outfall area. RW mentioned that the H&W garden manager, who led with the outfall clearance, could help with advice for other areas of the ponds. RW will mention this in due course.

d. To consider Community Payback proposal.  
Due to the issue with insurance and also the management of the payback team, it's not possible to use the services of the Payback Team.  
MB asked about any specific tasks that needed to be fulfilled by the possibility of using the payback team, that would then need to be filled by volunteers. None immediately sprang to mind.

e. To consider hedge-laying.  
A proposal was submitted for hedge laying of the perimeter hedge, about 115m in length. It was commented that cattle can still get through a laid hedge. The Working Group felt that the stock fencing needs to be sorted before any hedge laying can be considered, and that hedge laying is not a priority at this time.

Could the hedge laying contractor be employed to teach hedge laying, and provide his courses for volunteers to learn? The clerk is to ask him for further details.

f. To schedule upcoming habitat management work parties.

AD and EJ have scheduled the first work party, on 21<sup>st</sup> February, and is advertised by BrueCREW, and One Planet Bruton. It is hoped to have a good take up by volunteers. EJ is hoping to set up a calendar of events

RG suggested to put in place for the next meeting:

- A volunteer policy, and who is managing the volunteers.
- Programme of contracted works.
- Take the management plan and turn it into some work parties.

There are no additional tasks apart from the butterfly bunds before April.

**25/23: Archaeology and Heritage**

To receive any updates on research since July/October meetings.

RG shared an article he had uncovered, from 1976, when a pond was created. The upper pond was dammed (where the stones have been uncovered). RG to send a scan of the article.

**25/24: Vision for Habitat and Heritage**

To consider medium and longer-term objectives for ponds restoration, and implications for the negotiation of the next Management Agreement with Historic England. It was decided to defer this to the April meeting.

AD had some additional comments. Bruton Conservation Trust have funds available that can be used in the ponds area. AD has donated a piece of machinery (scythe that can be used for meadow work) to Abbey Ponds for conservation use. A secure shed for this to be stored in. AD mentioned supplying tools that can be used by volunteers at Abbey Ponds for conservation purposes.

RD suggested the large shed at Durslade Community Gardens. A separate conversation with allotmenters, and also Hauser and Wirth (it is their shed, and allotmenters are permitted to store items within) is required to garner opinion and permission. AD also asked about tools etc within the secure area, for volunteers to use, as well. AD would like the funds from the Bruton Conservation trust to be used as locally as possible.

**25/25: Date of next meeting.**

6 pm on **Monday 20 April**, then quarterly thereafter. Agenda items to the Chair of the Working Group by Monday 13 April please.

Agenda item request from RG: to speak about the leaky dam, and also to speak about the footbridge proposal (there is a desire line across the ford/stepping stones).

Meeting closed at 7.45pm.

**END OF MEETING NOTES.**