

Rewild London (Phase 2) - The Yeading Brook Unbound

Project Summary

Although much of what was fields around the Yeading Brook at the start of the twentieth century had become Metroland estates before World War II, this being preceded by the main changes to its open course, what would have been a significant ecological and hydrological feature in the landscape was treated more as an engineered over-deep, steep-banked drain; the ongoing loss of soft surface across the catchment, resulting in heavy surface run off and associated water quality impacts.

These were compounded by the burying of tributary streams, imposition of hard paths in too close proximity to bank edges, the planting of unsuitable species, the spreading of invasive non-natives and general neglect - other than where interested individuals and volunteer groups have sought to make a difference.

The result is that the brook - which should be a delight – is in woefully poor condition. A start to address the situation has been made with the recent Headstone Manor flood relief projects and a planned scheme for Yeading Walk - making this the ideal time to follow up on the western arm of the Yeading Brook, to address community group aspirations and the wider vision for the Crane Valley catchment – which necessarily depends on positive change being made in this upstream section.

As part of the Crane Valley Partnership and in collaboration with local groups and volunteers, Yeading Brook Unbound will make lasting changes - both major and minor - to the brook, its margins and adjoining areas within SINCS, parks and neighbouring allotments along its course - targeting locations and issues where greatest benefit can be achieved and incorporating or preparing the way for additional interventions to ensure nature's recovery along the Yeading whilst raising awareness and support - and engaging a wider community in its management, monitoring and ongoing improvement.

Alongside making much needed, positive intervention on the ground, YBU will have a significant people focus, seeking in particular to involve community group members in survey, management and reporting activities that presently don't occur and to establish groups where these are lacking, growing an involved, enthusiastic, and well-supported volunteer taskforce to care for individual sites and the Yeading Brook as a whole, and to share their expertise and help more widely and monitor and respond to changes over time. This will be critical to the project's legacy and to influencing more nature and climate positive engagement.

Bid Documentation & Timeline

10th October 2022 – Initial discussions with Stakeholders (Friends of Headstone Manor Park, Friends of Yeading Walk. Friends of Roxbourne Park)

27th October 2022 – Teams Meeting with Stakeholders (Friends of Headstone Manor Park, Friends of Yeading Walk. Friends of Roxbourne Park)

01st November 2022 till 14th November 2022 – Site Meetings with Stakeholders (Friends of Headstone Manor Park, Friends of Yeading Walk. Friends of Roxbourne Park)

28th November 2022 – Official Bid Submitted

06th February 2023 – Confirmation of successful bid (Press Embargo until World Rewilding Day on 20th March 2023)

14th February 2023 – Yeading Brook Unbound – Introduction Meeting

Items discussed – Full concept of the project and the proposed programme over the next 12 months, Report on what has been done in preparation of the works, introduction of group representatives to each other, & general Question and Answer session.

20th March 2023 – Press Release - <https://www.wildlondon.org.uk/news/rewild-london-fund-successful-applicants-announced>

23rd March 2023 – MoRPh Citizen Science training provided by Cartographer (Attended by Representatives from Friends of Headstone Manor Park & Friends of Yeading Walk)

28th March 2023 – Project Board appointed Dragana Knezevic (representing Hillingdon's interests Roxbourne Park), Michael Bradshaw (Harrow's Flood Risk Manager), Joe Pecorelli (Zoological Society of London), Steve Bolsover (Harrow Nature Conservation Forum), Stephen Mills (Harrow Parks), allotments representative yet to be appointed. Initial Board Meeting to Schedule for w/c 08th May 2023

05th April 2023 – Site Visit to Headstone Allotments to discuss alterations to the banks of The Yeading Brook.

21st April 2023 – Cartographer issue morphological survey for review by Steve Whitbread – Harrow Council Biodiversity Officer

31st May 2023 – Steve Whitbread issues Doodle Poll for first YBU Board Project Meeting (Date range 05th – 14th June 2023)

05th June 2023 – Steve Whitbread confirms YBU Board Project meeting date as 12th June 2023

12th June 2023 – Yeading Brook Unbound – Project Board Meeting 1

Funding Update

Rewild London £146k + Environment Agency £35k + Harrow Council £27k revised total £208k - Awarded.

Environment Agency – Up to £100k grant – Awaiting approval.

CVP – Smarter Water Catchment £83k – Awaiting approval.

Total – Potentially up to £391k + Volunteer Time

Focus

Headstone Manor – Yeading Walk – Streamside Open Space – Roxbourne Park

Potential to include - Woodland Open Space

On the ground

Larger and smaller works – Vegetation management - Plantings

People

Existing (new) Park User Groups – Allotment groups – HNCF – Wider community

Impact and outcomes

Immediate

Longer lasting

Sites and people

Maximise what can be achieved within funding period(s) and beyond.

Baseline Information and future survey/monitoring

MoRPh - Faunal surveys – SINC surveys

ZSL - HNCF project (Wetland & Rivers Community Day)

Larger works

Build up groups and develop key volunteers (Training, certification, equipment)

Up to 10% of RLF grant can be spent after March 2024, EA grant within financial year (CVP by September 2024)

Next steps (end of June)

- SW arrangements with site groups – Prioritised list to fit within available funds

- SW to secure works type quotes from 3 specialist contractors – Use this to award contract(s) then work with appointed contractor to finalise details within budget (in July)

- Develop related works around this (e.g., Balsam bashing, surveys)

- Site works start (planned for September)

10th July 2023 – Steve Whitbread has drafted a Gateway 1 procurement request which should mean that he will be able to contact contractors shortly.

10th July 2023 – Crane Valley Partnership agree in principal to provide an additional £83K funding.

10th July 2023 – Steve Whitbread issues Doodle Poll for YBU Board Project Meeting No.2 (Date range 17th – 27th July 2023)

20th July 2023 – Yeading Brook Unbound – Project Board Meeting 2

Steve Whitbread has a scheduled meeting with the Rewild London Fund Team to discuss progress/plans and the mid-project report on July 31st.

Steve Whitbread will be asking for the Council to release funds against the grants already received at this week's Capital Forum meeting (W/C 24th July 2023) and will be looking to issue a contract for tree and other vegetation works as soon as mapping has been completed. This will preclude delays that would result from tying everything into one big contract as originally planned. This can be dealt with just by seeking quotes.

Steve Whitbread will complete the mapping and prioritisation of in-stream, channel and bankside interventions and constraints as soon as possible, so that he can Lewis (Environment Agency) with adequate information for the release of a contract against the WRF allocation.

The board can then meet to discuss proposals and ensure they meet with group approvals.

This will allow for an application for additional Environmental Agency funds if the Board thinks this is justified. Provisional date W/C 14th August 2023 these can then be issued to the Future Research Assessment Programme (FRAP).

Steve Whitbread to submit a revised Gateway 1 permission to procure in tandem with the above so that we can then go ahead with the tender whilst retaining the flexibility to add in works to the contract as any additional funds permit.

23rd August 2023 – FoHMP request update on outstanding items following Project Board Meeting No. 2

23rd August 2023 – Steve Whitbread Biodiversity Officer confirms that no updates are available and that he will report back to the Project Board once updates have been issued.

05th September 2023 – Steve Whitbread Biodiversity Officer advises that the cartographer report on the Yeading Brook has been completed and is available for distribution.

11th September 2023 – FoHMP follow up on email dated 23rd August to request if updates have been received.

11th September 2023 – Steve Whitbread Biodiversity Officer advises that there isn't really an update as yet, but he will be in touch with each of the park and other groups directly once he has managed to complete the detailed 'opportunities and priorities' plan, amidst planning matters etc.

The work will be split into 3 main phases with the vegetation and tree clearance over this autumn/winter and the main ground works in spring and summer 2024, with some funds being retained to support associated activities by site and other volunteer groups.

As such there will be opportunities for interested parties to comment ahead of Phases 1 and 2 – ideally via meetings on site - and collaborate in developing Phase 3.

17th September 2023 – FoHMP formally request release of the cartographer report on the Yeading Brook this is subsequently chased on the 25th & 29th September 2023

29th September 2023 – Steve Whitbread advises that the cartographer report is not available for distribution despite advising on the 05th September 2023 that it was available.

07th October 2023 – FoHMP request an update on the outstanding items requested on the 23rd August 2023 (Project Board Meeting No.2) and seek confirmation of the next Project Board Meeting

20th October 2023 - FoHMP request an update on the outstanding items requested on the 23rd August 2023 (Project Board Meeting No.2) and seek confirmation of the next Project Board Meeting

13th November 2023 – Update released by Steve Whitbread

I will be commissioning contractors re winter veg clearance shortly, in tandem with discussions with those at the affected sites and then looking to tender the contract for the main works, that will be undertaken next spring/summer. As discussed, when we last met the intention is to agree details in partnership with the appointed contractors which should give plenty of opportunity for input from partners and for the necessary approvals from the Environment Agency and the Council's drainage team.

Luke Farnsworth, our UKSPF Nature Recovery Ranger is now in post and will be leading a task for the nascent community group at Streamside Open Space next weekend, and we'll include him in future meetings.

The intention, when putting together the UKSPF project, was that the Ranger would be supporting YBU and other projects, but since the appointment was delayed by 9 months or so, I've had to cover a quantity of things that should have happened under that as well, as being the one now mainly responsible for getting Luke up to speed. Although I did spend a week staying in Harrow over the summer so that I could complete the mapping of proposed interventions, I have still to finish off the prioritisation in relation to this – and provide detailed proposals for Lewis.

So, my apologies to all for the lack of communication since the summer. November will see rather more definite progress and I'll be looking to set a board meeting date in or before the last week (taking account of when Luke will be on training).

23RD November 2023 – FoHMP request Steve Whitbread to confirm date of Project Board Meeting 3

06th December 2023 – FoHMP request Steve Whitbread to confirm date of Project Board Meeting 3

11th December 2023 – CVP chase Steve Whitbread regarding the date of Project Board Meeting 3

20th December 2023 – Environment Agency chase Steve Whitbread regarding the outstanding information and date of Project Board Meeting 3 and advise that the cut off date for additional funding is the 19th January 2024

20th December 2024 – Steve Whitbread confirm the following.

Dealing with the introduction of biodiversity net gain alongside the planning policy would probably have kept me busy enough but looking after the UKSPF project too, as well as dealing with all those unplanned issues and enquiries and other bits and pieces (and the fact that our GIS is generally turned off at weekends) has simply meant that most of finishing off the shopping list has yet to happen. It was fun sowing seed and organising tree planting, however.

I will certainly meet your deadline, Lewis, and it's really useful to have the date because I can now use most of the next two days (another two days of TOIL to be postponed for some future time) fortifying the evidence base for justifying a local minimum net gain level of 20% rather the statutory 10%. Last week's separate planned TOIL, which I'd also allocated to YBU instead was also further gazumped. (I'd hoped that might let me do the deed at last – and provide you with some meaningful response, John)

Regarding SWC in particular, the project proposals were specifically for interfering with Mick's flood storage area at Headstone Manor (which I really wish I'd had time to visit during/after all the rain last week) and the pond creation at Yeading Walk allotments (plus possibly tweaking the stream bank alongside the Headstone allotments should funds permit), so no issues with vegetation removal for these or much of concern for EA approval, so there shouldn't be any worries about the delivery of these.

Huge apologies to you all for the lack of any comms in the meantime. It's decidedly frustrating having to split focus so much and not being able to progress what I want to. And just as frustrating for you too, I'm sure.

03rd January 2024 - FoHMP request Steve Whitbread to confirm date of Project Board Meeting 3

08th January 2024 – Steve Whitbread confirmed that he is working on the EA's requirements for the 19th January 2024

22nd January 2024 – EA confirm documentation has been issued with regards to additional funding

29th January 2024 – Steve Whitbread issues Doodle Poll with regards to Project Board Meeting 3

30th January 2024 – Steve Whitbread confirms Project Board Meeting 3 as 05th February 2024 at 16.00pm

05th January 2024 – Steve Whitbread issues documentation in advance of Project Board Meeting 3

05th January 2024 – Project Board Meeting 3

Agenda

1. Welcome to Luke, introductions, and relevant news from partners
2. Update
3. Review of proposals (re attached)
 - a. Works
 - b. Current Timeline
4. Next Steps (in relation to Timeline)

Contractors

Consultation & Communications

Finalisation of proposals

Summary of Meeting

The EA's funding will be focussed on delivery of instream/bankside works in Roxbourne Park

The CVP funding will be used principally for the works within the Flood Storage Area at Headstone Manor and offline pond creation at the Yeading Avenue allotments

The RLF funding will be used for works along the stream, principally at the four main sites (which includes Yeading Walk and Streamside plus some small bits elsewhere at Woodlands Open Space and the allotments, including the planting of a number of black poplar where there are opportunities for this.

The RLF large grant is for linking SINC's and improving ecological connectivity.

An amount which is +/- equivalent to the LBH match funding will be used over a 3 year period so that we can continue with required INNS eradication and provide appropriate support to volunteer groups so that they can undertake a series of follow up actions and have a good degree of ownership of the project, ensuring its legacy etc.

Exact allocations to different elements will depend on what will be most practicable given financial and other constraints. As we know we don't have enough money to do all that we want – so whatever the Board agrees to this year should ideally make sense in itself whilst identifying and costing up discrete add-ons. I would be looking to be in a position for us to secure further EA and SWC funding in the autumn for preparatory works this year and implementation next year. I do of course have to ensure that we adhere to the Council's procurement process.

It'll be absolutely great to have ZSL directly involved with the scheme (both thanks to SWC support and for what will be chargeable to the Project). We're set to have a first meeting next week. Documents such as those which ZSL have prepared for Spider Park and the Lower Crane will certainly be hugely important for explaining the project to participants, politicians and the wider public. And it'll be very helpful to draw on their experiences from downstream.

Vegetation clearance at Yeading Walk will commence on 15th January 2024 and contractors will be working at Yeading Walk and Roxbourne Park, initially, before moving on to Streamside, which requires more sensitive treatment.

Monday 19th February 2024- ZSL commence production of Strategy Documentation with initial visits to Headstone Manor Park, Yeading Walk & Roxbourne Park

Tuesday 05th March 2024 – ZSL issue draft copy of the Yeading Brook Unbound Vision document.

Tuesday 05th March 2024 – FoHMP issue comments and amendments to the draft Yeading Brook Unbound Vision document.

Thursday 14th March 2024 – Steve Whitbread confirms that a Walk & Talk sessions with regards to the project will be held at Headstone Manor Park on Monday 25th March 2024.

Wednesday 20th March 2024 – Steve Whitbread meets with contractors to formalise costings with regards to the Project

Monday 25th March 2024 – Steve Whitbread undertakes the project Walk & Talk at Headstone Manor Park the event was attended by 30 members of FoHMP. The scope of works for Headstone Manor Park was reviewed and discussed in great detail, with works planned for September 2024.