

Chairman's Annual Report

(2020-2021)



This year has been marked by a global pandemic, a huge surge in virtual rather than physical meetings, much analysis of the 'where, why and how' of helping our River Cam and great continued work on troublesome 'invasive non-native species'. The most significant change has been the huge upsurge of our advocacy for the health of the river and the strides taken in policy making towards protecting Chalk streams, both regionally and nationally, to which we have contributed.

In early March 2020, at our last AGM, we gingerly spaced the chairs out as we had had whispers of that ill-wind approaching. Apart from 'distanced work parties', in the field, that remained our last physical meeting! At that last AGM Bruce Huett kindly offered his help as Hon Treasurer. He now takes on that role - from which Richard Wells retires after 10 years of unflinching, meticulous, and loyal service. For Richard's care the committee is gratefully indebted. Further, we have all benefited from his practical wisdom. Indeed, it was his boyhood memories of playing and fishing in what he and his mates called 'The Rush', on Sheep's Green that triggered its recent re-instatement as a working fish pass. We wish him well.

Following that AGM, Alan Woods stepped up to support us as Hon Secretary for the Forum and its Committee. With his background in land use and water policy with the RSPB, CLA and as a former regional committee Chair for the Environment Agency, he quickly put a very professional stamp on all our activities. His driving energy gave us "Let it Flow!" in May 2020. This formidable essay set out a new direction for action, with CVF bringing its own expertise to bear on the unsustainable way we are all living. In this advocacy work he has been well supported by, amongst others, Joe Stallard and Bob Evans, whose data gathering, analysis and incisive thinking about our river's ecosystem has been invaluable.

Although COVID-19 restrictions imposed on our physical activities, with support from ever-vigilant paddlers our volunteers we were nonetheless able to further reduce the presence of two important riverine invasive non-native species. We are all greatly indebted to Mike Foley for leadership on this. Floating Pennywort was eliminated from most of the Cam from Grantchester to Baits Bite Lock, with some removed further downstream too. Previously undetected or new growth, mostly in ditches, did occur but these were dealt with. There is now a realistic prospect of eradicating it downstream as far as Bottisham Lock at Waterbeach. Massive amounts of Himalayan Balsam were pulled out from the CVF-designated lowest section of Bourn Brook, down to Byron's Pool, in CVF's first year of intensive work along this tributary of the Cam. We have enjoyed a very good relationship with our volunteers and both the Cam Conservators and Environment Agency in such work. We were also pleased to contribute financially to the regional programme of American Mink eradication, led locally by Vince Lea.

Under the aegis of David Brooks, CVF Membership is very buoyant. We now have some hundred members. Of these 17 are Life Members and 25 are new members this year. A steady trickle register their interest and support on our website. Anne Miller, as our most media and web-wise operator, has ensured a much greater media presence for our work. We have also gained support, interest and encouragement from three local radio stations, benefited from articles and letters in the press and been pleased to have our message heeded by two local MP's, Councillors and bodies such as Natural England, RSPB and Natural Cambridgeshire. David also continues to edit our members' regular newsletters for which we thank him.

I am also grateful to the whole committee for their great steer and energy on a host of issues. On your committee Lesley Bradford, John Terry, Alan Coulson, Joe Stallard and Bob Evans are now standing down, in some cases after long membership. We shall undoubtedly call on their expertise again from time to time. We are setting up more working groups of committee and CVF members (and others) to cover the range of our concerns including improving the Cam's water quality for both wildlife and bathing, and understanding better the river's flows and water pollution. More volunteers for our work are always welcome - in conservation management, media, advocacy, heritage, gathering data or in river wildlife recording.

A Chairman's annual report should be retrospective, but we also need our members to define for us the way ahead.

We intend to continue to work in an inclusive, collaborative and evidence-based way to support the River and seek solutions for our and its benefit. Everyone in our area needs to **own the responsibility for the sustainable management of our ecosystem** - not just water companies or government. We need wetland wildlife, vibrant Chalk streams and an unspoiled river heritage, but we also need to save water and pay for its optimal recycling. We are thus allied both with the campaigning Chalk Aquifer Alliance, on the one hand, who are fighting historical abuses, and Water Resources East, on the other, who are charged with getting our integrated water resource management right.

We are currently not in a good place - with inadequate flow and 'poor' water quality. Cambridge should surely **lead thinking and action on genuine sustainability** by having nothing but the best technological and human solutions to the challenges of climate change and population pressure. We should only have regional development that is genuinely needed and wished for - without compromising ecosystem well-being. We go into our 21st year considering whether or not a local **River's Trust** is something that we might need in order to pull all these things together more powerfully.

Stephen P Tomkins:

March 2021

Appendix

The following CVF documents have been produced or published this year

- *Let it Flow! (May 2020)*
- *Response to Water Resources East Management Plan (June 2020)*
- *Support for local MPS pressing for a DEFRA Chalk Streams Task (June & ongoing)*
- *Response to the Greater Cambridge Partnership survey on Green Infrastructure (July 2020)*
- *Response to the Relocation of Milton Sewage Treatment Works (August 2020)*
- *Response to Defra Policy Discussion Document on Environmental Land Management (Aug 2020)*
- *Response to Environment Agency Consultation on River Basin Planning (Sept 2020)*
- *Challenging the EA on their Glyphosate use on streams (ongoing, from August 2020)*
- *Submission to the Stantec interim Integrated Water Management Study (September 2020)*
- *WRE Systematic Conservation Planning (November 2020 & ongoing)*
- *House of Common Environmental Audit Committee inquiry into Water quality (Feb 2021)*
- *Support for Wicken Water Objection to housing Application (Jan 2021)*
- *OFWAT Future Challenges and opportunities for the Water Industry (Feb 2021)*
- *Response to Greater Cambridge Chalk Streams Project (March 2021)*
- *Tentative Proposal for a Bathing Water on the River Cam (March 2021)*
- *Updating the EA determination of water stressed areas in England (March 2021)*

Cam Valley Forum

ACCOUNTS for the year ended 31st December 2020

INCOME	2020	2019
	£	£
Members subscriptions	620	700
Corporate memberships	130	-
Life memberships -	550	700
Donations	220	210
Slow Swimming	250	250
Xylem-Benevity \$ 1,000	712	-
K Hewitt Esq - Mink Fund	250	-
Gift Aid claim	-	374
Sales of books and postcards	-	27
Interest accrued on NS&I bond , matured	174	-
Interest accrued on Nationwide bond , matured	-	74
	<hr/> 2,906	<hr/> 2,335
EXPENDITURE		
Postage and office expenses	106	15
Printing	-	132
Room Hire - Meetings & AGM	72	53
Insurance	641	641
Website	105	138
Audit	40	30
Tools	107	298
Clothing and safety equipment for volunteers	417	-
World Rivers Day Exhibition , September	-	128
Donation - Countryside Trust, Mink Traps	1,000	-
- River Med Restoration Group	200	-
- Grantchester Village Hall	50	-
	<hr/> 2,738	<hr/> 1,435
Income less expenditure	168	900
Accumulated funds b/fwd	17,789	16,889
Accumulated funds carried forward	<hr/> <hr/> 17,957	<hr/> <hr/> 17,789

Cam Valley Forum

Continuation

	2020	2019
BALANCE SHEET	31.12.20	31.12.19
Current assets		
Cash at Bank – Current a/c	18,416	11,584
NS&I Bond 1.95% to 09 Dec 2021	-	6,302
Prepayments	672	-
	<u>19,088</u>	<u>17,886</u>
Less current liabilities		
Outstanding cheques drawn	1,131	97
Net Assets	<u>17,957</u>	<u>17,789</u>
REPRESENTED BY		
Accumulated fund b/fwd.	17,789	16,889
Surplus / (deficit) for year	168	900
Accumulated fund carried forward	<u>17,957</u>	<u>17,789</u>

Report of the Auditor.

I have examined this Balance Sheet and Income and Expenditure Account prepared from the records of the Cam Valley Forum. I certify that, in my opinion, they give a fair and accurate statement, respectively of the financial position of the Cam Valley Forum, as at 31st December 2020 and of its income and expenditure over the year then ended.

N. M. Heath

Nicholas Heath, MA, ACA, ATIL.
Hon. Auditor.

SA March 2021