

ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP REPORT

Prepared by Councillors Hilary Brazier and Nick Pettit
18th September 2024

1 River Colne on The Common , Colney Heath

- 1.1 In September 2023, Cllrs Pettit and Brazier raised to Council the issue around the poor condition of the River Colne, which flows through The Common. On Friday 23rd August Cllr Pettit conducted a walk along the bank sides and noted that an abundance of overgrown vegetation remains and the water flow is very slow in parts – held back by too much vegetation in the bottom of the river. There was algae in the shady areas and at both road bridges, vegetation was overgrown.
- 1.2 Mr Tim Hill, from The Wildlife Trust has already on the Council's behalf, registered the 'poor state' of the river to the 'Colne Catchment Action Network' – a group that contains representatives from the parish's local water provider, Affinity Water. We have had no feedback since, so Cllrs need to follow-up during October with Mr Hill (at a previous meeting with him he stated that 'ringfenced' funds held by the Colne Catchment Action Network could to help with improvements along the River Colne).
- 1.3 Going into late Autumn we should consider clearing some of the bank vegetation if there is Council budget available – it needs to be done professionally by a landscape contractor. Debris needs to be cleared and taken away.
- 1.4 We could also consider organising a volunteer resident clean-up along the river. Taking advice from the Clerk on health & safety matters, we could look at a cut back on certain parts of the river that can be safely accessed and a general litter pick. Clerk to advise Cllrs Brazier and Pettit on the matter.

2 Horseshoe Field, Smallford

- 2.1 We need to follow-up with a review of the current state of Horseshoe Field and assess if any remedial work needs to be actioned asap, especially the poor state in places of the fencing surrounding it.
- 2.2 Smallford Residents Association have previously made the Council aware of its general condition – and the poor state of the fencing. It also raised a concern that the land could possibly be 'crossed' and accessed by unauthorised parties.
- 2.3 Council should consider adding signage along the fencing to inform residents / passers-by that the land is privately owned. Cllr Pettit can advise on the production of this.

3 Monahan's Field, Colney Heath

- 3.1 At July's Beating of the Bounds, the Common Ranger, made Cllrs Brazier and Pettit aware that 'Monahan's Field' – a small area of land off Church Lane next to the river – was overgrown and looking very neglected. He is concerned that it will become inaccessible, especially going into Spring / Summer 2025*.
- 3.2 Cllr Pettit, noted that the vegetation along the riverbank was also very overgrown – his concern is

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that if left it could 'mask' the edge of the river and create a potential hazard. There are also overhanging tree branches. Residents and walkers use the cut-lawn path running along the bankside.

- 3.3 Cllr Pettit has had email comms with the Clerk who has noted that the area has become neglected. However the Clerk has stated that the land is unregistered and the reason why no formal work can be carried out on it. There also appears to be a dispute over a hedge and its location. The picture below shows what the mapping service and survey believes should be part of the Common.
- 3.4 Council needs to discuss with the Clerk to work out the options available – there may be the chance to organise a volunteer resident clear-up of the area. Clerk to advise.

*From speaking with residents, Cllrs have discovered that the area used to be a favourite place with residents. The current overgrown area on the right hand side, is a grass lawn and park benches are at the back of it. It was once a popular picnic spot!



4 Ghost Ponds, The Warren on The Common, Colney Heath

- 4.1 The two Ghost Ponds are 'bubbling with life' and the water levels are rising. Council should consider putting up some signage to make residents and walkers aware that the water is a potential hazard – especially for small children. Cllrs Brazier and Pettit can do a survey of the area. Clerk to advise on budget for potential signage (signage could also include some information about the wildlife in the ponds).