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Your ref:

Our ref:

Date: 13th December 2013

Dear Mr Lovell

Thank you for inviting me to the Parish Council Meeting on Wednesday 20th November. In response to your request for information about Bradford Dale I have spoken to a number of colleagues at Aldern House namely:

Rhodri Thomas, Natural Environment Team Manager
Sarah Whitely, Senior Conservation Archaeologist
Garrie Tiedeman, Landscape Architect
Bec Penny, Senior Countryside and Economy Adviser


Below is a summary of what we discussed:

Bradford Dale is not a Site of Special Scientific Interest nor is it a Scheduled Ancient Monument and therefore there is no prescribed plan of action to deal with its conservation or protection. It is privately owned and managed by Haddon Estates who do not receive any agri-environment payments for the management of the river itself. Haddon Estate is in receipt of a Woodland Grant for work to improve the conservation of the woodlands in the dale but this does not affect the river. Information relating to the Woodland Grant is detailed later in this letter. It is therefore not within the power of the Peak District National Park Authority to actively change or control the management of land or river in Bradford Dale, though we have a good relationship with the Estate and are happy to discuss their management of the river with them.

The river valley and its wildlife

In recent times the habitat along the river near Middleton has changed from open dammed pools to a clear river channel running through reed beds. Both types of habitat are important for biodiversity and consequently whichever type of habitat actually occurs in the Dale, there is likely to be pros and cons associated with it in terms of the benefit to different wildlife species. It may be that if the river is taken in its entirety, a variation in habitat that includes both pools and more marshy areas can increase the overall biodiversity along the river. For this reason, in terms of ecology, the National Park Authority currently has no strong views about the changes to the river habitat down in Bradford Dale, but is happy to discuss and consider the pros and cons of a variety of management options.

Member of the Association of National Park Authorities

Holder of Council of Europe Diploma 

Chief Executive: Jim Dixon

Chair: Tony Favell MBE Deputy Chair: Geoff Nickolds

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• *Where beauty, vitality and discovery meet at the heart of the nation* •

Any information given to the Authority may be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000

The historic and cultural heritage of the river valley

The National Park would wish to see the significant heritage features of the River positively managed. Some minimal works such as the removal of trees on and around features such as the sheepwash, Bobbin Mill and the ruins of the corn mill further down the Dale and stabilisation of the mill structures would also be desirable. These remains, as well as the weirs and the machinery associated with the river management for fishing all serve as important reminders of the past use of the valley that is now disappearing. To lose such features from the landscape would be a significant loss, however, none of these features are protected through scheduling or listing and there is no fund or grant aid in place at the Peak District to conserve such features. In addition as the River Valley is not managed within a grant scheme like Higher Level Stewardship there is no public fund available to support such conservation work. The cost of conserving built features, including the dams/weirs and other river management machinery is likely to be high and without significant funding or investment it is likely that they will eventually fall into disrepair.

The Bradford Dale landscape

The changing landscape in Bradford Dale has not gone unnoticed by the National Park. However, the National Park is a changing landscape. Over the centuries river valleys have undergone significant change – Lathkill Dale, for example would once have been a hive of industrial activity, rather than the tranquil haven for wildlife that it is today. Likewise Bradford Dale was once a natural river valley before it was dammed for the benefit of the fishing interest. Although the dammed pools from the recent past were tranquil and atmospheric, the change to a river valley re-wilded by nature also has significant landscape importance - ruins emerging from wet woodland, hold their own charm and sense of discovery. For this reason, as with the consideration of the river ecology, the National Park Authority is open to discussing and considering the landscape implications of various management options for the river with the Estate.

Planning considerations

The changing management of the dale does not appear to contravene any planning requirements and therefore is not relevant to the Planning Department. However, should the silt in the ponds be cleared it would create a significant amount of material that would need to be deposited off site and this would in itself create a large number of vehicle movements. Planning permission would be required for this type of activity.

The Management of Bradford Dale

Bradford Dale is owned and managed by Haddon Estates and the only grant aid it receives within the confines of the valley is for managing the woodland. In the near future, a programme of tree thinning will take place in the Dale increasing light into the woodland which should improve the biodiversity of the woodland habitat. The Estate has now confirmed that this work will be carried out by hand, so there will be no need to upgrade the track surface as we originally thought, as there will be no movement of heavy vehicles in the area.

Summary

The character of the River Bradford, and consequently the dale as a whole, is highly dependent on the future of the dams and associated water control structures, and the availability (or not) of financial resources to either maintain them in the long term or to actively restore the river to a more "natural" flow. Either option

has different benefits and disadvantages. The management of the river is essentially under the control of the owner, Haddon Estate, but we would be happy to discuss management options with the estate and to encourage them to liaise with the local community (perhaps through the Bradford River Action group) about future management.

I hope this information provides you and the Parish Council with a little more background about the management of Bradford Dale. Please contact me if you need further information or assistance regarding this matter.

Yours sincerely

Lynn Burrow

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynn Burrow". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'L' and 'B'.

Area Ranger