

The Hurst Water Meadow

Dorchester on Thames, Oxfordshire
Owned and managed on behalf of local people
Charity Number 1050272



Hurst water meadow news

30 August 1998

Replacement of Long Bridge

Work started on August 17th and should last about six weeks. The whole contract for removing the old bridge and building the new one is being carried out by the Environment Agency (formerly the National Rivers Authority and before that the Thames Conservancy). The new bridge will carry up to 7.5 tonnes, which will be adequate for conservation, hay cutting and river bank maintenance. The appearance will be much the same (apart from not sagging in the middle!) and with a single span, will not collect so much floating debris as the old one.

The work has required a 27-tonne crane and the four bridge girders to be brought across Mr Blundell's stubble field from the Drayton Road gate. We thank him for his cooperation.

Temporary closure of the footpath to Overy

For public safety while work is in progress, the footpath across the bridge has had to be closed. Diversion signs have been put up. Access to the meadow from the Overy end will be open as usual. Please keep children away from the site.

Generous grants received

The Trust has been very fortunate in obtaining a grant of £20,000 from the ARC Environment Fund, as part of the Landfill Tax Rebate Scheme. Our scheme was the first to benefit in Oxfordshire. We are all most grateful to contractors, such as Greenways at Didcot, who deal with domestic waste have to pay a tax of £10 per tonne of waste tipped into landfill sites. Landfill operators can be spared paying one fifth of this tax, provided that the money goes to conservation projects managed by enrolled conservation bodies (such as this Trust). The landfill operator, however has to contribute 10%, so, of the £20,000 grant we have been promised, £2,000 has been donated by Greenways (a subsidiary of ARC) for which we are very grateful. The remaining £18,000 comes from the ENTRUST (Customs and Excise) as tax rebate.

The South Oxfordshire District Council contributed £2,500 from the Community Trust Fund for which we are indeed grateful. As a result of this generosity, we do not think we will have to appeal to the public.

Partnership has proved effective

The bridge project has been coordinated by Richard Douglas - no stranger to bridge building! He and the other trustees have had splendid cooperation from the Oxfordshire County Council Bridge Engineers, The Environment Agency, ENTRUST, The Royal Society for Nature Conservation and The Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment, as well as the donors named above.

Highways Agency land between Buck Pool and the bypass

The Agency contractors will shortly start work on repairing the weir and sluice, which is in a sorry state. Once this is complete, The Highways Agency are prepared to offer this small plot to the Trust for a nominal sum. This will extend the fishing area and allow for better care of the habitat around Buck Pool. Public access is planned by a footpath crossing the weir and sluice, with addition of proper handrails. The Trust will be responsible for the sluice and weir in the future, but we hope that, by regular maintenance, it will not be too costly to maintain.

Cattle grazing

This has been of benefit to the meadow. We apologise for any inconvenience to the public, but grazing is an essential part of improving the meadow. This should pay off in better and more varied wildflowers in the future. Grazing is the traditional way of managing the meadow that has operated for a thousand years. The population of cattle increased when two calves were born in August.

The farmer may soon move the cattle to the cut area on the other side of the footpath. We hope that the grazed area will be given a light cut (topped). We are grateful to him for his cooperation. His work has not been made easier by miscreants removing his electric fence posts and throwing them in the river. The cattle are due to be removed by the end of October.

John Metcalfe and Cecilia Eldridge have done great work in cutting thistles and removing ragwort - an illegal weed causing liver disease in cattle and horses.

Bathing in Buck Pool is not safe

The water below the weir is said to be seven metres (17 feet) deep and there are underwater obstructions. Bathing is not safe and diving into the pool is highly dangerous. Warning notices are in place.

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