

# FOVANT PARISH COUNCIL

## FOVANT BROOK

*a Community Asset*

***Guidance on Care and Maintenance  
for those who live by the Brook***



**Edition 02 – September 2014**



## **FOVANT BROOK - Guidance for those who live by the Brook**

### **Fovant Brook – a Community Asset**

In April 2006 the Environment Agency (the EA) took over responsibility for the management of watercourses including Fovant Brook, which was then designated a *Critical Ordinary Watercourse*. This means that the EA is responsible for ensuring that landowners who have watercourses within their boundary or adjoining their land – so called **Riparian Owners** - carry out their responsibilities under law. Where two landowners share a stretch of the watercourse each Riparian Landowner's responsibilities generally only go up to the centre of the watercourse. Riparian Owners also have rights, such as extracting limited amounts of water and fishing by a legal method but exercise of these rights should be agreed with the EA.

Fovant Brook rises from the natural spring fed lake at West Farm and flows from there through the village where it joins the River Nadder at Mill Farm to the north of Fovant Wood. The section of Fovant along Brook Street, High Street and Tisbury Road is fast flowing and healthy enough to support glorious trailing clumps of *Ranunculus* with its white flower. The Community can be proud of the Brook, and we all need to think about what can go wrong if any of us are careless with it. The *Ranunculus* clumps trap debris coming downstream, and so provide an indicator when cut vegetation and items such as plastic bottles are in the Brook either as a result of natural fall, accident or as a result of deliberate dumping. Dumping is illegal, but all excess debris threatens the health of our *Ranunculus* and all wildlife living in or beside the Brook.

Clumps of *Ranunculus* are an important asset but in places they and other water plants do need to be thinned out from time. We are warned about invasive weeds, which can be native plants such as wild cress, or foreign plants. Non-native species which are particularly aggressive include Floating Pennywort, Parrots Feather, Himalayan Balsam, the Japanese Knotweed and the Giant Hogweed. If unchecked, all these

species have the potential to create havoc by choking up drainage ditches, blocking low bridges and culverts destroying wildlife habitats and disrupting fisheries along the watercourse. Overgrowth of the water plants interrupts the flow, threatening the ecological balance and causing water levels to rise and even come over the banks in places where they are low such as on the road by the Village Hall.

Over the past few years throughout the region summer rainfalls have caused *Ranunculus* and other plant growth to be unusually strong and the summer levels of water particularly high. These two factors should remind us of the importance of good housekeeping in Fovant Brook.

### **Environment Agency Permission for Works**

One of the duties of any Riparian Owner is to clear debris from a watercourse which abuts their land (see pages 4 & 5 of the EA Booklet *Living on the Edge*), and many Fovant householders have in the past and continue today, to work hard to remove debris including plant material such as outflows of nesting debris, fallen leaves, moss and algae, grass cuttings and other garden waste that has flowed downstream along the watercourse from the lake. Some householders also go into the lake and the Brook to thin out their clumps of weeds and other plant life including *Ranunculus* when necessary from time to time.

The obligation here is that under the new Environment Agency (EA) regulations a Riparian owner best consult the EA before doing work to remove plants from the bed and banks of a watercourse, giving details of the location and nature of the work and how the plant debris will be disposed of. Hand cutting of weed or maintenance does not require consent but mechanical works or removal of silt and changes to bed levels does. There is a detailed guidance document now available ideally for contractors from the Environment Agency.

If you have a substantial length of watercourse to manage that is too extensive to manage as an owner occupier you might wish to contact a reputable contractor from the approved list mentioned elsewhere in this document.

The Parish Council has recognised that Fovant Brook has many Riparian Owners along its length, each responsible for maintaining their particular part of the water course. One Riparian owner is the Wiltshire Highways Authority, which is responsible for the culverts and bridges and jointly responsible for the stretches of the Brook running along the A30 and the other public roads in the Parish. The Council is also aware that with so many affected parties involved, informal arrangements by individual parties can lead to unfortunate occurrences whereby work completed in one part of the Brook can subsequently be adversely affected by later works being carried out further upstream. Moreover, some new Riparian Owners may not even be aware of their obligations and others may not be able to do the work or pay for someone else to do it for them.

### **Booklets published by the Environment Agency.**

The rights and responsibilities of Riparian owners are described in an EA booklet *'Living on the Edge - a guide to the rights and responsibilities of riverside occupation'*. Information on foreign invasive weeds is available in the EA booklet *'Protecting our native wildlife – Guidance for the control of non-native invasive weeds in or near fresh water'*. Fovant householders may obtain copies from the Environment Agency, by contacting the customer enquiry line

### **Control and Disposal of Weeds in and adjacent to the Brook**

Fovant householders (or their contractors) who apply to do work in accordance with the Environment Agency's regulations are advised to take account of the following points

**Invasive Weeds.** If you suspect that an invasive plant species is present, contact the Environment Agency 03708 506 506. Photographs of some invasive weeds are shown in the Environment Agency booklet *'Protecting our native wildlife – Guidance for the control of non-native invasive weeds in or near fresh water'*

- Keep a watchful eye out for Invasive Weeds such as Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed and Japanese Balsam near your bank or in the Brook.
- When attempting to remove these dangerous plants, wait until the seed pods are formed immediately after flowering and before the seed pods have dried ready to 'pop', gently pull the weed (use a gloved hand – do not use powered machinery) whilst using a trowel to ease out all the roots with the plant.

*(Tip: before attempting to pull the plant, spray the seed pods with a coating of varnish or lacquer and let dry – this helps to ensure that disturbed pods do not fly open and spread the seeds all over your bank)*

- As each Invasive weed is pulled, place it immediately into a sealed bag or ideally into a garden brazier for instant burning – do not leave any Invasive Weed lying on the bank or allow any part of it to fall into the Brook.
- Do not put any or part of any Invasive Weed into your composter or compost heap. Do not send any Invasive Plant to the local Council's waste and compost re-cycling centre. Do not throw any Invasive Weed into hedgerows or open green spaces.

### Other ('good') Plants (Including *Ranunculus*).

- Do not carry out any weed cutting in the Brook between November and April, to avoid endangering and disturbing spawning fish and to encourage the survival of young fish.
- Cut *Ranunculus* after it has flowered, in the three months August to October.
- Cut and pull weed only by hand – do not use powered machinery.
- Ensure that cut weed does not flow downstream – for example, use temporary netting to catch those small clumps which evade you.
- Leave the cut weed on the bank for a 24 - 48 hours to allow invertebrates to return to the water.
- Then remove the cut weed from the river bank. (Rotting weed produces a liquid effluent which is highly toxic to fish and other aquatic life).
- Don't remove all weed – leave some clumps (about a third) in the stream for fish, voles and ducks and other wildlife to feed on.
- Leave some vegetation on the banks to protect and feed the wildlife there.
- Dispose of the cuttings as compost, or by removal from the site.
- If you can't maintain your section of the Brook yourself, employ a contractor *who is qualified to do the work and is registered* with the Environment Agency. A list can be obtained from the EA.

The Parish Council's Guidance publication is available to all the Riparian Owners in the parish individually to help to ensure that best practise for weed control and the water management of Fovant Brook and its banks is carried out.

If you have not received a copy and would like one, please contact a Parish Councillor (details on the Village Hall Notice Board or the website) or the Parish Clerk (or any Parish Councillor) at the address below:

**Clare Churchill  
The Parish Clerk  
Fovant Parish Council  
1 Tower Farm Cottages  
Quidhampton, Salisbury. SP2 9AA.**

**Telephone: 01722 743027  
Email: [fovantpc@btinternet.com](mailto:fovantpc@btinternet.com)**

### Useful numbers

Environment Agency Customer Enquiry	03708 506 506
<a href="mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk">enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk</a>	
Environment Agency Incident Hotline	0800 80 70 60
Floodline	0845 988 1188

### Fovant Flood Warden