



Advisory Visit

River Ure, Bradford City Angling Association

09/01/2017



1.0 Introduction

This brief report is the output of a walkover of the Bradford City Angling Association (BCAA) waters on the River Ure, N. Yorkshire, undertaken by Jon Grey of the Wild Trout Trust. The visit was accompanied by various members of the committee (Jim Munden, Phil Bailey & Mick Curtin) and keen members (Steve Rhodes & Francis Dines).

Normal convention is applied with respect to bank identification, i.e. left bank (LB) or right bank (RB) whilst looking downstream. Upstream and downstream references are often abbreviated to u/s and d/s, respectively, for convenience. The Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference system is used for identifying locations.

Recommendations for particular techniques can be found in previous AV reports for BCAA (e.g. R Aire; <http://www.wildtrout.org/av/river-aire-bradford-city-angling-association>).

Summary data for the BCAA waters are collated in Table 1.

	Bradford City AA R Ure (Aysgarth & Worton Bridge)
River	River Ure
Waterbody Name	Ure from Duerley Beck to Mill Beck
Waterbody ID	GB104027069463
Management Catchment	Upper Ure
River Basin District	Humber
Current Ecological Quality	Classified as Moderate Ecological Status (2009 & 2015)
U/S Grid Ref inspected	SD 94630 90427
D/S Grid Ref inspected	SD 99566 88903
Length of river inspected	~4000m in total

Table 1. Overview of the waterbody. Information sourced from:

<http://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/WaterBody/GB104027069463>

2.0 Habitat Assessment

The starting point for the walkover was BCAA's lower fishing limit, west of Aysgarth at the footbridge (SD 99566 88903). The true RB was followed as BCAA have continuous rights along that bank. Aside from the very lowest sections that were fenced (although in a state of disrepair) and well covered with scrubby goat willow and more substantial crack willow (Figs 1&2), the banks are only sporadically tree-lined. Many mature ash trees are at risk of removal as their roots within the bank are undermined by livestock trampling and grazing, and resultant wash-out at high flows (Fig 4). Almost all of the bank has been historically rock-armoured to constrain the channel within the floodplain, presumably to prevent meanders approaching the defunct railway. Where this has been breached, the river has quickly worked against the boulders to erode the soils behind, often leaving what looks like wall footings down the middle of the channel; an indication of its former proportions. Currently, the channel is overwide and the bed and substrate homogenous as a result; only in some sections is there evidence of braiding at low water level.

Livestock exclusion fencing is required to help restore a more natural riparian fringe which will benefit ecology as well as providing the banks with resilience to future spate flows. However, the size of the river and height and speed of spate flows may well be the reason that buffer fencing is not more prevalent; there are flood resistant options. It is worth contacting Dan Turner of Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust (YDRT) for advice on this.



Fig 1. A short walk along the LB to examine willow fringe which presents good low cover over and in the water on both banks for the lowest ~250m of BCAA Aysgarth waters. See Fig 2.



Fig 2. Almost opposite Fig 1, taken from the RB. Fencing requires reinstatement to prevent livestock access. Where there is adequate depth of water in the wetted channel, strategic laying of some well protected willow stems could provide low cover for fish holding. Furthermore, it may be possible to insert some woody debris between the abundant living stems and cable into position to introduce more heterogeneity to the instream habitat. NB: laying does not require consent; installation of fixed woody material may require consent dependent upon dimensions.



Fig 3. Looking u/s from the last of the willow in Fig 2, exemplifying the bare, grazed banks (lacking tree and vegetation regeneration), and long sweeping bends created by channel realignment and bank toe reinforcement with stone, presumably to prevent the river meandering too close to the railway line (now defunct). Unfettered access to Gill Beck (foreground) has resulted in a shallow, uniform channel completely devoid of cover. Such becks will be important for spawning and fry habitat and hence are worth protecting. Engagement with YDRT could provide an avenue for improvements to be made beyond the immediate sphere of influence of BCAA.



Fig 4. A slumped section of bank at SD 98420 89306 which would have been long lost if not for the extensive root mass holding it in position. However, continued livestock access is exacerbating erosion around the remaining horizontal roots via trampling and grazing. Fencing would be beneficial here to allow riparian regeneration and development.



Fig 5. Line of willow spiling (on the outside of a bend and ~ 1m above the waterline) which appears to have taken well. Evidence that willow techniques will work on the Ure and can be applied as actual habitat creation rather than just bank erosion.



Fig 6. Block failure of bank. Sheep grazing greatly reduces the diversity of vegetation and the extent of associated root matrices within the soil; as a result, only the surface layer is bound together. Continued loss of such blocks will eventually lead to the loss of the tree in the background and further widening of the channel, which will become shallower and entrain soil / silt.



Fig 7. Upper & lower panels: assorted rubble and unconsolidated material illegally dumped onto the river bank (and sloughing into the channel) in a misguided attempt to curtail erosion on this bend (SD 97770 89513). It will be worth engaging with YDRT to instigate a farm visit and where possible, encouraging the use of willow whips and stakes to create a softer, green engineering solution to preventing bank erosion. However, for any green engineering techniques to be effective, livestock must be excluded from the bank.



Fig 8. Dumping of manure / old silage – a pollution hazard perilously close to a small tributary and less than 25m from the mainstem Ure bank (SD 97606 89612). As this decomposes, the liquor is likely to seep into the beck causing pollution and eutrophication.



Fig 9. Confluence of Sister Ings Beck with the Ure (white arrow) viewed from opposite on the RB. BCAA have fishing rights at least until the old railway line along the tributary. It appears fenced and with a wooded riparian fringe on one bank at least and so may well be worth further investigation into its suitability as a spawning beck. Its confluence with the Ure is also on the outside of a bend (on the main river) and hence should always be accessible from relatively deep water.



Fig 10. Image taken at the top of the BCAA Aysgarth beat as the river was rising rapidly! Exemplifies typical bare banks which would benefit from restriction of livestock access and tree planting.

Quick and easy wins could be achieved by willow whip and peg / stake insertion at appropriate points in the toe of the banks, but is only worthwhile in areas that sheep cannot access. The further upstream, the more willow is available (aside from the very lowest banks), and more could be done to lay some of that into and over the water surface (angled d/s so as not to cause undue stress under spate flows) to provide cover (e.g. around Worton). Sister Ings Beck (Fig 9) could also be a target for protecting / rehabilitating / creating spawning habitat, especially as the Club has the fishing rights and hence access there; the land management further u/s also appears to be more sympathetic than along the becks entering from the Ure RB.

3.0 Making it Happen

The WTT may be able to offer further assistance:

- WTT Project Proposal
 - Further to this report, the WTT can devise a more detailed project proposal. This would usually detail the next steps to take and highlight specific areas for work, with the report forming part of a flood defence consent application.
- WTT Practical Visit
 - Where recipients are in need of assistance to carry out the kind of improvements highlighted in an advisory visit report, there is the possibility of WTT staff conducting a practical visit. This would consist of 1-3 days' work, with a WTT Conservation Officer teaming up with interested parties to demonstrate the habitat enhancement methods described above. The recipient would be asked to contribute only to reasonable travel and subsistence costs of the WTT Officer. This service is in high demand and so may not always be possible.
- WTT Fundraising advice
 - Help and advice on how to raise funds for habitat improvement work can be found on the WTT website - www.wildtrout.org/content/project-funding

The WTT officer responsible for fundraising advice is Denise Ashton: dashton@wildtrout.org

In addition, the WTT website library has a wide range of free materials in video and PDF format on habitat management and improvement:

<http://www.wildtrout.org/content/advice-and-practical-help>

4.0 Acknowledgement

The WTT would like to thank the Environment Agency for supporting the advisory and practical visit programme in England, through a partnership funded using rod licence income.

5.0 Disclaimer

This report is produced for guidance only; no liability or responsibility for any loss or damage can be accepted by the Wild Trout Trust as a result of any other person, company or organisation acting, or refraining from acting, upon guidance made in this report.