

The future of Millbrook Lake

A meeting took place on Friday 14th January 2022.

Attendees: Cllrs Nicky Roberts, Sharon Lewis, Don Wood, Bruce Taggart, Karen Hall.
Mr David Shorten (DS), Environment Agency
Karenza Heald, Parish Clerk.

Notes from the meeting and following up communication

- Cllr Taggart said the Council are faced with the dilemma of some members of the public wanting to see the lakeside cut right back neat and tidy whilst there are others who would like to see more vegetation. The Council tries to create a balance.
- DS talked about the Environment Agency's webcam facility.
<http://www.eathorvertonwebcam.org.uk/Webcammenu/EAFrameset.html>
- DS explained about the role of the Environment Agency in flood risk management and how the organisations work together.
- A discussion took place regarding complaints received relating to an increase in midges. This was particularly noticeable last year.
- DS had previously circulated a scanned copy of an options report from 1998 regarding the midge's issue at Millbrook Lake. Discussing this with his colleagues DS suggested, it would seem given the time since this report was compiled, that it would be sensible to commission a survey to include ecology of the lake and options appraisals for future management to help inform discussions going forward.
- The Clerk asked if the report could be made publicly available. Following the meeting, DS was able to gain permission for the report to be publicly available. The report is now available on the Parish Council website (see appendix i). Members of the public are able to comment on news posting on the website.
- DS suggested one option could be to let the lake drain and then allow it refill naturally. The Clerk sent a follow up email to DS asking if EA intended to wait until the updated report was available before trying this option. DS responded "*I think for now we need more information before making significant changes to how the lake is operated now. I had hoped to get the lake drained for a culvert inspection but haven't been able to get this organised, so I think it's probably best to leave this for now and go for leaving the lake to refill naturally after the last flushing of the season ready for next winter, especially given we aim to drain it in a couple of weeks from now*".
- During the meeting Cllr Wood asked if the path by the dam could be repaired. DS indicated the EA may be able to fund the works and agreed to look into this. The Clerk asked DS for an update. DS responded "I've added topping up of the bits where puddles form with more fill material to the structures maintenance we carry out in March annually. Refilling the low spots on the path was carried out on 7th March 2022. More will be completed over the next couple of weeks. EA are fitting this in around other works.
- In response to the Clerk's request for an information on the updated report, DS said he was currently working with an inhouse ecologist to develop a scope for a future feasibility study for Millbrook Lake. Initially DS had requested funding support for the report from MPC. EA are now able to cover the costs of the updated report but depending on the findings may look to the Council for financial support.

- The Clerk received an email asking for clarification on who owns Millbrook Lake and who is responsible for the flushing.

Millbrook Parish Council have the Freehold land under title CL212614 (date 2nd September 2005), this being the quay, lime kiln and fundus (*bottom of the lake*).

The Environment Agency owns the land under title CL46756. The Council has letter on file dated 14th August 2007 stating *the EA operate the control structure in accordance with the agreement made with MPC, for the purposes of amenity and reduction of flood risk. This is done under permissive powers given to us in the Water Resources Act 1991.*

The Clerk asked DS for confirmation that the lake flushing is done in consultation with the Parish Council. DS responded *“Basically the flushing of the lake is done in partnership/ agreement with yourselves as MPC. This is based on the previous discussions with stakeholders in the 1980/1990’s resulting in the longstanding arrangement of draining the lake every 2 weeks between April and September to help control the midge population. So, every year the EA produces a flushing schedule which is shared with the MPC and other key stakeholders for agreement before the flushing operations start for the season. As the EA operate and maintain the tidal barrier and the control gates for flood risk management purposes the EA carry out the actual draining and re-filling operations. As Mr Harker stated previously this is done utilising the EA’s “permissive powers in the Water Resources Act 1991” . There is no one party responsible for draining the lake, it is a decision that has been taken between the EA and MPC taking account of local people’s concerns.”*

Millbrook Lake summer 2021



Millbrook Lake 1992



Following discussions between David Shorten and the Parish Clerk a posting was made on the Council website:

[Report from 1998: Nuisance problems associated with emergence of midges – special reference to Millbrook Lake | Millbrook Parish Council \(millbrook-pc.gov.uk\)](https://www.millbrook-pc.gov.uk/Report%20from%201998%3A%20Nuisance%20problems%20associated%20with%20emergence%20of%20midge%20-%20special%20reference%20to%20Millbrook%20Lake%20%7C%20Millbrook%20Parish%20Council%20(millbrook-pc.gov.uk))

Please find a link for a report entitled [“Nuisance problems associated with emergence of midges special reference to Millbrook Lake”](#). This report was commissioned in 1998. In response to requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environment Information Act 2004, the Environment Agency has agreed for this report to be shared. It makes interesting reading.

The Environment Agency, who operate and maintain the tidal barrier and the control gates for flood risk management purposes, are working with the Parish Council to commission an updated investigation and report into the current onsite conditions and ecology of Millbrook Lake to inform the development of a future management plan for the lake. This is planned to take place during the summer of 2022.