

CHARNEY HALL & FIELD TRUST

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 7th JUNE, 2023

REPORT FROM CHARNEY FIELD SUBCOMMITTEE

MAINTENANCE PLAN FOR CHARNEY WICK DITCH

(FROM MAIN STREET AND ALONG THE BRIDLE PATH/ BRIDLEWAY ON THE
SOUTHERN BOUNDARY OF CHARNEY FIELD)

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 At the last meeting of the Charney Hall & Field Management Committee (CHAFT) the Field Sub-Committee was asked to develop a maintenance plan for the watercourse known as Charney Wick Ditch (CWD)

1.2 CHAFT has taken note of advice issued by Oxfordshire County Council and the Environment Agency (amongst others) and now seeks to agree and implement an annual maintenance plan based on what needs to be done, who does it, how it should be done, when it should be done and if necessary who pays.

1.3. The draft maintenance plan which follows has been prepared for discussion at a meeting of other riparian owners and the Parish Council in June/July 2023.

2. RIPARIAN RESPONSIBILITIES

It is understood riparian responsibilities are as follows

- Oxfordshire County Council is responsible for the culvert under Main Street
- Owners of properties 4 and 5 Barnfield have riparian responsibility for the ditch at the rear of their properties.
- Charney Hall & Field Trust (CHAFT) and the owners of Bridle Cottage and Bridle Farm Cottage have shared responsibility to the midpoint of the ditch.

3. DRAFT MAINTENANCE PLAN

3.1. The purpose of the plan is to ensure the ditch is able to accept the natural flow of water from upstream and allow it to flow downstream.

3.2 It is proposed that interested parties undertake a joint inspection of the watercourse in the summer of each year when the water level is low in order to decide what, if any, maintenance will need to be undertaken in August/October when the vegetation has begun to dieback naturally and in anticipation of an increased water flow. Matters for consideration include

- How much vegetation should be cut back above the water level leaving a fringe along the edge with any overhang well clear of the water? Recommended practice is to leave any vegetation removed from the water on the bank for a few days prior to removal. Occasional gaps should be left on the southern side of the watercourse to ensure visibility from the bridle path/bridleway.

- What, if any, action needs to be taken to remove silt from the centre of the ditch so that the water has a natural meandering course which maintains the profile of the ditch? Silt should be placed on the banks for a few days before removal
- If any trees, or shrubs are likely to interfere with the free flow of the watercourse and need removal.

4. USE OF TOOLS & EQUIPMENT

Hand tools such as saws and shovels should be used wherever possible in order to protect habitats, vegetation, and the bed of the watercourse. Machinery such as mini-diggers or tractor mounted ditching attachments can clear large stretches of open ditch quickly but should be avoided if possible. Consideration should be given to the sensitivity of the watercourse and its habitat and any permissions necessary from the Environment Agency .

5. IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN LEGALLY AND SAFELY.

5.1 Those charged with implementing any part of the plan shall assess the planned work in advance to ensure it can be carried out without putting themselves or others at risk e.g. when working in deep silt, mud or on slippery banks, using tools, plant or machinery, cutting down/ working near trees. Protective equipment should be worn.

5.2. If protected species are present e.g. native crayfish, water voles, great crested newts, nesting birds and bats specialist advice should be sought

5.3. Specialist advice should also be sought if invasive plants are found in the vicinity of the watercourse

6. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS.

<https://www.oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com/contacts/>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/owning-a-watercourse>

Plan approved by Environment Agency (email dated 24 May 2023 refers)

END 27/05/23/05 DS/ND/LG