

INFO NOTE

Management of Vegetation along Tems Beck, Giggleswick Village

The most recent (2008) Conservation Area Appraisal of Giggleswick described Tems Beck as “*one of the most distinctive and attractive features in the village street-scene.*” Most of its flow is from spring sources in the limestone escarpment above the village and so water quality is usually extremely good. As a result, Tems Beck supports a wealth of wildlife, including large numbers of brown trout, which in the autumn can be seen spawning near the Primary School. In recent years, otters, kingfisher and dipper have also been seen through the middle of the village, along with nationally endangered white-clawed crayfish. In summer, flowering beds of water crowfoot are an attractive feature of Tems Beck.

Through the centre of Giggleswick, the course of Tems Beck is historically channelised. Examples of more natural channel can still be seen just upstream of the village, around Catterall Hall. These tend to be deeper, narrower and faster flowing. By contrast, through the middle of the village, the over-widened channel is usually much slower flowing, and so is much more liable to silt accumulation.

There are many practical constraints on management of Tems Beck through the centre of Giggleswick, including gas, electricity and water supplies that are routed beneath the beck. De-silting is also very expensive, disruptive, damaging to wildlife, and can cause pollution downstream. Rather than allow silt to accumulate, it is much better to encourage the beck to flow faster throughout the year. This can best be achieved by appropriate and timely vegetation management.

The following photo shows part of Tems Beck, where all vegetation was cleared from the watercourse. This kind of management might seem to help reduce the risk of flooding. But in fact by clearing all the channel, this has the effect of dramatically slowing the flow, silt accumulates more readily, and the bed of the beck will rise over time – potentially increasing the flood risk to nearby properties.



It can be much better to leave some of the instream vegetation; allowing a preferential channel to remain. This encourages faster flow throughout the year; especially in dry weather periods, when the beck is most vulnerable to siltation. The faster flow is also very much better for fish and other wildlife, and more attractive than complete clearance of instream vegetation.



Whilst too much management of instream vegetation can cause problems, there are also problems that result from too little vegetation management. So if instream vegetation is allowed to grow across the entire channel, this can increase flood risk and also increase siltation. Also, if bankside woody vegetation is not periodically cut back, this can collect debris during high flow periods, which can also increase flood risk.

Since 6 April 2016, those wishing to carry out certain works in or near watercourses may require an environment permit under the Environmental Permitting Regulations (EPR). For designated 'main rivers' such as the River Ribble, the Environment Agency is the relevant authority. For smaller watercourses, known as 'ordinary watercourses', designated local authorities are the regulator. For Tems Beck, this is North Yorkshire County Council.

Management of vegetation along Tems Beck is the responsibility of riparian owners. Those who own property that extends to the beckside are responsible for managing their own part of Tems Beck. However, there are a large number of riparian owners, and there would be benefit in ensuring that vegetation management is co-ordinated, as well as being correctly carried out at the right time of year. To minimise ecological impacts, it is best to plan any management work in August or September. Vegetation must never be removed in the fish/crayfish breeding season (October-June).

Before carrying out any vegetation management along Tems Beck, riparian owners should first check whether they will require a permit from North Yorkshire County Council floodriskmanagement@northyorks.gov.uk. They should also be aware that any removal of instream vegetation is likely to require a white-clawed crayfish licence from Natural England.