

Tree Warden Report for PC on 8 July 2024

- 1 **Riverside Walkabout** – Invasive plants, fallen willows and storm debris. Please see attached Appendix A - note of site meeting with Carol Yesson, Tyne Rivers Trust. (For background refer back to May 13 report.)

Carol has arranged for a corporate volunteer group to come and pull Himalayan balsam on Thursday 11th July from 10am starting on the island, then walking along and removing any balsam seen.

TRT's habitats adviser has suggested repairing and extending an area of willow spiling that was done a few years ago and putting in another area of willow spiling - on the section on a small informal path that goes close to the edge of the river where the bank is being undercut. If the Parish Council are happy for TRT to do this work, permission would be needed from the Environment Agency before planning it into the volunteer programme. Timing of the work will be dependent on water levels as people would need to get in the river to do the work.

With regard to the mature willows, JTR thought it best to leave them, unless they are a safety hazard for the public. It is natural for this type of woodland to fall, regenerate and stabilise sediment.

A resident has provided information about work to control Japanese knotweed on network rail land. This is due to be repeated and the PC may wish to send a reminder.

- 2 **Annual Tree Survey** – I will be starting this shortly for completion end August all being well. This is a visual walk - through survey of Parish Council trees to spot any health and safety problems and suggest any essential work or the need for a professional second opinion. If anyone would like to flag up any tree issues or accompany me on site visits please let me know.
- 3 **Jackson Road** – Coppiced trees and shrubs starting to re-grow. Further phase of thinning of spindly and / or leaning trees may be advisable and concerns have been expressed by residents in Jackson Road. These issues will be assessed in the annual tree survey.
- 4 **Trees on private land** - I provided advice to Tracey about the emergency powers that Local Authorities (but not Parish Councils) have. They can

act to make safe trees on private land that are an immediate danger to the public, where the owner cannot be contacted.

5 On-going tree matters

No progress to report on the following.

- Hagg Bank Allotments - two sycamores.
- 2024-5 Tree planting and tree packs from Great Northumberland Forest Project
- “Bee Squares”
- Holeyn Hall Road – line of veteran oaks in field boundary, previously protected. The Tree Preservation Order was apparently never formally confirmed. Renewal of protection advised.
- NCC Woodlands Officer report - advice on pit heap trees adjacent to the river.
- Wylam Nature Reserve verges have been strimmed.
A very welcome and generous offer of help with renewing the permanent interpretation boards has recently been received.

Appendix A

Note of Meeting to discuss Wylam Riverside 13 June 2024

Attendance: Liz Bray (Tree Warden) Carol Yesson (Volunteer Co-ordinator for Tyne Rivers Trust) and Colin Percy (Wylam Parish Councillor) (Part)

Apologies: Diana Carney (Chair Wylam Parish Council) Tracey Wood (Parish Clerk)

Key issues:

- 1 Invasive plants (Himalayan Balsam – HB) (Giant Hogweed – GH) Japanese Knotweed - JK)
- 2 Fallen willows, accumulations of flood debris and bank stabilisation.
- 3 Water quality

Route: We walked along the north bank of the Tyne from the nature reserve and continued west past Points Bridge and into the area of willow scrub. We returned via the Public Footpath and the shingle bank / Wylam “Beach”.

Discussion Points:

- Current volunteer efforts to control the invasives, mainly 4 individuals and a strong focus on keeping the nature reserve free from HB.
- Land ownership. Main owners are Wylam Parish Council, Northumberland County Council and Network Rail. Some sections unknown.
- Access: not all of the riverside is accessible from Public Rights of Way, but informal paths close to the river edge are used when water levels allow. Access close to the river is often tricky with steep sandy sections, fallen willows, scrub vegetation, GH flattened by river flooding, cobbles and stones, mud and wet areas. The public path runs alongside the allotments, nature reserve and an arable field above the normal flood level.
- Water quality: pale brownish foam observed from Points Bridge: it is unclear whether the foam is algal and / or toxic. We noted the popularity of this area for picnicking, swimming and paddling. Also used year-round by anglers, dog walkers, paddle boarders, kayakers.
- **Hot spots for the invasives:**
 1. West of Points Bridge on north bank with lots of fallen and standing GH and HB. Difficult access for the hogweed and stems are now up to 4m and flowering. Cold weather and flooding have slowed the growth of HB but have not stopped it.
 2. Knotweed not seen on the walk but is known to be present very close to the edge of the water. Restricted height to date but clearly root systems are present along the river.
 3. Shingle bank has large stand of HB plus GH and JK present.

Actions agreed:

- Carol will consult TRT colleagues and feedback to us about options for managing the willow and flood debris. (Local resident had been in touch with TRT recently and was interested in willow spiling for bank protection.)
- Carol advised that workplace volunteers could tackle the GH above Points Bridge and would have suitable protective kit. The HB on the Shingle

Bank was another suitable task. TRT have a licence to use targeted herbicide (glyphosate) on GH on the riverside which is best applied to stop regrowth after cutting down the flowerheads before seeds ripen. She will get back to Tracey Wood if this will be possible. We need to check on land ownership of the shingle bank and on parking locations for an 18 seater coach or minibus.

- Noted that TRT emphasis tends to be further upstream and their resources are limited. Carol is providing maternity leave cover for the volunteer co-ordinator at the moment.

Liz Bray Wylam Volunteer Tree Warden