Sherborne Parish Council, 15 July 2025

Notes of National Trust Sherborne Brook Restoration meeting held 9 July 2025

1. The JBA design is a proposed local intervention developed to address a wider sedimentation issue affecting Sherborne Brook and Sherborne Broadwater Lakes. JBA's brief was 'to reduce sedimentation within the Broadwaters'. Both JBA and the National Trust (NT) recognise that meaningful and sustained progress will require a coordinated catchment-wide strategy.
2. Upstream sediment interception, through measures such as roadside drainage (particularly road run-off from the North and South of Waterloo Bridge) and the removal of silt and grit from the road before it enters Sherborne Brook, is essential for the project's long-term success.
3. Gloucestershire Highways are currently clearing roadside grips, following engagement from the Parish Council (PC). As the landowner, NT is responsible for maintaining connected drainage systems and has currently scheduled a volunteer clearance session for Saturday 26th July. The PC encourages NT to properly advertise this as soon as possible and reiterate the request to plan volunteering sessions further in advance to increase participation.
4. NT proposes an initial wetland establishment phase, followed by low-level ongoing maintenance that will lead to meaningful de-silting of the Broadwater Lakes. However, the lack of detail around future management plans has raised concerns for the PC. It is not known how often the proposed wetland area will have to be de-silted for it to remain effective in removing sediment from the Brook, and therefore difficult to predict future associated management and clearance costs
5. Without clear objectives, a firm understanding of the desired aesthetic outcome, or any current detail of the necessary ongoing management costs, it is therefore difficult to understand and evaluate what this proposed major intervention to our important historic landscape will achieve. Furthermore, without clarity on the above it will also be difficult to evaluate in the future whether this proposed intervention has been a success.
6. The project was initially presented to the community as a stand-alone and conclusive solution but is now understood to be one phase of a larger, evolving programme. The PC emphasises the importance of transparency, early engagement (not late 'for information' communication), and a clearly defined end goal to build support and trust from the Sherborne community.
7. Andrew Danson outlined that the Broadwater improvement programme comprises three parts.

   Part 1: Road run-off management and wider catchment engagement

   Part 2: Implementation of the JBA wetland design

   Part 3: Vegetation and silt removal to restore open water areas within the Broadwater.

8. This wider vision is encouraging but has yet to be clearly communicated by the NT. Strong concerns remain in the community regarding potential landscape changes, impact upon the historic parkland (i.e. the Registered Park & Garden and the Sherborne Conservation Area), and the long-term sustainability of the currently proposed JBA design intervention. Associated mental health impacts have also been noted. The PC calls on NT to strengthen communication and engagement efforts to address these concerns before progressing.
9. Separately, NT acknowledged that some of the language used in public messaging to date has been unclear. Terms like "restoration," "spine," and "ribbon" have caused confusion. NT now refers to the work as a 'reimagining' of the Broadwater and reassignment of natural processes and should consider revising its public communication accordingly.

Flood Risk and Planning Concerns

10. The PC has serious concerns about the accuracy of the current flood risk modelling. The project relies on Environment Agency (EA) assumptions, specifically a 100-year flood level plus 43% contingency, which has already been exceeded four times since September 2024. Matt, the representative from JBA,

acknowledged that no specific topographical surveys of the Brook and adjacent land had been undertaken, nor had there been any long-term monitoring of water levels to inform the design. The PC has concerns that the proposals for a 'leaky dam' and 'deflectors' in the brook could exacerbate upstream flooding in the vicinity of Sherbrooke House and Waterloo Bridge. The PC calls for immediate updates to the hydraulic modelling and reassessment of flood risk before further progress is made with this design.

11. Although the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) has informed design decisions and been reviewed by JBA, it remains in draft form and has not been shared with the community. Without access to the CMP, it is impossible to fully understand the NT's position on key issues, including the date of when the lakes were first formed, which is critical to the heritage assessment and of significant public interest. The PC therefore requests the CMP be made publicly available as soon as possible, and ideally before any planning application is submitted

Next steps and community engagement

12. NT explained that the project has received positive initial feedback from Historic England, with potential funding in the £X00,000s. Combined with some NT funding, this could help deliver Part 3 of the project. The PC encourages the NT to communicate its end goals, including future management plans, for the Broadwater to the community.
13. Despite pressure on NT to deliver "Part 2" quickly, the PC advocates for a rebalanced, phased approach, beginning with lower-cost, catchment level interventions, such as grip clearance and sustainable drainage improvements within NT land adjacent to the highway to the south and north of Waterloo Bridge. There is a strong argument that this work should happen before more complex and costly interventions, like the proposed JBA design.
14. The PC supports the formation of a catchment-wide working group, including NT, JBA, Gloucestershire Highways, and other local stakeholders to support this. This group would allow for holistic thinking, ensuring that all interventions are sustainable, community-informed, and aligned with the wider catchment goals.