

## **Friends of the River Frome**

### **Chairman's Report to the Annual General Meeting (5<sup>th</sup> Feb 2009)**

This report covers this last twelve months of our work but this evening we are particular conscious of the past work, successes and energy during the past decade and a half.

What are we about? Frome people with their customary searching questions ask:

“What are you doing? Why are you doing it? What is your programme of work - long term?” And, they very often say “Well, I wouldn’t do it that way! All one can say to the last remark is “At least they notice and care”.

And Frome people do care very much about the river. It’s not wishful thinking - the V4F consultation showed, loud and clear, that our own River Frome remains a centre of our lives. That fact raises the morale of activists and makes us more energetic.

An important theme this year has been to clarify who is already volunteering to do what. We have a base point from which to build our membership. Significant membership gives us credibility.

Our Vision for the River?

It has many echoes of earlier work. eg

Caring for the riverbanks as a valuable amenity for the Town and surrounding area.

The River Frome could be made into a significant tourist attraction as well as an important local amenity. In official speak – it can be an economic asset. We need a good few of them right now.

Many other towns have done it for exactly the same reasons - Salisbury, Bradford on Avon, Bath and Trowbridge?

New building developments, whether commercial or housing, should be obliged [i in the Planning process to make sections of the riverbank a public amenity. And incorporate that development into the Town as a whole.

Who has responsibilities towards the river and riverbanks? The County, District and Town Councils, Environment Agency and Network Rail.

FRF see its job as persuading them to cooperate more than they do. This approach is beginning to pay off.

Who are the Interested groups?

Somerset Wildlife Trust

Rodden Nature Reserve

HopeFrome – the combined churches

Frome Canoe Club

The anglers

The cyclists

The walkers and ramblers

Frome Society

Vision for Frome

Sustainable Frome

FROGS

They already co-ordinate their efforts in projects aimed at improving the River. We thank them

Who has ownership of which stretches of the river banks?

Apart from MDC, FTC and Network Rail, ownership is with a host of private citizens who own property adjacent to the river. Their Deeds should specify. We find that nobody knows or are not saying what the position is. To progress our objectives, we need to work happily with these riparian owners. As everyone knows, boundary disputes between neighbours are notorious for breeding bad feeling. We need to research and record it. We would warmly welcome someone to help with research.

Future projects:

We propose to continue as before with light coppicing as preparation for upgrading the plant-life and biodiversity. We hope this will reduce the necessity for litter picking.

We are determined to seek cooperation with riparian owners including especially Mendip DC  
We wish to draw on expert advice and help as much as we can.

We hope to be the touchstone and an information clearing house for matters concerning the river.

John Hyde