

Dear Member/Supporter,

Welcome to the February 2026 edition of Flow, the newsletter for FoMW members and supporters.



Neighbourhood Plan - FoMW is a founding member of the Maidenhead Neighbourhood Forum, a community group designated by RBWM in 2023 to create a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) for Maidenhead's 7 unparished wards. The Plan's policies were determined through successive consultations and the NP has just passed independent inspection. It will now go to a referendum prior to adoption by RBWM. Although NPs cannot override national or borough wide planning policies, they expand on them at a local level and once adopted will have equal weight in planning decisions.

The NP provides detailed local policies on Design, Housing, Getting About, Climate, Built Heritage and Biodiversity. Tailored policies for the Waterways Corridor are also included to help protect and enhance the role of the waterway as a key public amenity and wildlife corridor through the heart of town. The ***referendum is due to take place on 19th March*** - when invited please ***vote in favour of NP adoption***. You can view all the NP details at <https://mnf.org.uk/>

Gas diversion - Work is underway in the High Street to renew and divert a gas main that currently runs under Chapel Arches. An old pipe at the rear of the arches is due to be recovered at a later date.



FoMW events 2026 - Trustees have agreed to hold two major events this year around the waterway... another Paddlefest on Saturday 20th June and the annual Waterways Fun Day on Saturday September 12th. Both will include providing boat trips for the public, for which we need more skippers familiar with our craft and the waterway. Ideally RYA qualified, but full training is provided. If you can help please Email boating@maidenheadwaterways.org.



Canoe Club News - Our new Canoe Club last month completed their first trip down the channel from Maidenhead town centre to the Thames at Bray and back. Five members in kayaks and a canoe paddled the previously blocked section at Braywick Park to the Thames in fast flowing high water, seeing kingfishers, swans, herons and egrets on the way.

Parts of Bray Cut below the weir had been blocked in places for nearly eight years by fallen trees, some of which were removed by RBWM last year. The river being closed and blocked by fallen trees for so long has sadly led to a significant build-up of litter in the water, snagged in the undergrowth. Brambles and low branches are also a safety hazard for canoeists and need cutting back. On the return paddle the paddlers filled a canoe with footballs, beer cans, glass bottles and bits of discarded plastic. We have since met with RBWM's nature team and agreed to work together to clear the litter from Bray Cut.

Channel maintenance - Work has been ongoing outside of the bird nesting season throughout Autumn and Winter to clear obstructions to the channels to the north, along York Stream and also in Bray Cut. We have welcomed advice from Wild Cookham on the northern channels, the National Trust for the Widdbrook and from RBWM's Rangers on Battlemead Common and Braywick Park. Work parties increased to every Saturday morning over this period and the water and banks are looking good and set for the spring. Work in Bray Cut had to be curtailed, however, due to rising water levels and a fast flowing channel, which with the deep mud banks was judged unsafe for volunteers.



Our maintenance pontoon came adrift from its moorings but is now secured mid stream. Once water levels are lower it will be retrieved, upgraded and properly moored. The increased work rate has generated large amounts of waste in the form of bramble, tree branches and weed. Wherever possible this is left as habitat piles close to the channel, allowing invertebrates to return to the water. There are accumulations of excess material at a couple of locations along York Stream which we hope RBWM will remove. The next visit from the Waterways Recovery Group (BITM ...the 'bit in the middle'..!) is due at the end of February to carry on its clearance of larger obstructions in lower Bray Cut. Thanks are due to the various Riparian Owners who allow access to their land to carry out this essential work.

FoMW's boats have been competing for space under Chapel Arches bridge with the pigeons for some time. The accumulation of 'guano' has been cleared periodically by a team of dedicated volunteers but c18 months ago we started looking at how we could better protect our craft and the arches themselves from the pigeons. It has taken time to agree a workable design, but MT Perry have now fabricated a protective screen for us and are due to install it in the coming weeks. We are all looking forward to being able to access clean boats.

Byofix - We will shortly be starting this year's weekly application of Byofix, a beneficial bacteria approved by the Environment Agency that breaks down blanket weed to help keep the waterway clear. If you could take a turn distributing the handy sealed sachets it comes in, please Email contact@maidenheadwaterways.org and we can agree a convenient schedule. No special skills are needed, it just involves a gentle half hour stroll along the channel from Town Moor to Green Lane.

Just Giving - **FoMW** is a volunteer, donation supported charity with limited financial support from RBWM. If you would like to make a donation, to help us do more, please use your phone camera to scan this QR Link to our Just Giving page at <https://www.justgiving.com/charity/maidenheadwaterways> and select the GIVE NOW button.



Richard Davenport

Chair of the Trustees

February 2026