



## Report for Officer Executive Decision

**Date:** 16<sup>th</sup> September 2020

**Title:** The grant of a Licence to Affinity Water for River Misbourne Re-alignment Works

**Relevant councillor(s):** Councillor John Chilver – Cabinet Member for Property and Assets

**Author and/or contact officer:** David Stowe/ Tina Abbott

[david.stowe@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:david.stowe@buckinghamshire.gov.uk) [tina.abbott@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:tina.abbott@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)

**Ward(s) affected:** Little Chalfont & Amersham Common – M Tett, C Jones, M Flys, D Bray, C Jackson, P Martin, D Phillips, C Rouse.

**Recommendations:** to grant a Licence to Access and Occupy relating to land off the Amersham Bypass to Quarrendon Mill, London Road East, Amersham to Affinity Water for the period of 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020 to 30<sup>th</sup> December 2021

**Reason for decision:** The Licence will give Affinity Water the right of access and occupation in order to carry out river restoration works which includes channel re-alignment and re-grading, installation of fencing and cattle crossing points along the new channel, in-channel works (installation of raised benches (berms)), creation of an informal wetland area and 300mm raised earth bund, and like for like replacement of a small footbridge.

This project will considerably improve the functionality of this stretch of the River Misbourne which in turn forms part of a future long term plan for the whole of the River Misbourne by Affinity Water.

The River Misbourne, Water Framework Directive (WFD) waterbody is failing WFD criteria for its *Hydrological Regime and Fish*. The river has been negatively affected in the past by channel straightening, the building of weirs and other barriers, over-widening and re-location away from the valley bottom, often into millstreams.

Affinity Water was asked by the Environment Agency to address morphological (physical habitat) issues in the depleted area (i.e. the area affected by extraction; Great Missenden to the M25 at Denham) as well as to reduce the extraction of water in the catchment.

The 1km long project area which affects the Councils land lies to the south of Amersham (see [append/attch](#)). The river passes through a rural landscape, initially through pasture, then between arable fields and finally bypasses around the north of Quarrendon Mill.

This whole section of river is artificial; with the original natural channel some 60 – 70 metres to the south-west. The channel was diverted in order to provide water to Quarrendon Mill. The mill is no longer operational.

The artificial channel is unnaturally straight and, being away from the valley bottom, is disconnected from ground water re-charge. In turn, this means that the river is more prone to drying than it otherwise would be. Conversely, during times of high flows or channel blockages, water spills out and runs across the fields to the bottom of the valley, re-joining the river via the remnant channel to the south of Quarrendon Mill.

The recommendation from Affinity Water was that this section of the River Misbourne is returned to the bottom of the valley as close to its original course. By returning the river to the valley bottom, the river will be better connected with ground water re-charge and will therefore be more resilient to low-flows. Moving the river to its original course will reduce the risk of flooding whether caused by high flows /blockages in the channel.

Officers have been working with Affinity Water on the proposals over the past couple of years and a report was submitted to Chiltern District Councils Corporate Asset Management Group (CAMG) on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2018.

Members agreed to support the proposal to relocate the river to its original course and to authorise the Head of Environment to take the necessary action to proceed and implement the proposal in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder.

Consultations with stakeholders have been undertaken including the Council's Tenants, the Town Council, Legacy Council Ward Members, Chilterns AONB Chalk Stream Officer and the River Misbourne Association.

There is no financial contribution required from the Council for this project as it is being fully funded by Affinity Water through the National Environmental programme in connection with the Water Framework Directive (WFD).

The Agricultural tenants have been kept fully informed throughout the process and are supportive of the project. The two tenants have signed the Licence in the last week.

Affinity Water have appointed a contractor to carry out the works and the contract is due to start on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

**Authority to take this decision:** This is a delegated decision to the Director of for Property and Assets under his delegation

**Other options available, and their pros and cons:** Not Applicable

**Conflicts of interest:** There are no conflicts of interest

**Key Risks:** Without undertaking this project there will continue to be a risk of the River Misbourne flooding affecting adjoining farmland and also at times drying out and having little or no flow due to being away from the ground water re-charge. This has an effect on

the natural habitat which Affinity Water is looking to address through this and other projects along the course of the River Misbourne.

**Legal and financial implications:** Katharine Welham has reviewed the Licence and her comments have been incorporated into this final version. There are no financial implications as the project is being funded entirely by Affinity Water

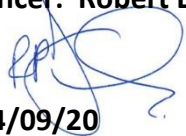
**Next steps and review:** The Licence is required to be signed and returned to Affinity Water by Friday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2020 and the Contract will commence on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

**Exemption from publication:** No exemption required.

**Background papers** None

**Lead Officer: Robert Daniels**

**Signed:**



**Date: 24/09/20**

**Director Property & Assets: John Reed**

**Signed:**



**Date: 30/09/2020**

**(Where there is a financial implication to the OED)**

**Finance Lead Officer: N/A**

**Signed:**

**Date:**

