

Yealmpton Environment Group

Notes of meeting 10th January 2024, Parish Room, Bakery Square

Present: Sheila Barton, Linda Durman, Tony Hawkins, Jane Pennington, Charles Weston-Baker

1. Apologies: Jen Fox, Sheila Melot

2. November meeting notes agreed.

3. Parish Council Environment lead

Noted that Rachel Wilson has resigned from the Parish Council and that Sheila Barton has been appointed as lead person for environment.

4. Budget

Charles confirmed that we are within budget for 2023/4. The Parish Clerk has asked for a meeting later this month in order to ensure that we satisfy council audit requirements. **ACTION LINDA**

Sheila reported that the grant money from Parish Council is not classified as Section 106. Linda to clarify with Chairman of council. **ACTION LINDA**

Cllr Barton reported that £5,000 is included in Parish Council budget for 2024/5. This may reflect monies brought forward for tree nursery equipment at Kitley woodland – to be clarified at meeting with Parish Clerk. We also need to be aware that requests for funding for river quality work/projects will be sent to Yealmpton Parish Council from the River Yealm Water Quality Group, but that this will be taken from the YEG allocation. Linda to be sent copy of these requests for budgetting purposes **ACTION TONY, JANE**

Linda's report to the January 2024 Parish Council meeting included a statement that we would produce a summary of 2023/4 spending by YEG for the April council meeting, based on the six projects approved at the June 2023 Parish Council meeting. At the same meeting, we will outline 2024/5 spending for the remaining costs of these projects.

Additional income from the YCE sales of solar/sustainable energy is expected to be in the region of £1,500-£2,000 for 2024/5. Receipt dates vary (March-July recently) and we do not yet have a guarantee that it will be allocated for environment projects. Linda will produce an annual report for 2023/4 outlining the benefits. **ACTION LINDA**

5. Footpaths and active travel.

Gemma Bristow (Active Travel Officer, South Hams) has explained that:

- Highways England is not going to fund multi-use routes but do want to improve commuter routes ??
- Active Travel England has funding at national level but the Prime Minister had 'cut this to the bone' earlier this year.

Travel consultants (Phil Jones Associates) have identified 29 priority cycling routes in South Hams. Y2P active travel group are confirmed Stakeholders, along with Brixton Parish Council and Yealmpton Parish Council. An online meeting for stakeholders is at the planning stage for February/March, in order to give us a better understanding of the process. The next stage will be to agree which are priority routes and audit the road networks involved to identify barriers to walking, wheeling and cycling, and then suggest possible interventions to overcome the barriers.

Devon County Council, South Hams District Council and Dartmoor National Park Authority are in the process of reviewing the outcome of the reports from consultants commissioned to advise on LCWIPs but officers are only just starting to share outcomes and agree a way forward where council/authority boundaries are involved.

Cycling UK are undertaking a study on behaviour change relating to active travel for South Hams DC and are developing a behaviour change strategy due March 2024.

6. River Yealm water report

Scoping Study and Mapping

- The final workshop for the Data Accessibility for River Catchment Environmental Enhancement (DARCEE) Project was held on Nov 11th at the Yealmpton Community Centre, where training was provided enabling use of the new QGIS “Yealm Mapper” desktop tool, integrating background knowledge throughout our catchment.

Citizen Science Investigation (CSI) of water quality

- Following a site visit with DWT, continued access has been negotiated on behalf of Dippers to sample Lee Mill Stream in New England Wood.
- A celebratory meeting was undertaken for those who have been directly involved with “Yealm Dippers” on Sat 2 December in Yealmpton Community Hall, when findings from our first year’s sampling were presented, with discussion of emerging areas of concern throughout our catchment. A further presentation is planned to NNEG and others in the N&N WCI Hall at 2000h on Thurs 17th Jan.
- Our first annual “Dippers” report is planned for January 2024.
- AH and JP attended WRT’s River Guardians Steering Group in Callington on Thurs 23rd November.
- AH, JP and DC met with WRT to further evolve our Partnership on Mon 18 December.

Continuous water monitor (CWM)

- An annual report of first year’s findings has been commissioned from WRT for early 2024.
- A quote has been requested for a further water monitor which measures concentrations of *E. coli* continuously.

Pollution response team

- Towards quantifying the bacteria *Escherichia coli* and other enterococci, we are collaborating with WRT, WATER and Friends of the Dart re trialling the MolEndo kit manufactured in Brixham as an alternative to the Aquagenx MPN kit.
- To improve the sensitivity of our phosphate measures, WRT have offered 2 x Low Range Hanna Phosphate Checkers.
- To improve the range of our phosphate measures, YEM plans to purchase 2 x High Range Hanna Phosphate Checkers.
- To record events in real time, RYWQG plans to purchase an outdoors wildlife camera with infra-red imaging and inbuilt telemetry.

Ecological impacts associated with water pollution

- TH is in discussion with PML re collaborations investigating hydrodynamic flow to, from and within our estuary, plus how our river impacts estuarine biogeochemistry.
- We are awaiting the results from first Riverfly Survey undertaken by Wildfish in November. An application has been submitted through the RYWQG to each Parish Council for funds to pay for analyses of future samples planned by local CSI volunteers.
- We continue to be engaged with consultation and planning on behalf of the River Yealm District Association, River Yealm Harbour Authority and/or Newton and Noss Parish Council with respect to environmental remediation work outside the former AkzoNobel paint-testing laboratory.

Nature-based solutions

- Dialogue is continuing re the possibility of raising sea trout and/or salmon for reintroducing back to our river.

Additional representations, collaborations and partnerships

- Plans are being drawn up to act upon emerging areas of concern relating to water quality within our catchment, as have been identified from our first year's measures from the CSI. This will be done primarily through the River Yealm Catchment Co-ordination Partnership (RYCCP), chaired by the Environment Agency, working with the Westcountry Rivers Trust, Devon Wildlife Trust, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Natural England, Yealm Estuary Management Group, South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, South West Water, South Hams District Council and others. By sharing our findings through this Partnership, we intend to help focus appropriate monitoring, regulation and remediation, drawing upon existing schemes and collaborative grant proposals.
- DC and TH attended a quarterly meeting of South Devon Catchment Partnership in Totnes on 13th December.
- TH and NT attended a meeting convened by CW on 5th Dec to discuss river water quality with local EA Fisheries Officer.
- RYWQG is in dialogue with interested organisations regarding how SWW, other water companies and the Environment Agency are refusing to share flow data for combined sewage overflows, supported by the Information Commissioner, in what appears as concerted action to withhold quantitative information that would enable estimation of the true scale of pollution from CSO discharges nationwide.

7. Trees.

Kitley woodland

Dr Liz Tutty, who is coordinating the tree nursery at Yealmpton, has spent an enormous amount of time marking the successful and the few failed tree plantings at Kitley Lodge Gate field. The failed whips (300) were replaced 10th January by volunteers under supervision. Replacement whips were supplied by Eforest at no cost.

The "Elm Tree Experiments" : soft cuttings made in the spring have been planted within the tree nursery and we will try hard cuttings over the winter, and see what happens.

Veterans Outdoors is focussed on the development of an "environment hub" on the Kitley Lodge Gate Field. Tentative plans are being created to source funding. Charles WB is a Trustee VO. Jane suggested that we assess the mental health benefits of being outdoors in a natural environment. ACTION LINDA to source suitable methods.

Worston Mill; planting of 1500 trees will take place soon, with Plymouth & South Devon Community Forest, Parklife and Volunteers.

Ewells Wood Planting, Kitley. Planting of 5000 trees will take place soon, with Plymouth & South Devon Community Forest.

Footpath 20 Planting - beside River Yealm from Puslinch to Pimple Rock – to be confirmed.

Yealmpton Orchard. A further 20 apple trees were planted together with Park life to complete the new Village Orchard. Tony will manage pruning and further work on the wildflower area will commence in the spring.

8. Biodiversity

Ruby's Wood project is under way. Project outline attached.

Yealm and Erme Species Survival Project (YESS). We are moving forward with our Yealm & Erme Species Survival project (YESS) to provide advice, assistance and financial support for nature recovery projects to Non-Farming Landowners (NFL's) in the river catchments. Thanks to the EA we have the funds to start a

pilot working jointly with the Environment Agency, Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT), Wild About the Erme River (WATER) and ParkLife CIC. Note: this includes those parts of the catchment within Yealmpton Parish, but also all other parishes within the catchment.

Bat Walk – there was a successful batwalk in September with BeeWild and James Roberts of ParkLife - around 31 participants.

Bat and Bird Surveying. Volunteers have been identified to lead and/or advise on monitoring projects in the Yealmpton area. (Caroline Hirst, Liz Harris, Morwenna Moore)

9. Soil

We may stage a talk on soil for the community. Possibly a joint project with YAGA.

Linda noted that the recent talk on 'Springtails to Pauropods' was enlightening about soil invertebrates.

There do not seem to be accepted standards relating invertebrate presence or density to soil quality, in the same way there are for river water.

Charles noted that 30-40% of the Yealm catchment (land) is not farmed so soil quality for these fields should be relatively good.

Firm plans for talks and events in the summer of 2024 to be discussed at future meeting.

Note: Linda has since suggested that she prepare an annual report for YEG work and invite co-workers to a networking event later in spring.

ACTION LINDA

Other

Wild About Devon – the application submitted for Yealmpton Parish Council award failed (no reason given).

Climate change – in order to tackle excessive run off during heavy rain, we encouraged installation of water butts with a demonstration by Mens' Shed on how to install them on 28th October in Bakery Square.

10. Next meeting.

Wednesday 13th March 7—9pm Parish Room