

Yealmpton Environment Group
Notes of meeting 1st November 2023, Parish Room, Bakery Square

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

1. Apologies: Jen Fox, Sheila Melot

2. September meeting notes agreed.

3. Parish Council Environment lead

Noted that Rachel Wilson has joined the Parish Council and has been appointed as lead person for environment.

rachel.wilson@yealmpton-pc.gov.uk

4. Budget/Section 106 funding

2023/4 summary from Charles was considered.

Noted that £300 laboratory costs for 2023/4 is for CSI lab work, not RiverFly.

2024/5 £6,000 historic S106 funds allocated June 2023 Parish Council: Cllr Barton will check that this is included in Parish Council budget for 2024/5. YEG will itemise projects and costs for February or March 2024 council meeting and let us know the next S106 allocation when it arrives during 2024.

ACTION SHEILA B

5. River Yealm water report

Scoping Study and Mapping

- The final workshop for the Data Accessibility for River Catchment Environmental Enhancement (DARCEE) Project is to be held on Sat November 11th at the Yealmpton Community Centre.

Citizen Science Investigation (CSI) of water quality

- Training of additional volunteers has been undertaken during Sept and Oct in Cornwood, Wembury and Newton Ferrers.
- Continued access has been negotiated with DWT on behalf of Dippers to New England Wood.
- A celebratory meeting is planned for those directly involved with Yealm “Dippers” from 1800-1930h on Sat 2 December in Yealmpton Community Hall, when findings from our first years sampling will be presented and discussed.
- Our first annual “Dippers” report is planned for December 2023.
- AH and JP have joined WRT’s River Guardians Steering Group, as Coordinators of the River Guardians Network, with formulative meeting planned in Callington on Thurs 23rd November from 12:00 to 16:00.

Continuous water monitor (CWM)

- Batteries have been replaced and the monitor recalibrated.
- An annual report of first years findings has been commissioned from WRT for early 2024.
- Findings for the CWM to date will be presented alongside those for the CSI on Sat 2 December.
- To obtain evidence that will compliment that from the CWM, the RYWQG have approved application to PCs for funding towards cameras that can be placed at strategic locations.

Pollution response team

- Towards quantifying the bacteria *Escherichia coli* and other enterococci, DC is dialogue with WRT and WATER re trialling the MolEndo kit manufactured in Brixham as an alternative to the Aquagenx MPN kit.
- Our broader response team needs two further new members, to account for absence or non-availability upon alerts.

Ecological impacts associated with water pollution

- Zoe Connolly (MRes) presented her findings to the YEM SG and others re how separate contaminant classes have changed in space and time through the Yealm catchment over the past 2 decades, related to recent surveys of seagrass abundance.
- WildFish undertook the baseline/benchmarking survey for our own Riverfly Project earlier in October, observed throughout by JP and TH. They surveyed six sites along the Yealm, all of which showed lower numbers of invertebrates than you would expect in a healthy river. Ten volunteers will be trained in April 24 to sample at the standard required for us to contribute data to the Smart Rivers Programme.
- **Further funding is required to enable our own independent sampling and analyses over the years ahead.**
- TH and PB 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.

Additional representations and collaborations

- Given the report detailing first years findings for the CSI, expected for December, in association with historic findings reported by Zoe, and knowing that collective findings identify areas of local concern, next steps will include sharing those concerns 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 and others, towards planning appropriate future monitoring and remediation.
- **Planning is required for those recommendations and associated negotiations at next meeting with the RYCCP**
- On behalf of the RYWQG, letters have been sent to various environmental journalists and Wildfish, detailing how SWW, other water companies and the Environment Agency are refusing to share flow data for combined sewage overflows, supported by the Information Commissioner; as evidence of concerted action to withhold quantitative information that would enable estimation of the true scale of pollution from CSO discharges nationwide.

YEG agreed to write a short article for December Yealmpton Press, summarising work to date and work planned for this winter and requesting more volunteers. ACTION

LINDA

6. Footpaths and active travel.

Sheila reported unauthorised closure of Footpath 28 from Gorlofen. She has had a report that signs are put up on the footpath when the area is used for shoots. Photographic evidence to be obtained and Lyneham Estate advised of relevant laws.

ACTION SHEILA

There is a meeting planned regarding a new public footpath from the Collaton Cross housing development, to Yealmpton. Sheila will report after the meeting.

There has been no progress on the Silverbridge Way extension. Linda suggested that activity was suspended pending the consultants' report on LCWIP* expected December 2023. Linda to send Sheila information on LCWIP.

ACTION LINDA

7. Trees.

Lodge Gate Field now has a Yealmpton tree nursery. Tree seed Sunday was a success. The acorns collected have already been planted in troughs. Temporary covers are in place to deter vermin and permanent frames are being prepared by Mens' Shed. Beds have been dug for further planting. Moor Trees have provided advice and support.

YEM has given micro tree nurseries to local primary schools. Veterans Outdoors have signed a lease with Kitley Estate for placement of two cabins on the field. This will now require planning consent.

24 standard orchard trees have been purchased to extend Stray Park orchard. Tony offered to help Parklife with planting.

1,500 trees from eforest will be planted this Nov/Dec along the Yealm through Worston by volunteers coordinated by Parklife.

2,000 trees will also be planted at Ewells Wood in Yealmpton this winter.

Invasive species/noxious weeds: there will be another day of volunteers pulling Himalayan Balsam July/August 2024.

Presentation by Ekogea has been deferred until early 2024 as they are committed to work with Plymouth University's sustainable farming project this year.

Schools engagement: A new 2 year Environmental Science A level began at Ivybridge CC this term. Cliff Harris is working with ICC to develop knowledge base for students in Spring term. Up to 70% of students are poorly served by entirely indoor classroom and home based learning but do engage and benefit from outdoor learning (endorphins happen). An AQA A level research model is under development.

Cliff is also working with Sustainable South Hams group towards an Education Assembly that will build on the success of the previous Sustainable Southams Rivers Assembly. The focus will be guided by Nadim Zahawi's 2022 Cop 26 "Sustainability and climate change strategy" SCCS. (acronym fatigue)

8. 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.

Chairman will circulate dates early January 2024 as nobody has a 2024 diary at present.

*Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan