

Minutes of Yealmpton Parish Annual Meeting, held at 7.30 pm on 10th May 2023 at the Community Room, Stray Park.

In attendance Cllr Craddock, Cllr Endicott, Cllr Thomas, Cllr Baldry, Cllr Barton, Cllr Tucker, Cllr Hopkins, Cllr Guy-Fierens, numerous members of the public and our invited guests representing Yealmpton Environment Group & Yealm Estuary to Moor.

1. Approval of the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 11th April 2022.

The Minutes were unanimously approved, Proposed by Cllr Thomas and Seconded by Cllr Baldry

2. Annual Report from Cllr Craddock, Chairman

Cllr Craddock reported the Council has continued to work with many agencies to maintain an active role in environmental projects and particular thanks are due to Dr Durman who has chaired the Environmental Sub-Committee. Thanks also to Cllr Endicott who has diligently chaired our busy Planning Sub-Committee which is a statutory consultee to South Hams District Council as our local planning authority.

All of our councillors have had allocated areas of responsibility and many of these roles have expanded as financial pressures have led to curtailment of services by both the County and District Councils. These responsibilities have covered Works, Footpaths, Roads and Pavements, Environment, Emergency Planning, Communications and Speed Issues.

Cllr Craddock added he believed the parish councillors had worked as an effective team over the past year and gave his my thanks to all who have freely given their time and expertise.

Cllr Craddock recapped the parish was sad to receive a resignation letter from Mike Stickland, who retired as clerk at the end of December after 20 years' sterling service and had recruited Mike Plant, who took over in January. The parish accounts for the year 2022-23 have been approved by our internal auditor, Mike Cosby, whom we thank for his pro bono work and his ongoing help in improving our management accounts.

Financially, the parish remains healthy and have been able to support village and other local organisations with grants totalling £13,365 including £8,000

sponsorship of the Yealmpton Press. Our precept increased by £3,000 this year to £57,000 which is just 2.6% of our Council Tax bills for the coming year.

It was disappointing that there were only 8 nominations to serve as councillors for the coming term so no election took place. Cllr Craddock added the parish hopes to fill our two vacancies as soon as possible and will be pleased to hear from any parishioner who may be willing to be co-opted to join us.

Finally, the parish took the lead in organising the Yealmpton Street Party which has been hailed as a great success. The planning and organisation was a collaboration with St Bart's, the Methodist Church, the YCA and a great team of volunteers. We even managed to organise a sunny afternoon!

3. Annual Devon County Council Report from Cllr Thomas

Cllr Thomas reported that Donna Manson is Devon County Council's new Chief Executive. Donna has set out her first impressions of the county and the council, and her focus on engagement in a message to our staff and Members. As a result of her appointment – and many other changes of personnel at senior levels, the County is now undertaking a comprehensive Governance review. This will deal with the massive Special Educational Needs and Disabilities budgetary shortfall as well as the Council's scrutiny functions and how it deals with other partner bodies.

Budget

As a result of the recent budget, in 2023/24 DCC will be spending 18.5 per cent more on children's services, and 8.8 per cent more on adult social care services. Overall, the Council is budgeting to spend 10.5 per cent more on services than last year. The average Band D householder will see the County's proportion of their council tax bill increase by £1.49 a week to pay these increases. Spending this much on priority services to meet growing demand without national support means having to make savings in the region of £47.5 million elsewhere in order to balance the books.

20mph schemes

4 applications were passed and begun in 22/23, with around £100k allocated. With over 100 parishes having expressed interest, County has given itself a 25 – 30 workbook of jobs before all parishes are satisfied.

Children's Services

This area, worryingly, continues to have an official rating of 'Requires Improvement'. Parents delivered DCC a strong message during the year in protest over failings within services that support children who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Significant problems and delays are occurring across the County. Cllr Thomas added he would urge parents who feel that they are not receiving a timely or appropriate level of service should contact him for support.

Pot Holes

These remain a huge issue across the County. The good news is that DCC has doubled the number of pothole teams, introduced weekend working and extended working hours across the network. This has resulted in up to 2,200 potholes being repaired each week.

Local Issues

Cllr Thomas concluded he had been delighted to support the Parish from his locality budget this year and would be happy to continue to do so next financial year.

4. Annual South Hams District Council Report from Cllr Baldry.

Cllr Baldry informed the meeting of successful recommendations from the Sustainable Locality Fund for payment to various community projects and the District Councillors will look to support Yealmpton Parish in 2023/24 if asked.

The South Hams share of Council Tax agreed for 2022-23 will be increased by £5 pa for a band D property. The South Hams share of Council tax is less than 10% of the total Council tax bill. The main elements are County Council, Police and Crime Commissioner.

In November 2022, after nearly 18 months of constant demands from opposition parties, the administration at SHDC brought the waste and recycling collection service back in house. As a direct result, collection rates have improved hugely, with a tiny proportion of collections reported as missed. It is true that many are still on the old service, and some are receiving a co-mingled collection but things are very much better than they were under privatisation. Garden waste is now being collected from residents who have opted in to the £49 per year subscription, which is working well.

The recent elections have seen something of a change at Follaton. The previous Council composition was 16 Conservatives, 9 Liberal Democrats, 3 Greens and

2 Independent members. Last Thursday saw the election of 19 Liberal Democrats, 7 Conservatives, 3 Greens, 1 Labour and 1 Independent Member. As such, the Liberal Democrats have now taken outright control of the District Council for the first time since its creation in 1974. There will be an Annual Meeting on 25th May where roles and responsibilities will be formally ratified

Cllr Baldry has been replaced as one of our ward members by Cllr Tom Edie. Tom lives in Noss Mayo – he is working away this week but looks forward to meeting us all next month.

5. Any Other Business: There was no other business.

6. YEALMPTON ENVIRONMENT GROUP & YEALM ESTUARY TO MOOR, (YEG & YEM).

The Parish was delighted to welcome Diane Castle, Jane Pennington, Charles Weston-Baker and Cliff Harris to address us in turn, on behalf of YEG & YEM.

Donna Castle informed us of the importance of long-term community projects to link fragmented catchment areas to increase the resilience of natural habitats. These projects are typically volunteer led, with the support of experts. Engaging landowners and farmers is a key goal to help protect and restore habitats and provide inter-connectivity.

Donna discussed the Citizen Science Project which encourages volunteers to explore the environment and local wildlife and derive an awareness of protecting it. Donna added that to understanding how to protect a species or habitat, we need to establish a great deal of related information. The more information we have, the better. Collecting a large amount of information is much easier with a big team helping and that is where Citizen Science Projects are very beneficial. The joint and collaborative working of volunteers, scientists and conservationists in particular enables more information about the species and habitats be obtained.

Sometimes specialist knowledge is required, but often a basic grasp of wildlife is all a volunteer may need to get involved – some projects offer training or identification guides to help.

Donna concluded by stressed the integration of **Rivers, Land and Community which would be presented by Jane, Charles and Cliff in turn.**

Jane Pennington, *Rivers*

By way of an overview, **Westcountry Citizens Science Investigation** aims are (1) to educate and engage people with the water environment (2) to produce data that can be used to target work and identify degrading water bodies (3) to spot pollution events which can be dealt with as quickly as possible (4) to create a network of catchment communities that are invested in their local environment.

Jane added the projects being delivered span whole catchments to specific places. They relate to water, land, and communities – everything undertaken is supported by evidence and science.

The Riverfly project aims to improve the health of the river and improve biodiversity, with the goal of a pollution free river. Essential to this is an understanding of the health of the river with accurate data for benchmark projects. 50 volunteers have very successfully taken part in the CSI with monthly sampling which greatly assists with identifying problems and areas requiring attention.

The Continuous water monitor which was deployed on 13th January of this year and records river data every 15 minutes thereby providing a live data stream. This greatly assists identifying, assessing and recording pollution events. There is a Response team which assesses the monitor alerts supported by a trained technician. This also enables the monitoring of pesticide pollution and that of E.Coli.

To conclude the River Fly project is a baseline survey of aquatic invertebrate diversity throughout the length of river as a direct measure of ecological health which will then be mapped against pollutant concentrations and habitat status.

Also a University of Plymouth Master of Research student is studying the link between historic pollution and ecological consequences through River Yealm catchment.

Charles Weston-Baker, *Terrestrial Coordinator* stressed the importance of land and planting to create a buffer zone along the river, with creating benefits including preventing waste entering the river and improving sustainability.

Charles commented way of an overview, the Parish Council is committed to protecting the environment and the natural heritage of the Parish, whilst recognising the need for sustainable development and the provision of high-quality public amenities and services. YEG is responsible for advising the Parish Council on environmental matters, which then decides on the best course of action, working in conjunction with local businesses, landowners, appropriate agencies and community groups. Once projects are approved by the Parish Council, YEG works through YEM and other organisations, such as BeeWild, on projects the Yealmpton parish, managing funding agreed by the Council, monitoring and reporting back to the Council.

Charles expanded that YEM is a serious long-term and dynamic community group project of volunteers from the six parishes in the Yealm catchment. Its aims are “to improve the health of the River Yealm and address biodiversity loss by taking community action to protect, conserve and enhance the local environment.” YEM is an all-volunteer group with a wide range of experience, working together with the parish councils, environmental organisations, local schools and community groups for the benefit of the environment and the local community. Funding is sought from each of the six Parish Councils for projects undertaken jointly with their environment groups and others in their respective parishes, where possible, on a matched funds basis.

Charles referred to the **completed YEG / YEM Environmental & Community Projects in the Yealmpton Parish:**

- 1) 3,000 trees planted by volunteers at Ben’s Farm Shop on the Kitley Estate,
- 2) 1,500 trees planted by volunteers at John Lawson’s Torr Farm, Yealmpton,
- 3) Farming Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) – five eco advisory visits to farmers in parish,
- 4) Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT) – four five eco advisory visits to landowners in parish,
- 5) Environment landowner events held at Ashcombe Farm, Worston Barn & Rose & Crown,
- 6) Elm Tree Disease Resistance programme established at Kitley,
- 7) Community & schools volunteering & training network established,
- 8) YEG/YEM youth strategy evolving, including “*Tree Seed Sunday*” etc,

- 9) Yealmpton School - micro tree nursery provided, jointly with Saving Devon's Treescapes.

Planned YEG / YEM Environmental & Community Projects in Yealmpton Parish:

Funded Projects:

- 1) River Fly Survey, with WildFish as part of their Smart Rivers Programme,
- 2) Yealmpton Community Orchard, with BeeWild,
- 3) Yealm River corridor 1,900 tree planting project at Worston, with eforests & Woodland Trust,
- 4) Kitley Estate Wood 3,000 tree planting project, with Woodland Trust & PSDCF,
- 5) Elm, Sweet Chestnut & Ash Disease Resistance & Biochar Project,

Ash Dieback Replacement Project, with Veterans Outdoors

Cliff Harris *Community & Education*

Cliff informed us that his brief for YEM is School and Community Engagement.

This involves 7 "Catchment Schools" Yealmpton, Newton & Noss, Wembury, Brixton, Cornwood, Sparkwell and Sherford Vale.

YEM has provided each school with a mini tree seed nursery.

Each Parish is developing its own community tree seed nursery. This is ready now in Newton and Noss, Wembury and Cornwood. There will be a "Flag Ship" nursery soon in Yealmpton.

"Seed Tree Sunday" common day in each Parish, in Autumn for foraging and collecting tree seeds.

Development of "Youth Strategy" and appointment of YEM "Youth Ambassadors" Ivybridge Community College.

Painting/ drawing competition between the catchment schools. Final best 3 from each school to be exhibited and judged at the Yealmpton Show by Gina Bastard.

Mermaid and the Cow: Based on a true story, adventurer and children's author, Lindsey Cole "mermaided" the length of the River Thames to highlight the plastic pandemic. Along the way, she rescued a cow, which featured in the national press and created a bestselling children's book, "The Mermaid and the Cow". The book has been given by YEM to all the catchment schools. The Mermaid will be at the Yealmpton Show.

Lindsey will be launching her next book The Mermaid the Otter and the Big Poo at the Yealmpton Show. So next year's painting competition theme will be all about otters swimming in a clean river Yealm.

A highly enthusiastic discussion was undertaken in conjunction with questions and answers. In conclusion, Cllr Craddock thanked the 4 presenters for such an informative presentation and for all their very obvious hard work and commitment. He added the presenters when seeking funding from the parish would be "pushing at an open door."

The meeting closed at 9.20pm

MAP, 22.6.23