

Yealmpton Environment Group
Notes of meeting 12th June 2024, Parish Room, Bakery Square

Present: Linda Durman, Jane Pennington, Charles Weston-Baker

1. Apologies: Sheila Barton, Jen Fox, Tony Hawkins. Sheila Melot

2. March 13th meeting notes agreed.

3. Matters arising

Noted that Sheila Melot has resigned from YEG. Linda has thanked her for her contributions.

4. Budget

2023/4 final budget has been agreed with Parish Clerk

Additional spend 2024/5 approved by Parish Council May 24:

£3,000, which will fund six Nature Recovery Advisory Visits (NRV's) and works **in Yealmpton Parish** at £500 per visit

Polytunnel - A 10ft x 8ft polytunnel with work benches – to propagate tree seedlings - £600.00

Anti-vermin frames x 2 – built for us by the Yealmpton Men's Shed at cost - £160.00

Compost – 20 bags from Moor Trees @ £8.60 each - £172.00

Total request - £932.00

YEG members expressed thanks to Yealmpton Parish Councillors for their support.

5. Active travel.

South Hams officers are currently revising the contract for LCWIP work due to the extended project length and so the public consultation has had to be delayed until this is resolved. They anticipate the consultation will happen in July, but I will send a further update when this is confirmed.

Priority routes, barriers and suggested interventions can be reviewed at the link below:

[Online mapping showing priority routes, barriers and interventions suggested – please click here](#)

6. River Yealm water quality

Citizen Science Investigation (CSI) of water quality

- The first annual “Dippers” report was circulated, including through RYWQG to all riparian Parish Councils and the Environment Agency (EA) on 07 March 2024.
- To improve the accuracy of associated phosphate measures, Hanna Phosphate Checkers will soon be deployed with associated training to CSI teams that are surveying sites where phosphate is known to be a problem.

Continuous water monitoring

- An annual report of first year's findings from the In-Situ continuous water monitor placed at bottom of river Yealm back in January 2023 was completed by Dr Holly Pearson of WRT in April 2024.
- The pH probe from the In-Situ monitor has been returned to suppliers, and which they have agreed to replace under warranty.
- The RYWQG have purchased two automated water temperature monitors and two wildlife cameras, funded from the South Hams District Council (SHDC) Climate Change & Biodiversity allocation, to be owned and insured by Yealmpton Parish Council and destined to be placed upstream in our catchment in consultation with the EA.

Measurements of bacterial contamination

- Towards quantifying the bacteria *Escherichia coli* and other enterococci, YEM is collaborating with WRT, Wild About The Erme River (WATER) and Friends of the Dart re trialling the MolEndo kit manufactured in Brixham as an alternative to the Aquagenx MPN kit.

Identifying and addressing sources of pollution

- A proposal titled “Understanding *Vibrio* Bacteria Risk using Earth Observation (uViBREO)” has been submitted by Plymouth Marine Laboratory (PML) in partnership with RYWQG and YEM to measure abundance of human pathogenic bacteria using water quality tests in the River Yealm, using that data to help develop algorithms from satellite data to forecast associated bacterial abundance throughout our catchment. The project will also involve Surfers Against Sewage (SAS) helping to collect public health data.
- An Environmental Information (EIR) request was submitted to South West Water (SWW) in April 24 asking for on-off times for all overflows of untreated sewage on our river. That request was refused by SWW. RYWQG has since appealed that decision, asking for an internal review of SWW’s decision, on basis that they have previously supplied such data and that the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) has recently ruled that a water company must share similar data.
- Discussion is underway between the RYWQG and Martin Fodder of the Scrutiny Group, towards co-ordinating communication and representations to South West Water and other organisations. The Scrutiny Group arose from SuSH and pulls together expertise and capacity to pursue information from SWW by legal means if necessary.

An Environmental Information (EIR) request was submitted by RYWQG to SHDC in Feb 2024 for information on underground utilities within, to and/or from Lee Mill Industrial Estate, with particular reference to drainage. In March, SHDC provided a map of drainage points within Lee Mill Industrial Estate, but which included nothing to indicate drainage from the estate. Upon RYWQG then asking SHDC to provide details on drainage from the estate, specifically in respect of which of the drains they have identified might flow into Lee Mill Stream, and which drain into Lee Mill sewage treatment works, SHDC replied saying they do not have any such information. Linda to suggest that Tony contacts Dan Thomas regarding this information request as he likes to be kept informed especially when if are difficulties getting information from officers. It is hard to believe that SHDC does not have this information. How could they consider planning applications for Lee Mill Industrial Estate without information on drainage? They wouldn’t do so for domestic properties.

ACTION LINDA

Ecological impacts associated with water pollution

- The second part of the professional Riverfly Survey by WildFish SmartRivers took place on 21 May 2024. The training of 9 local CSI volunteers took place on 22nd and 23rd of May. The CSI team will undertake the next survey in Autumn 2024.
- Six sites on the Yealm and its tributaries with known pollution issue are included within the survey.

Catchment scale remediation

- Following the example of Wotton Brook Water Quality Group on River Exe, who kindly shared valuable experience of projects mapping: (i) soil type, agricultural practice and surface water drainage, towards targeted mitigation and (ii) motorway road runoff, towards mitigating schemes that will help cleanse that runoff; YEM is in discussion with the EA and WATER re a scoping study towards mapping soil type, agricultural practice and surface water drainage throughout both the Yealm and Erme catchments.
- 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), co-chaired by the EA and YEM, working with the WRT, RYWQG, Devon Wildlife Trust, Dartmoor National Park, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Natural England, Yealm Estuary Management Group, South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, South West Water and others. By sharing information and ideas through this Partnership, we intend to help focus appropriate monitoring, regulation and remediation, drawing upon existing schemes and collaborative grant proposals.

7. Trees.

Trees in nursery are now in root trainers. They need daily watering in hot weather so we need a rota of volunteers for this. ACTION LINDA

Veterans Outdoors have planning consent for buildings/shipping containers on Lodge Gate Field but not yet sufficient funding.

Planting of holly bushes to screen the sewage treatment plant from nearby tracks and footpaths has been completed.

Worston Mill planting of 1500 trees took place 20th March with Plymouth & South Devon Community Forest, Parklife and volunteers. Ewells Wood planting of 5000 trees will take place in the autumn, with Plymouth & South Devon Community Forest.

Milizac and Stray Park orchards continue to do well.

The YESS project is going well - a long-term community project aimed at delivering measurable improvements in biodiversity and species abundance, water quality and flood resilience in the river catchments of the Yealm and the Erme. This is being achieved by providing advice, assistance and financial support for nature recovery projects to Non-Farming Landowners (NFL's). A report will be available in due course. The local Landscape Recovery Plan relies on initiatives of this sort and longer term funding for the Yealm catchment is anticipated.

8. Biodiversity/schools

A two day field work programme on Research Methods for ICC students on the Environmental Science 'A' level course will take place in late June. Students will learn standardised water quality testing assisted by some of our existing adult CSI volunteers. Observation of Himalayan Balsam included as an example of invasive species. The second day will focus on land based research methods; transect and quadrant surveys, door mouse traps, camera traps and possibly bat and moth surveys. It will compare the habitat which has remained untouched for a considerable amount of time (Rubies Wood) with the adjacent DWT reserve which has been open to the public. Students will also learn about terrestrial non native species and might observe a Australian flatworm which is thriving in the reserve.

Linda will ask James Roberts whether he will offer bat walks this summer.

ACTION LINDA

9. Invasive species

Four sites have been identified and prepared (brush cutting) for Himalayan Balsam removal will take place along the Yealm. The first pull of this year will take place in early July with volunteers. Plants should be pulled and crushed before the seed sets. Permission of the riparian landowners has been secured to go on their land to do this.

10. Next meeting.

Wednesday 9th October 7—9pm Parish Room