

Yealmpton Environment Group
Notes of meeting 30th June 2025 on Teams

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

1. Minutes of 28th November meeting agreed.

2. Budget

Charles has agreed YEG funding for 2025/6 as set out in the November 2024 YEG minutes, with the Parish Clerk.

3. Active travel/Public footpaths.

Linda and Sheila have met with Cllr Hitchins (Brixton PC) to agree to proceed with improved access to Silverbridge Way at the Yealmpton end of the path. This project was discussed at the June Parish Council meeting in Yealmpton and agreed in principle. Devon County Council also produced a LCWIP in October 2024 in which they identified Yealmpton to Newton Ferrers as a priority route using Section 106 funding from the Collaton development.

4. Yealm Water quality

4.1 Saltmarsh and intertidal habitat resilience project. Linda to contact Estuaries Officer at South Devon Natural Landscapes to request inclusion in information sharing with YEMG. Action Linda

4.2 Mudspotter. Run-off from land into the river is best avoided as it impairs water quality and causes loss of topsoil. Mudspotter is a standardised system of recording run-off

<https://modularriversurvey.org/mud-spotter/>

We hope to introduce this locally. In September there will be an initial assessment of what this would involve locally with Matt Worthington, after which volunteers will be recruited.

4.3 Pollution event. Another episode of pollution on the River Piall was reported to EA earlier this year but they deemed it within allowable limits although the investigation by EA is ongoing. Noted that we consider that this licence really needs to be re negotiated.

4.4 "A collation of specific projects throughout the catchment that would help to achieve remediation was submitted by WRT to the EA, following consultation with YEM and the RYWQG. We have since heard that this initial proposal has been approved in principle, now awaiting sign off by the EA's legal team, when we will be informed of the funding awarded, following which proposed projects can be prioritised towards a final agreement and workplan".

4.5 From Parish Council minutes for June:

'Footpath 20 a. A pre-application meeting with the Environment Agency had indicated that the creation of a bund along Footpath 20 would be refused by the EA. The concreting of the path and the proposed works to the river bank are likely to be acceptable. The river is salmonoid which means it is likely that any permit will state that no works can take place between 1st October and 15th June. The permit application was 2-3 months, so the works are unlikely to be able to be completed this year. They could not advise on the likely fee. Council confirmed they wished to continue with the proposed scheme without the inclusion of the bund.'

5. Noxious weeds

This year's 'Himalayan Balsam pulling & Brush Cutting' programme begins soon. All the riparian landowners we have been contacted regarding access. The HB and Japanese Knotweed locations have been reviewed and it is encouraging to see that last year's large stands of HB have been very considerably reduced our efforts. A 'call for volunteers' will be sent out soon.

6. Biodiversity monitoring. Ivybridge Community College students undertook two days' field work at Ruby's Wood in June as part of their Environmental Science course. This resulted in a standardised data set that will act as a template for the future.

7. Tree planting

Plans for planting trees and hedges this coming autumn are being firmed up at three sites in Yealmpton Parish.

8. Yealm Catchment Management Plan

YEM is still in the early stages of developing the Yealm Catchment Management Plan that will bring together many aspects of wild habitats and biodiversity, water and land management (including natural solutions to flood/drought management), water quality and pollution and community engagement.

Many of the projects to improve our natural environment rely on volunteer work. Organising everything falls on the shoulders of a few volunteers, and environment improvement would be faster if there was more volunteer support for project management. In particular, at the moment, there is a need for either the funding, or volunteer time to upgrade the YEM website. YEM works to improve the whole river.

9. Next meeting late September tbc