

## Natural Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Change Notes

Meeting 11 January 2024 19:00 – 20:00

Present: MR, AH, KR, AP, JB, PB

Discussion about Invites incl. Southwell Young Farmers, Minster School – JB agreed to follow the latter up.

PB noted AHs comments following the previous meeting, which he apologised for not having responded to.

**Non-fossil fuel equipment** use by STC staff – issue resolved now? KR thought that PH had given a date of March 2024 to resolve.

**Town Environment** – PB attended last meeting and KR and JB both on committee. PB apologised for not having sent through the November Minutes to TE.

**Water fountains and Severn Trent** – response received from one department in ST saying that we needed to contact another department. PB has received no response from the second department yet.

**Himalayan Balsam** – plan for survey of STC land in Spring. Communication with landowners to be delayed until this has happened. Flooding will have resulted in spread of the plant to new areas.

**Brackenhurst student involvement** – need to know what students are interested in participating in, though there are various options in town. PB has invited Rebecca Dicks from NTU, though only very recently. Need to refresh the list of possible MSc topics. AH will circulate this.

**Neighbourhood Plan** – substantial changes to this plan and for further discussion with councillors in February 2024. Local landowners may feel now that they have been listened to. Consultation was a proper consultation, as opposed to many consultations, which appear to be a rubber-stamping exercise. AH noted Future Homes Standard – he forwarded this to PS and PH for this information and possibly to add into NP. AH also mentioned Green Link plan along Riverside, though there is a pinch point at Upton Rd, which would require National Trust involvement.

**Green Southwell** – AP Beryls Meadow has been discussed between GS and STC and an agreement has been reached, though flooding likely to have impacted on programme of activity. Untidy areas or areas better for wildlife? ‘Spring clean litter pick’ agreed for March 16. AH noted that Media Pack available for this, Daily Mail or Keep Britain Tidy. Green Fayre being planned for later in the year. Community fridge also mooted, Ruth Murray taking a lead on this. Sharing foods produced locally, particularly at times of glut of a particular foodstuff. Concept led by Frome in Somerset. Concern about vandalism, but good case studies available. MR noted plans to help swift and swallows with boxes installed in the

Minster steeples. Discussed accessing boxes cheaply. Anna Joyce has been very active and installed a good number. KR wondered if Ruth could be asked to create some posters for the Burgage for Keep Britain Tidy.

**Woodland Management Plan** – still not finalised. For consideration by Full Council on 17 January (post-meeting note - approved by FC subsequently). Several meetings between LH and Clerk to discuss. AH noted recent fallen tree over the Greet, but overlap in responsibility with Internal Drainage Board. They appear not to have cleared the rivers so much recently, AH will write to them. PB had raised a question at TE about which trees had fallen recently and whether or not they had been judged to be higher risk. AH noted that a healthy tree had fallen next to a dead tree on his land recently. KR noted problems with red beetle infestation in Scots Pines. Plans for new tree planting to be developed, with assistance from Woodland Trust or County Council. Trees for Climate would be supported by CC for 15 years. AH noted however that more mature trees (much higher cost than whips) might need to be planted to replace some of the lost trees.

**Pesticide trial** – DC want to know whether STC wanted to expand the trial. The results of last year's trial are not known, but we might make an assumption that things went well, if expansion is being suggested.

**Climate and Ecology Bill** – PB took this to FC in November, at which he was informed that Private Members Bills fall with Kings Speeches and new sessions of Parliament. Letter of support for aims of Bill agreed at FC in November 2023. PB will check that this has gone.

**Establishing STC carbon footprint** – PB has spoken with both Clerk and Deputy Clerk and has offered to make phone call to energy provider. No progress made to date.

**Electric vehicles** – JB has had discussions with various people about getting EV charging points installed in the Minster School car park, to encourage staff to transition to EVs.

**Sewage Discharges** – PH had made FoI request, but not clear he got the necessary information. AH has extracted information from a huge database. Large number of sewage spills into both Potwell Dyke and the Greet. AH happy to update this action every year. Riverside footpath flooded at present, adjacent to sewage outflow pipe. Currently smells, which might simply be stagnant water or may be caused by sewage. Should TE look at this issue? Need to discuss with ST, if possible. Concern about housing developments which don't separate clean and dirty water. PB has passed paper on this to planning cttee chair JB, though district council is the principal planning authority, so may need to be passed to Chair of DC planning cttee, Andy Freeman. Planning to move up to Mayoral level soon?? Letter to NSDC to ask if they will share information about drainage and surface water collection with us.

20mph zones – recent negative responses from Police, suggestion that the proposal was pointless, as not possible for vehicles to travel at more than 20 in Kings and Queens Sts.

## New Issues

PB noted that councillors have received invite to Staythorpe power station on Tuesday 23 Jan. May include reference to move to renewables. He will be attending this.

MR noted flooding-related issues, maintenance has fallen behind in various parts of town. Problem of passing the parcel, too slow and late, concern about brambles growing near Higgons Mead creating a blockage. He has cleared it recently. Wealth of open space in town but not enough time and money being spent. KR noted local orchard areas becoming overgrown and needing work.

KR noted dog-walking, exclusion zones discussed in TE. Concern about damage to local ecosystems and this being a consideration for exclusion. Increase in number of dogs is impacting adversely in various ways, use of green areas and changes in dog food composition being environmentally unfriendly etc.

AH noted if anyone wanted wild garlic, once flooding has receded, maybe 6 weeks time. KR suggested perhaps Squires Pond area.

Cycling or Active Travel Advisory group meeting on Thursday 18 January. Development of rights of way to create active travel routes, particularly between Southwell and Newark and within Newark. Concerns about new owners of Kelham Hall excluding local people from walking in the grounds. Possible link over Trent by adding walk and cycle route to existing railway bridge.

(Post-meeting note – PB discussed with Dawn Campbell – chair of Newark Town Council Climate Change Cttee. Possible sharing of information?)

**Next Meeting: 7pm 22 February 2024, Old Court House**

LH - Lyn Harris

PH - Peter Harris

JB - Jeremy Berridge