

Stoke Environment Group

Minutes of the Meeting 16th September 2021

Attendees: Emma Arthurs, Judy Blair, Mike Blair, Polly Burns-Cox, Dave Evans, Sarah Evans, Helen Grant, Karen Housego, Fi McQueen, Jane Parsons, Janice Pearce, Ian Upshall, Trevor Williams. (13)

Apologies: Andrew Boyle, Edwina Hansford, Lyn Silcock, Annette Smith, Dave Smith, Charlotte Sunquist, Jane Williams. (7)

1. Welcome

Everyone introduced themselves.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

Minutes of last meeting all agreed and no matters arising.

3. 2 Minute Task Reports (excluding Envirofair)

- Hedges & Trees. Ian Upshall reported that all arrangements and agreements are in place to continue with this project. A quote (£224.40) for the membrane has been received from the recommended supplier and it is planned to place the order this weekend. Delivery is 4-5 days, and it is hoped a small working party can be formed to lay the membrane in a couple of weeks-time. Ian will ask for volunteers to undertake this work.
- Mobility & Transport. Sarah Evans reported that after a fantastic start by the footpaths group, work is ongoing and making a tremendous difference. Sarah has been in touch with the Somerset County Council's representative for footpaths (Martin Cooper) who has been very supportive and provided advice and guidance, and they have also formed very positive relationships with local landowners. In most cases, the landowners are happy for volunteers to clear public paths with shears and secateurs. In many cases they have also agreed to the use of a strimmer – but this is not universally the case.

Polly Burns-Cox reported that initial tidying of the area around the bus stop at the top of Dark Lane has been carried out. Polly would now welcome help and advice on what to plant at the bus stop – in particular from the person whose suggestion it was. Polly has been in touch with the Parish Clerk (Kelly de Silva) regarding a lid for the recently relocated bin. The bus stop area looks much improved, now also provides an accessible bin and so reducing litter in the area. Fiona McQueen agreed to send Polly a contacts list so she can progress this work with willing helpers.

- Home Energy & Waste. Trevor Williams reported that the 'Open House' trail, organised in cooperation with Climate Action Athelney (CAA) was well attended and generated lots of interest. There were five open houses, three in SSG and two in North Curry. Trevor and Jane welcomed nine visitors, and Emma Arthurs eight. Brian Jeanes (N Curry) welcomed two visitors and the owners of Applegarth, 15. A very useful and helpful day, with positive feedback from visitors. Trevor confirmed they would be prepared to repeat the Open House in the future.
- Information Hub. Karen Housego reported that the first of the information leaflets she has been compiling is almost finished. The topic is 'home and personal products' and contains ideas for using more sustainable and less damaging products at home. There was a discussion about printing and distribution, and it is hoped that it will be ready in time for the Environment Fair in October. Karen is to email a copy to Ian for proof-reading. Following finalisation, quotes for printing will be obtained. It was agreed that the leaflet should be printed on recycled paper and also have an electronic copy on the website.
Ian reported that both he and Dave Evans have access to a database called 'Parish Online'. This resource may enable the group to log environment-based information, including the results of surveys. Some training may be necessary, and Ian will contact the PC about how this might be carried out.
- Biodiversity. Ian reported that a survey of coppice at the village hall has been undertaken with the help of a locally- based botanist, Sarah Shuttleworth. Sarah provided some immediate advice to increase biodiversity in the area and provide an area that could be used for more efficient wildlife habitats. Sarah will be writing a report, and this will inform a strategy for future management of the area.

Ian also noted that he had been invited to The Levellers' meeting on 21 September 2021, and to the Coffee and Book morning on 25 September 2021 to talk about the SEG and its objectives.

Ian has also been contacted by Louise Grinter who runs the Brownies about a forthcoming virtual sleepover. They also plan to make hedgehog houses. Ian has agreed to go along to talk about the SEG.

Helen Grant reported that she was asked by a resident of SSG if the SEG would be prepared to undertake work on her garden, and a neighbouring shared area, so that it would be more attractive for wildlife. This was discussed and noted, but it was agreed that the Group does not have the resources for private work at this time.

4. Environment Fair Progress Report

Janice Pearce is coordinating the arrangements for the Envirofair and summarised the current situation:

- Organisations attending: 16 have confirmed. A couple of further organisations to confirm. Emma agreed to make contact with the company supplying home renewable energy equipment – it is hoped they will also attend.
- Layout: There will be tables with numbers, so organisation know where they are going to be located. A one-way system is to be put in place to maintain a degree of Covid security.
- Timings: There is a group in the hall on the Friday evening, so it will be necessary to undertake all setting up on the Saturday morning. It has been requested that the hall is open at 7.30am to set up. Organisations will be given a start time of 8am allowing two hours to set up. The fair will be open to the public from 10am until 4pm.
- Resources: Access to power will be required and Janice enquired about extension leads. Any organisations attending will be asked to provide own equipment (other than table and chairs). The overhead projector will be available.
- Refreshments: To be managed by the WI. It is planned to charge £2 for a tea/coffee and cake. There was a request for ethically sourced tea and coffee to be provided. Polly offered to bring tea towels. Janice suggested we would need to provide blue roll and plenty of hand sanitiser.
- Raffle: A raffle will be held (proposal being to ask The Levellers to manage) to win the 'sustainable products' hamper assembled by Karen and Fi. It was estimated to contain (including the basket donated by Dave Evans) close to £100 of products. A photo of the hamper will be placed on NextDoor and our FB page. There will be no advance sales of tickets – all will be sold on the day at £1 per ticket.
- Publicity: Dave Evans is managing this and he has assembled a number of signs and posters to be placed around the village. It was agreed that publicity will start in earnest two weeks before the fair – i.e. from 1 October 2021.

It was suggested that a donations box, located by the entrance/exit, be provided. Funds collected would go towards future projects undertaken by the SEG. This was agreed.

SEG will put all its displays together in order to maximise impact. The displays will include a summary of all current projects and those coming up. The SEG stands will be located in front of the stage.

5. Funding & Finance

Ian Upshall reported.

- Bank Account update: Ian reported that the application for the bank account had been approved and that they were waiting for log in information. There will be three signatories, Polly, Dave Smith and Ian. Ian agreed that he will put in place a procedure whereby the accounts can be routinely 'audited' by a non-signatory member of the Group.
- Funding Sources: Ian reported that the SEG had been assured of £500 from the PC (as a 'kick-start' donation), £300 from a Reconnecting Communities fund (granted from SCC

through the PC), and approximately £300 from members doing work for Coates and donating their wages to the group. Many thanks everyone.

Also, the successful application for hedging plants for the village hall boundary by 'Reimaging the Levels' will be supplemented by a donation of £240 – this will more than pay for the membrane.

- Future applications are currently being reviewed by Dave Smith who will compile a list, together with conditions and criteria for application. These include Lottery funding and Wessex Water. An 'expression of interest' for a grant of £2500 from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) has also been submitted.

6. Media Management Report

Dave Evans requested that it would be helpful if people can comment on the Environment Group Facebook posts as this will then force the original post to the top of the list. This is particularly relevant to the posts shared on the SSG Villagers FB page, which receives several posts per day.

Boards and information signs about the fair will be going up around the village. Also, leaflets for the primary school and the Willow Set are ready for distribution, with the agreement of the leaders. A new 'mobile' notice board has been made for general notices.

7. Next Meeting

The next meeting is to be held in the time on Thursday 7 October 2021 in the Committee Room at the Village Hall.

8. Close

The meeting closed at 2105hrs.