

# **Stoke Environment Group**

## **Minutes of the Meeting 7<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

Attendees: Dave Smith, Trevor Williams, Janice Pearce, Helen Grant, Alison Katte, Andrew Boyle, Dave Evans, Sarah Evans, Karen Housego, Fi McQueen, Ian Upshall. (11)

Apologies: Polly Burns-Cox, Edwina Hansford, Jane Williams. (7)

### 1. Welcome

Welcome to Alison Katte who has assumed the role of liaison between the Group and the Baptist Church.

### 2. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

Minutes of last meeting all agreed and no matters arising.

### 3. Two Minute Task Reports (excluding Envirofair)

- Hedges & Trees – Village Hall

A biodegradable weed suppressant is being laid tomorrow (8 October) in preparation for the hedge to be planted over the winter period. The timing of the planting will be determined by the weather and the maturity of the 'whips' to be planted. We have recently been informed by the Somerset Rivers Authority that the application for a grant amounting to £242 has been confirmed. This is for 120m of hedging and two trees. It is intended that this grant be used to pay for the biodegradable membrane and fixing pegs (£224.40, having been paid by Ian Upshall). The grant will be paid to SEG on completion of the project.

A representative of The Playing Field Committee has expressed interest in planting a hedge along the recently constructed bank at the bottom of the field, and for the replacement of a number of trees that have died in the hedge-line between the stile and the children's play area. Further discussions will be undertaken after completion of the village hall hedge project.

- Mobility & Transport – footpaths

Several local walk descriptions have been compiled and are being 'tested' by volunteers. It is envisaged that a booklet will be put together at a later stage containing many more walks. In the meantime, draft descriptions will be printed and given out at the EnviroFair on 16 October. Leaflets will be created and uploaded to the website, whilst more will be printed and possibly put in holiday lets and offered to local businesses etc. It has been suggested that the cost might be mitigated by offering advertising space and/or sponsorship to local businesses - this will be investigated.

After the EnviroFair it is hoped we can make further progress on improving the area around the Dark Lane/Woodhill Terrace bus stop. Some residents of Polkesfield have also volunteered to help clean up the Polkesfield bus stop.

- Home Energy & Waste – litter picking  
A number of residents have adopted roads and open spaces but there are still areas that are not included. The EnviroFair will be used to encourage people to ‘self-help’ on litter picking. Little and often is the key to staying on top of this scourge. Ian confirmed he will speak to the PC regarding the purchase and provision of litter-picking equipment.
- Information Hub – talks and guide  
Karen Housego has finished an information booklet on ‘the sustainable home’ and has had 50 booklets printed. Attendees agreed that this was a great piece of work and thanked Karen for her hard work. The booklets will be offered at the EnviroFair, and recipients invited to make a donation to cover the printing costs (roughly £1.90 per copy).  
Ian reported that he had delivered a short talk on SEG to The Levellers Group. There was much interest in what the Group is doing and there were offers of help (The Levellers have since agreed to run the raffle at the EnviroFair).
- Biodiversity – Williams Hall Spinney  
Ian reported that he has now received a report on a survey conducted by Sarah Shuttleworth. The report includes actions that can be taken immediately to improve the biodiversity of the area. Ian will write an action plan, based on Sarah’s report, and will liaise with the Williams Hall Trustees and the Parish Council, with a view to gaining their agreement to actively manage this potentially valuable habitat.

#### 4. Funding & Finance

Ian reported that SEG now has an active bank account – albeit with a balance of £0! Dave Smith, Polly Burns-Cox and Ian Upshall are joint signatories. Ian reported that SEG can expect the following grants to be made shortly:

- £375 grant from Reconnecting Communities Fund (via the Parish Council)
- £500 start-up fund made directly by the Parish Council.
- ~£300 ‘earned’ by members of the SEG who cut willow wands for Coates English Willow at Mere Green.

SEG has also submitted an ‘expression of interest’ for a grant to be made from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) that will be received by the PC following the construction of Broomfield Park. The final amount to be awarded will be decided once the results of the residents’ survey have been collated and discussed by the PC membership.

Dave Smith is producing a spreadsheet of potential funding sources for the future. The information recorded will include such data as the criteria to be met for individual funding opportunities. Ian noted that to enable the Group to be ready to respond quickly to grant opportunities, it will be necessary to develop a detailed forward programme of projects, with milestones and resource requirements. This is something he will start to develop for further consideration and discussion by members of the Group and other village organisations.

## 5. Environment Fair

Janice gave a wide-ranging summary of the arrangements for the EnviroFair:

- Confirmation of attendees  
SEG, RSPB, Somerset Wildlands, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Somerset Beekeepers, Parish Church, Baptist Church, Tennis Club, Trevor and Jane's Plant and Seed Swap, Stoke St Gregory Primary School, the Willowset Pre-School, Dykes Farm, Coates English Willow, Taunton Midweek Conservation Volunteers, Somerset Waste Partnership.  
We are also hoping 'Nappy Solutions' and Total Renewable Solutions will be able to attend. Currently awaiting confirmation.
- Exhibitor Plan  
Janice has produced a floor plan with table numbers. This will be displayed on the morning to help with table locations and for when exhibitors arrive.
- Logistics and Support  
Covid safety measures will be put in place. There will be a one-way system around the exhibition areas, with removable signs placed on the floor. Hand sanitiser stations in place. Windows and doors will remain open and visitors will be encouraged to 'sign in' using the village hall QR Code. Some spare extension cables will be supplied by SEG members but these will be minimised as far as possible.  
Janice has borrowed some wicker hurdles from Coates English Willow (these will require very strong twine to secure – Ian to source) and some concertina display panels.  
Volunteers are needed from 7.30am to help setting up. There will be a significant workload to be undertaken in the two hours before we open our doors at 10am.
- Timings  
Dave Evans will be unlocking the Village Hall at 7.30am. He will not be available to lock up. Ian to inform Graham Gleed/Paul Fielding when the hall has been cleared.  
The main hall, conference room and kitchen will all be utilised. At least two displays outside (RSPB and Trevor and Jane's Seed Swap).  
All stall holders can arrive from 8am and the official finish is 4pm. This will be followed by packing down all tables, chairs and equipment and then a general tidy and waste removal.

- SEG displays  
The SEG displays will be located both on and in front of the stage area. The displays will comprise, Footpaths, SEG overview, Hedgehog information and 'Coming Next' board. Fi is also promoting recycled toilet rolls!
- Refreshments  
The WI are providing tea/coffee/cakes and squash and little cakes for the children. Ingredients have all been sourced. Wild-flowers on the refreshment tables. A risk assessment has been completed. The WI will provide eight volunteers to manage refreshments all day. Charges will be: 50p for squash, small cake or cookie, and: £2 for tea/coffee/cake for adults. PG Tips will be used as they use biodegradable tea bags.
- Raffle  
Currently there is one prize which is the Eco Hamper which is worth about £100. The Levellers (Jenny Priddle) have offered to manage ticket selling at £1 a ticket. There was a suggestion to provide more prizes. It was left that if any member has anything they would like to donate then they should contact Janice now and bring it along on the day.

Janice shared her 'Tree of the Future' where people can write on a piece of card what they are doing already to tackle climate change and attach the card to the tree. Where possible, we should take the opportunity to celebration what people are doing already.

Dave Evans is to contact the Somerset Gazette to see if they can attend. It was agreed that it was more likely that they would ask for photographs and some text. Ian stated he would be prepared to write some text if that was the case.

## 6. SCOP26+

A Somerset COP26+ meeting is to be held at The Edgar Hall in Somerton on Saturday 6 November. This is to discuss local issues alongside the international COP26 conference in Glasgow. The Parish Council have reserved two seats - Janice Pearce is attending and there is one more place available. If anyone is interested and would like to attend, they should email Janice on "pearcejanice@hotmail.co.uk".

## 7. Village Breakfast

The next village Breakfast is to be held in the village hall on 6 November. Andrew Boyle has asked the Group to supply some flyers that will be put out on the tables. Fi stated that she may also be able to attend to represent the Group.

#### 8. Somerset Water Forum

A Somerset Water Forum is scheduled to take place on Friday 19 November at the J24 Conference Centre near Bridgwater. This free event is a joint venture between Somerset Catchment Partnership, Somerset Rivers Authority and the Environment Agency and will showcase some of the most innovative water environment projects happening in Somerset, as well as stimulate discussions around future priorities and opportunities. Environment Minister Rebecca Pow will open the forum and will be followed by a range of speakers covering Somerset's Flood Action Plan, climate change, water quality and working with nature. Ian suggested that SEG should attend and asked if Trevor would be available. Trevor agreed to consider and let Ian know his availability

#### 9. Next Meeting

It was agreed to hold the next Group meeting on Thursday 18 November 2021. Location to be confirmed but Alison Katte agreed to find out if the Baptist Church Room is available. Timings will be the usual 7 – 9pm.

#### 10. Close

The meeting closed at 9pm