

Stoke Environment Group

Minutes of the Meeting 18th November 2021

Attendees: Trevor Williams, Janice Pearce, Polly Burns-Cox, Andrew Boyle, Dave Evans, Sarah Evans, Karen Housego, Simon Bale, Fi McQueen, Ian Upshall. (10)

Apologies: Helen Grant, Alison Katte, Nicolette Williams, Judy and Mike Blair, Emma Arthurs, Eric McLaughlin, Jane Williams. (8)

- 1 Welcome
- 2 Minutes of Last Meeting (Oct 21). No matters arising
- 3 Two-Minute Work Group Reports (excluding Envirofair)
 - *Hedges & Trees*

Ian reported that the biodegradable membrane has been in place for some time (thanks to Dave Smith and Jason Morgan) and we are currently waiting for a date when the hedge whips will be ready for collection.

Action 1/6: Ian to contact Reimagining the Levels to obtain a rough idea of this date and the length of notice.

Since the meeting Ian has contacted RtL and they have given an estimated date of January 2022 for availability of the whips.

There was a discussion about who would be involved in the planting. Ian suggested that we arrange a community-wide event. The Brownies have already confirmed an interest in helping.

Trevor reported that he has pruned the trees in the allotment orchard today and suggested that the Group might consider planting other species that will produce berries and blossom.

Ian also noted that we are waiting for seven trees to be delivered which are to be planted at the top of the Playing Field – in cooperation with Neil Sollis of the PFC and Kelly de Silva, PC Clerk.

Action 2/6: Ian to contact Kelly and enquire whether the PC has heard anything about a delivery date.

Since the meeting, Ian has contacted Kelly. No response to date.

Ian has also been approached by the WI with regard to the donation of a tree to mark the Queen's Jubilee in 2022. SEG has spoken to the PC about a location. SEG to continue to liaise with the WI and PC.

- *Mobility & Transport – Footpaths, Bus Shelters*

Sarah Evans reported that the strimming carried out to date has been successful. The group has discussed the need for improved signage. The next task will be to repaint the lettering on existing finger posts. Charlotte Sundquist (Parish Footpaths Officer) is also due to receive a number of direction roundels which will be available to SEG to improve direction finding. A further task is to consider amending the draft guides with inform such as areas that can be impassable due to flooding, car park locations and grading the walks.

Action 3/6: Alison Katte to undertake improvement work on the draft walk guides.

No further progress has been made on sprucing up the bus shelters. Further discussion to be held withing the Group to agree the next stage. Ian noted that there are volunteers at Polkes Field who are willing to assist with their shelter.

- *Home Energy & Waste*

Ian reported that he has bought litter picking equipment on behalf of the PC who will reimburse him. Equipment includes 6 x litter pickers, 6 x reflective vests and 3 round bag holders. Ian has contacted the PC to determine where the equipment should be stored so that members of the community can access it as and when they require. A location in or around the Pub/Shop has been suggested. We await the PCs views.

Action 4/6: Ian to liaise with the PC regarding a location that can be accessed by members of the community.

- *Information Hub*

Karen reported that 100 copies of the Green Book have been sold so far. A further 75 more copies have been ordered from the printers. Karen has paid for these herself and will be passing the invoice onto Polly for reimbursement

It is hoped the shop at Coates Willows & Wetlands Centre will take 20 copies. The Green Book has been a great success.

Ian met with four members from Kingsdon (near Ilchester/Somerton), led by Alison Hicks, as they are in the process of setting up a community environment group. It is hoped we can stay in touch and continue to share ideas and experiences.

- *Biodiversity*

Based on the advice received from Sarah Shuttleworth on how to manage to spinney to promote biodiversity, Ian put together a plan and submitted it to the Village Hall Trustees and the PC. Both agreed to the plan with a relatively minor query about grass cutting. Ian noted that a date has yet to be arranged to undertake the first phase (weed clearance and hazel coppicing), but that this needs to be addressed soon.

4 SEG Organisational Structure and Appointments

- *Discussion Paper by DE*

Ian invited Dave Evans to add any points to the note he distributed on SEG organisation – and, in particular, the need for a committee. Dave noted The Group has been in existence for about six months and it may be that some changes can evolve over the next six months. There was a discussion about the need for a committee to make decisions especially on financial expenditure. There was agreement that a committee would be helpful for the smooth running of the Group, to improve transparency and to share the workload. The following agreed to be on the committee for the remainder of the first year (ending June 2022) after which it may be necessary to review the appointment process:

Ian Upshall, Fi McQueen, Polly Burns-Cox, Dave Smith, Janice Pearce, Trevor Williams, Karen Housego, Rev Simon Bale and Andrew Boyle.

Since the meeting there has been further correspondence on this topic. It has also been agreed to replace the title 'committee' with 'Steering Group'.

Karen asked if it would be possible to receive a list of the names of members of the SEG, as collated by Fi. This was agreed, although contact details would not be shared at this stage – partly due to the need to respect privacy rules.

Action 5/6: Fi to email list of names of current SEG members to those who attended the November 2021 meeting.

- *Appointment process*

It was agreed that the current committee members (as named above) will continue in that role until the end of our first year.

For administrative purposes we will assume our year start to be 1st July.

5 2021 Environment Fair

- *Report on Feedback and Future Plans*

Janice reported that all feedback received was practical and useful. Improvements identified included the need to focus more on younger people and to have more activity-based displays and presentations. All the organisations that attended the Envirofair 21 are happy to come back next year and do things with young people.

There was unanimous agreement that SEG should organise an Envirofair for 2022. Janice suggested that it could be expanded and be more inclusive, particularly for other village groups. She suggested that we could hire a marquee to focus activities for 'Young Environmentalists'. It could be 'marketed' as a family day out.

Janice also suggested the day could be concluded with a village dance.

A number of groups and visitors suggested that an earlier date in the calendar be selected. Somerset Beekeepers would prefer a date in May or June so that they can bring a display hive. Trevor noted that the plant stand would also benefit from an earlier date. This was agreed and a provisional date of 25 June 2022 selected.

It was agreed that there was an opportunity to build on the success of this year and that a larger event in June 2022 would require that planning and organisation start almost immediately. It was noted that 2022 marks the Queen's Jubilee.

Janice agreed to take on the management of the project, but all agreed that it is too much for one person to arrange so a working group would be formed to assist her.

Ian asked Janice if she would produce a summary of her thoughts to aid discussion and to decide on a venue (subject to availability). Janice recommends the use of the Playing Field, but further discussion was required. Time is of the essence for deciding the venue.

Action 6/6: Janice to prepare and distribute (via Fi) an outline plan of Envirofair 22 for discussion within the Group.

Ian said he would contact other village groups to ascertain any potential clashes with other planned events

Action 7/6: Ian to contact the village groups to ascertain that the date would not clash with any other village events.

Ian has since contacted the PC to determine if they are aware of any village events – particularly connected with the Jubilee. Awaiting reply.

6 SCOP Meeting

- *Report by JP and KH*

Janice reported that the event in early November was well attended and included a large number of speakers. The most valuable part of the event was the networking and discussing what was happening in each of the parishes. Langport have made a pledge to implement a 'Green Charter' to encourage improved management of their environment and community.

Janice has taken the 'Green Charter' to our PC which has agreed to discuss it at their next meeting with a view to potentially implementing something similar in Stoke St Gregory. Karen brought back the idea of a newsletter and repair shop. Community transport was also discussed.

7 Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC) iNaturalist Project

- *Report*

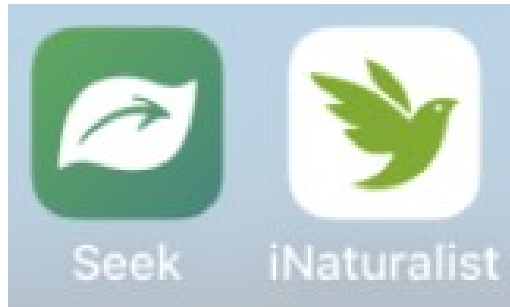
Ian reported that he has been in discussion with SERC and Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT) on a project called the 'Somerset State of Nature' (SSON). It is essentially a nature audit following a national 'State of Nature' exercise that was carried out in 2019. SERC and SWT have been working on the creation of a digital database that can be used by everyone to record observations in their local area using mobile phone apps.

The SSON will be monitored using two metrics: abundance and biodiversity. Over the medium to long term, and when sufficiently populated, the database will be used to focus effort and resources supporting environmental projects. The argument has been made that the better our 'state of nature', the stronger our position to tackle climate change.

Ian noted that Stoke St Gregory is the first parish outside of Taunton to go live on the new database and we now have our own 'project' corresponding to the Parish of SSG.

The two apps that are used to upload observations are free of charge. They are called Seek (which can identify new species and store a photograph) and iNaturalist (developed by National Geographic) that records all observations on a UK-wide database. The SERC mapping system takes research grade observations from iNaturalist and plots them together with all the relevant metadata.

This is a really important and exciting project and one that everyone can engage with (so-called citizen science) and SEG is at the forefront of its roll out. Ian is now in



discussion with SERC and SEG to write a user guide that will be widely distributed within the environmental community.

Action 8/6: Ian to write a user guide in collaboration with SERC and SWT.

8 Communications

- *Social Media*

Dave E noted that it would be good to put things on social media more frequently - weekly, if not every day. Members are asked to send any articles or contributions to Dave Evans.

- *Newsletter Contributions*

Briefly discussed the publication of a SEG newsletter, this may be a project for the future.

9 Finance Report

Polly Burns-Cox is now doing the finances. She will give a brief financial report at subsequent meetings. Ian thanked Polly for taking on this role.

10 Funding Report

Ian noted we are still awaiting decision about CIL funding. It is understood the PC are reviewing the results from the community feedback exercise.

Dave Smith has created a simple spreadsheet to record funding opportunities, criteria, etc.

11 Next Meetings:

It was agreed to identify dates for the next three meetings so that these could be publicised in good time.

Thursday 20th January 2022, 7-9pm

Thursday 17th February 2022, 7-9pm

Thursday 17th March 2022, 7-9pm

Locations to be confirmed.

Fiona McQueen

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