

Stoke Environment Group
Minutes of the Meeting 20th January 2022

Attendees: Helen Grant, Polly Burns-Cox, Andrew Boyle, Emma Arthurs, Nicolette Williams, Dave Evans, Sarah Evans, Alison Katte, Fi McQueen, Ian Upshall. (10)

Apologies: Karen Housego, Susan Crabbe, Dave Smith, Eric McLaughlin, Trevor and Jane Williams, Janice Pearce. (7)

1 Welcome and Apologies

2 Minutes of Meeting 6 (Nov 21) and Matters Arising

Correction

Sara Evans requested that a correction to the minutes relating to her Footpaths report. Fiona has made the correction. "Alison is doing a mock-up sheet of all the walks written up to date showing where they all are. We thought it could be handy to be able to give some to B&B's and holiday lets so guests could consider whether they wanted to walk any of them. They will become available on-line for people to print off their own hence no cost to SEG though we thought they ought to be available in printed form as well. Venues to be decided."

Review of Actions

Action 1/6: Ian to contact Reimagining the Levels to obtain a rough idea of this date and the length of notice. **Completed.** The whips and two trees will be collected from Compton Dundon on Friday 28 January.

Action 2/6: Ian to contact Kelly and enquire whether the PC has heard anything about a delivery date. **Completed.** The trees were collected by Ian from the SCC nursery in mid-December 2021 and handed over to the Playing Field. The trees have since been planted.

Action 3/6: Alison Katte to undertake improvement work on the draft walk guides. **Completed.** The guides are under construction.

Action 4/6: Ian to liaise with the PC regarding a location that can be accessed by members of the community. **Completed.** It was agreed to place the community litter picking equipment to the rear of the shop. This has now been done.

Action 5/6: Fi to email list of names of current SEG members to those who attended the November 2021 meeting. **Completed.** The list was emailed to members immediately after the November meeting.

Action 6/6: Janice to prepare and distribute (via Fi) an outline plan of Envirofair 22 for discussion within the Group. **In process.** Now that a date and location for Envirofair 22 has been agreed, Ian will draft a project plan and distribute.

Action 7/6: Ian to contact the village groups to ascertain that the date would not clash with any other village events. Completed. Ian contacted all known groups. Only one reply, from the Baptist Church, was received.

Action 8/6: Ian to write a user guide in collaboration with SERC and SWT. **In process.** This guide has yet to be completed.

3 Two-Minute Work Group Reports (excluding Envirofair)

Hedges & Trees

Ian reminded the meeting that the Village Hall hedge planting will take place on 29 January 2022. We will be planting 480 hedge whips (14 species) and two trees. Some hedge species will be planted in multiples and others singularly. It is also the Coffee & Book morning at the Village Hall, and both events will be running side by side to the benefit of both.

Planting volunteers have been asked to arrive at any time from 9am to start planting. This will be continued throughout the day, and it is expected that planting will be completed by about 3pm. Volunteers are asked to bring their own spade.

Dave E has been in touch with the Somerset Gazette and reporter Steve will be coming at 9am. Neil Morgan has also agreed to come along and take photographs around 11am.

Ian and Fi have arranged an activity for children - there will be a nature I-spy/treasure hunt in the morning and Marion Vincent from 'Growing Minds' will arrive at midday for an hour and a half. She will lay on a free taster session for 0-2 year-old children and parents.

Janice and Helen (both members of the WI as well as SEG) will provide tea and coffee and biscuits from midday.

It has since been agreed that SEG will bear the costs of afternoon refreshments.

Ian noted that once the planting has been completed, the membrane will be covered with woodchip. Ian has sourced the woodchip (courtesy of Ashculme, Hemyock) and arranged transport to collect. No date has been agreed but thanks to Polly for offering use of a towing vehicle and John Davison for the use of his trailer.

Poster and flyers will be made available at the shop from 21 January.

Dave E noted that we have been given 60/70 whips by Holly Hembrow who had some left after completing a hedge on their land. These whips will be used if we are short, otherwise they will be offered to another site.

Dave E asked that people please comment on any Facebook post to ensure that it stays at the top. 'Liking' a post will not raise the post to the top so a comment must be posted.

Mobility & Transport

Sara reported that improvement of the yellow arrows on finger posts is going well. Unfortunately, two local owners have refused to have footpath/bridleway signs on their land.

Sara asked that, to help keep footpaths open when the fields are planted with maize (often up to the headland), they should be regularly walked by a small group.

Ian reported that SEG had purchased two bicycle racks from Polly. They were offered to local groups but only the HDTV replied. The racks have been delivered to the shop and they are now in place near the front gate.

Home Energy & Waste

Litter picking equipment, paid for by the PC, has now been placed in a clearly marked box and placed to the rear of the shop. This was a location agreed with HDTV. The equipment is free to borrow by any resident of the village – please ensure it is returned asap.

Ian noted that a Composting Workshop has been arranged for Saturday 19 March 2022 from 10am to 2pm. Nicky Scott, an expert from Devon, will lead the workshop which will be based at the Village Hall, followed by practical demonstrations at the allotments. The cost for attending will be £5 per person/family to help cover the expense. Ian has been in touch with Robin Ferrett who is the allotments site manager and has confirmed their involvement.

Dave E reported that the Christmas Card collection is ongoing. Once collection has finished, it has been suggested that a craft day, for children and families in the daytime and adults in the evening be organised in cooperation with other village groups. Saturday 29 October has been pencilled in for the craft day. A village 'firework' breakfast is planned for 5 November and this might be an opportunity to showcase the crafts.

Information & Resources

Ian noted that the photograph competition is now up and running and that entries will be accepted up to the end of May 22. All were asked to promote the competition. Ian also reported that Matilda Temperley, Managing Director of Burrow Hill Cider and a published

local photographer, has agreed to help judge the entries. Unfortunately, however, she is not available to attend the Envirofair where the results will be announced.

Biodiversity

Ian noted that after the hedge planting, the next project to be tackled is the village hall spinney for which the first stage will be to clear brambles and weeds and then to start coppicing – especially the hazel. Ian is currently working on a more detailed plan of action.

4 Somerset Environment Records Centre iNaturalist Project

Ian reminded the meeting of the Seek and iNaturalist apps that can be used to provide data for the Somerset Environmental Records Centre. A user guide is currently being written.

5 2022 Environment Fair

Ian noted that at the last meeting (November 21) it had been agreed to hold the Envirofair on Saturday 25 June 2022. An email 'survey' of the Steering Group members also gave the clear indication that the village hall was the preferred venue. Given this preference, the entire village hall and outside areas has been booked.

Ian is writing a project plan for the event that will give greater clarity on the objectives of the event, showing how these contribute to the Group's overall objectives, the logistics and costs. This will be distributed as soon as possible, and comment will be invited.

ACTION 1/7 – Ian to distribute a draft project plan for Envirofair 22.

In the meantime, Fi and Ian have started contacting groups and organisations that participated in Envirofair 21, plus some other potential exhibitors. All organisations attending will be expected to be able to demonstrate their 'green credentials'. The meeting agreed that it is a priority to be inclusive and to build upon the success of last year. All members (not just the Steering Group) will be asked to contribute ideas for Envirofair 22.

Polly suggested that SEG considers how to persuade our community to accept less plastic – especially single-use plastic. It was agreed that this is a topic SEG could do more work on in the near future – perhaps we could use it as the SEG theme at Envirofair 22?

SEG have received an email from the Parish Council enquiring of all village community groups and organisations, their plans for celebrating the Queen's Jubilee. Events, if they are to be held, will take place over the weekend 3 June 2002. Ian has sent a holding response to the PC confirming SEG's intention to hold Envirofair 22 but that the Steering group would further consider its plans.

After some discussion, the meeting agreed that the Jubilee events and the Envirofair 22 would be separate events. It was agreed that both had distinct objectives and themes. There was unanimous support to contribute to the jubilee celebrations in whatever way possible – potentially with a ‘stand’ or presentation at any village event to be held. Ian agreed to confirm SEG’s position by email to the PC.

ACTION 2/7 – Ian to email the PC stating its position with regard to the Queen’s Jubilee celebrations and Envirofair 22.

An email, copied to the Steering Group membership, was sent to the PC on 22 January 2022

6 SSG Green Charter

A Green Charter was presented at a recent meeting attended by Janice and Karen who passed it on to the PC for further consideration. The PC has noted the potential for a Green Charter to be adopted in our Parish, it has not yet discussed this in any detail. The topic appeared on the agenda of the last PC but time constraints resulted in it being postponed. Ian noted that he has highlighted to the PC the willingness of SEG to contribute to a review of the potential benefits and implications of a Green Charter. Ian will repeat the offer at the next PC meeting.

ACTION 3/7 – Ian to reiterate SEG’s offer to the PC on the review of a Green Charter

7 Finance Report

Polly reported that SEG currently holds £1223 in the bank and in cash. There have been very few payments of late.

Known future outgoings include the costs for Nicky Scott’s attendance at the Composting Workshop in March and the photograph competition printing in June. These costs appear in the respective project plans.

The Baptist Church, through Alison Katte, submitted an invoice for the hire of the Church Room for this evening’s meeting.

8 CIL Update

Ian reported that he remains unsure of the next stage of CIL process.

Ian noted that the last edition of Stoke News contained the results of the community survey where parishioners were asked to state their preferences for using the CIL funding. Votes were collated and ascribed to a number of categories. The category containing the most votes was Health & Fitness (47 votes). This was followed by Environment (38) and

Footpaths and Bridleways (34). There were nine other categories with votes of between 27 and 9.

Ian confirmed that he will attend the next PC meeting (14 February 2022) to enquire about the process going forward and to report to the SG.

ACTION 4/7 – Ian to attend the February 2022 PC meeting and gain a better understanding of the CIL process

9 Group/Volunteer Insurance Cover

Polly has made an application to the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) for SEG insurance. In order to qualify, SEG must become an 'Affiliated Society' to the RHS for a small annual fee. As soon as this has been approved, we will be in a position to apply for insurance cover. Polly agreed to investigate if temporary short-term cover can be obtained for the hedge planting on 29 January.

Following further enquiries, Polly has confirmed that cover will not be available for 29 January.

10 Any Other Business

Polly raised an issue on the rhyne that runs along the edge of Stanmoor Drove. She noted that it was almost dry – a state she had not witnessed before. What water is there is dirty and it has a greasy/oily film on the surface. As a consequence, it was having a negative effect on the wildlife (kingfishers, moorhens, swans) that is normally found in the area.

ACTION 5/7 – Ian to make further enquiries and to report back to Polly

As a result of enquiries, it has been stated that the reduction in water level is not uncommon during periods of low rainfall (and January 2022 has had one of the lowest rainfall totals on record).

Emma asked if there was anything SEG could do to help people reduce the increasing amount of food waste. She referred to a recent article in the national news. Emma said that she would be prepared to start thinking about collecting recipes on reducing unnecessary food waste – for example, by using up food 'leftovers'. There was significant support by everyone.

ACTION 6/7 – Emma to consider how best SEG should promote a reduction of food waste and to report back at the next meeting

Andrew noted that Thatchers are giving away apple trees to community projects. There is an application process where projects can bid for up to ten trees. This was discussed but it

was concluded that that until land is available in Stoke St Gregory where trees could be planted, it is not appropriate to make an application.

11 Next Meetings

Thursday 17th February 2022 at the Baptist Church Room

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Fiona McQueen

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27th January 2022