

Stoke Environment Group

Minutes of Meeting 19 on 15th March 2023

Attendees: Karen Housego, Andrew Boyle, Trevor Williams, Sarah Evans, Dave Evans, Nicolette Williams, Charlotte Sundquist, Deborah Anderson, Jade Anderson, Fi McQueen, Ian Upshall (11)

Apologies: Polly Burns-Cox, Dave Smith, Bryony Slaymaker, Matthew Slaymaker, Emma Arthurs, Jason Morgan (6)

1 Welcome and Apologies

Fi noted there were six apologies.

2 Review Task List for 2023

Ian reviewed the task list:

Task 1 – SEG Communications. Dave E has started running a regular SEG Saturday Spot on the website. It was noted that we all have a responsibility to provide Dave with content for the website.

Task 2 – VH Spinney. The Spring work has been completed. This comprised some coppicing, ground clearing, and installation of nesting boxes. There is evidence that the snowdrops and crocuses planted in the autumn are appearing. No more work will be done until Autumn 23.

Task 3 – Grafting Workshop. Andrew B ran a workshop to demonstrate how he undertakes apple tree grafting. Six members 'had a go' and we now await the results. There was interest in running this workshop again – perhaps in the Autumn or early Spring 24, depending on the weather. Numbers will need to be determined nearer the time so that the supplies can be ordered. Thanks to Andrew for organising and showing patience!

Task 4 – Bus Stop Sprucing. A recce has been undertaken and we have a plan. Work is unlikely to begin until May under Jason M's leadership.

Task 5 – Telephone Box Refurbishment. No date fixed yet but will probably be at a time when the weather improves. Work on the internals could be undertaken at any time. Karen H is leading this work.

Task 6 – Assistance to PFMC. A proposal has been sent to the Playing Field Management Committee to tidy up the picnic area. This proposal has been acknowledged but will not be considered by the Committee until April at the earliest.

Task 7 – Curload Wildlife Area. No progress to date. We need to re-establish contact with the owner and then develop a plan.

Task 8 – Sundquist Open Garden. This will take place weekend May 13/14. SEG will set up a stand for a book swap and information. Karen H to liaise with Charlotte.

Task 9 – Envirofair23. Fi reported that all was going well with about 30 confirmed exhibitors (roughly the same as last year) although we awaiting replies from a number of others.

Task 10 – Benches. It was noted that the bench in Dark Lane (opposite the Spinney) is in a poor state. It was suggested we could remove the wooden slats, refurbish and replace. Trevor Williams agreed to lead on this task.

Task 11 – Apple Pressing. It is intended to press apples in the Autumn but the date depended on the harvest. Jade A noted that a friend has all the equipment which we might be able to borrow. Jade was thanked for this information. Andrew B and Trevor W will lead on this task nearer the time.

Task 12 – Increasing biodiversity in verges. The bulb planting was very successful last year and we are starting to see the new plants. It was proposed that we repeat the exercise this coming Autumn. Fi McQ is leading on this task.

Task 13 – Walkways and Paths. Work continues to improve accessibility and new guides have been produced and are being 'tested'. All signs have been used now but Charlotte said she could provide more. Sarah E is leading on this task.

Task 14 – Newsletter. Karen, who is leading this task, reported that the second news letter will shortly go for printing. On receipt we will need to arrange delivery. It was suggested that we borrow the delivery plan for the Stoke News. Several people volunteered to deliver. Karen H will organise a delivery plan.

Task 15 – Presentations/Talks.

- Apple Tree Grafting. Completed
- Wildlife Discovery. Bryony has kindly offered to coordinate a short session on the use of the Seek and iNaturalist apps. Val Graham of Somerset Botany Group has offered to join us and provide some 'professional' input. Ian U noted that Leon DeBell of the Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC) was very interested in this project and asked if our experiences could be used to inform an initiative which they are leading on similar community projects. A meeting between SERC, SEG, SWT and Botany Group is to be arranged.
- Bat Detective. Bryony has confirmed that the bat detection kit has been reserved for our use on the weekend 2/3 September – weather dependent. She will arrange for a short briefing on the use of the kit, and it is hoped that a member of the Somerset Bat Group will give a short presentation on Bats in our area. This will be followed by a survey and then compilation of the results. There is a great deal of interest in this event.
- Adapt and Save. This will be a practical workshop to consider the impact of climate change on the environment and what householders can do to reduce energy usage and carbon footprint. Date to be confirmed.
- Finally, it is hoped that we can arrange a bird walk and a practical workshop on carbon action plans. These are unlikely to take place until next year.

Task 16 – Curry Moor Wildlands. Nothing to report other than Karen H is to receive a briefing/training as a volunteer warden.

Task 17 – Community Woodland Garden. Ian reported that he is still in contact with a landowner and it is hoped that some progress can be made soon.

- 3 Finance – Update at next meeting. Finances are in a good state (approx. £3400). We will look at ‘ring-fencing’ funds for specific projects so that the Group is able to demonstrate how expenditure has benefitted the community.
- 4 Newsletter – The next edition is due to be sent to the printers next week. As reported above, Karen will then need helpers to deliver them to every house in the village.
- 5 Website and Social Media – Environment Saturday has started well. Hits on the website have increased significantly. There was a discussion on ideas for content - all suggestions of articles, links etc. welcome. Please visit the website www.envirostoke.org/seg.
- 6 Village Plan – Ian reported that the Village Plan will be published in April 2023. There is likely to be much that is of interest to the Group. It is probably that SEG will be able to use the output from the village plan as a basis for future tasks.
- 7 Coronation weekend event – Monday 8th May will be held at the playing field. The event is being organised by Janice Pearce. SEG has confirmed it will take part. The theme of the day is ‘volunteering in the community’ and as a volunteer group, it was suggested that we should take the theme and show how it can be achieved in practical terms. There was a discussion on ideas including tidying up the picnic area (see earlier re proposal), undertaking a litter pick, demonstrating iNaturalist/Seek, second-hand book sale, children’s activities. Please send any ideas to Ian. We will use the Gazebo, flags and banners to ‘advertise’ our presence.
- 8 Liaison with SSG Primary School – The school is interested in contributing to EnviroFair23 and have asked for ideas for an Environment day at the school. Ian has met with the Interim Head and agreed to feedback some ideas on what a school Environment Day. He asked if anyone had any ideas or experience? Jade A and Charlotte (in lieu of a family member) offered to give this some thought.
- 9 EnviroFair23 – Discussed stands and groups that are coming and those still waiting to hear back from. Last year we had 32 confirmed with 29 showing up on the day. So far, we have 33 booked for this year. Themes for the photo competition were discussed with ‘insects’ and ‘your surroundings’ suggested. Fi McQ will circulate an email asking for preferences. Flyers to be ready by May for the Coronation and Open Garden weekend at Hillcrest.

- 10 Trevor W report that he has been working with Reimagining The Levels – a recent tree planting session took place at West Bagborough where 450 trees have been planted, in addition to 140 trees at Overlands at North Curry. Next planting is at Axbridge and Glastonbury.

Next Meeting – Wednesday 19th April 2023 at The Café, HOTV at 7.30pm.

Fiona McQueen

fmcqueen@yahoo.co.uk

March 2023