

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Committee held on Tuesday 16th May 2023 at 13:00pm via Zoom

Present: Councillors C Lattin (Chair), V Ashfield, L Brown, D Freeman, R Friederichsen and S Walker.

Also present: Parish Clerk A Shanley and Mr Jack Butlin (Wear Rivers Trust).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

None received.

3. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 11th APRIL 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th April 2023 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None received.

5. TO CONSIDER THE LATEST NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDEN REPORT

The Committee welcomed the excellent report by the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Wardens and **agreed** to formally thank Kirk and Antony for their exceptional work.

The Committee particularly noted a worrying trend in the increase in stray dogs and unchipped dogs and **agreed** that some further public awareness was needed in order to help resolve this issue.

6. DISCUSSION WITH WEAR RIVERS TRUST ON THEIR WORK WITHIN THE CITY OF DURHAM PARISH AREA

The Chair welcomed Jack Butlin to the meeting from the Wear Rivers Trust.

Jack began by thanking the Committee for the opportunity to speak with them today regarding the work of the Trust on the invasive non-native species project.

Jack advised that the work of the INNs project primarily focused on eradicating 3 species – Himalayan Balsam, Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed.

Jack advised that the peninsula project began in 2021 and he had now mapped out the full peninsula area with the locations of these INNs.

Jack advised that giant hogweed in particular was a serious concern as it now appears to cover much of the peninsula area and can be hazardous to humans. Jack advised that the WRT believed that Old Durham Beck was the source of the giant hogweed.

Jack advised that tackling this issue was a big task of the INNs project last year and WRT were working with partners to tackle this issue. Jack highlighted that good progress on this issue was being made as a result of this partnership work.

Jack highlighted that Durham University and the Cathedral are also working to manage INNs on their respective land.

Jack advised that he had worked with the Councillor Lattin and the Clerk to produce an excellent leaflet which has now been distributed around the parish area and in surrounding areas too. Jack advised that approximately 10 volunteers had come forward to support the work of the Trust following delivery of this leaflet.

Jack also highlighted that the public education from the leaflet had been amazing and thanked the Parish Council for their support.

Jack also thanked the Parish Council for their support in projects such as balsam bashing along the catchment area. Jack advised that over 20 volunteers had helped during the 'Big Help Out' and this had been a great success.

Jack also thanked the Parish Council for funding the PA1/PA6 training for 4 volunteers. Jack advised that this is important in tackling giant hogweed and knotweed along the catchment.

Jack advised that the Parish Council's funding had also been invaluable in purchasing PPE for their work.

Jack advised that volunteers would be looking to focus on the giant hogweed along the catchment over the next few weeks.

Jack highlighted the work of the WRT to tackle plastics in the River Wear and advised that Peter Nailon is currently looking for funding for a floating barrier to prevent plastics washing down the river.

The Clerk advised that he felt that people in Durham would very much welcome the floating barrier but the costs for this equipment are astronomical. Jack confirmed that this would cost a significant amount of money and Peter Nailon is currently looking for funding from DEFRA, Northumbrian Water and the Environment Agency for this.

Councillor V Ashfield highlighted that the knotweed is a significant issue near to Kepier Farm. Jack advised that the WRT is aware of this but there is a need for additional resource to tackle this issue.

Councillor C Lattin advised that she felt that the Big Help Out had been fantastic. Councillor C Lattin expressed her disappointment that the County Council would not give permission for volunteers to carry out balsam bashing at Pelaw Woods.

Councillor C Lattin advised that she understood that the clearing of the weir by Prebends Bridge is now set to take place by the Cathedral.

7. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PRIORITIES:

7a. To decide:

I) To consider a proposal to promote the Bokashi scheme in Durham

The Chair highlighted that she had been in correspondence with Sarah Cleeve, a local resident and member of Climate Action Durham regarding a Bakashi composting scheme Sarah is promoting at present.

The Chair highlighted that this scheme is an effective way to reduce the weight and volume of food waste transported to landfill, where methane emissions then become a huge problem for greenhouse gas emissions.

The Chair advised that 2 bins per participant are required as well as some special bokashi bran to last two or three months, or until it can be seen how well the bokashi method is suiting the participants, at which point they may decide to continue independently. The hope is that, as well as reducing food waste and its associated CO2 and methane emissions, educating others on the bokashi method will have a cascade effect, with more people in Durham City and beyond giving bokashi a go.

The Chair advised that Sarah was hoping to acquire a small amount of funding towards promoting this scheme in Durham.

Councillor S Walker highlighted that she had looked into this and was concerned about the ongoing costs for the scheme.

The Committee **agreed** to provide a small amount of funding – no more than £100 – towards this project and to request feedback as to its effectiveness.

II) To progress the proposal to improve the community garden area at the top of Lawson Terrace.

Councillor S Walker took the opportunity to thank Members for their ongoing support for this project.

Councillor S Walker reminded Members that the £6,000 allocated towards new EV-charging points in the City of Durham parish area is now not being progressed by the Committee and that the Committee has instead agreed that this funding should be allocated towards this project.

The Clerk highlighted that greening up the Viaduct Area of the City is a key strategic aim of the Parish Council and it is felt that this project conforms strongly with that aim.

Councillor S Walker advised that she and the Clerk have carried out a site visit of the area with contractors and the following quote has been received from DCC's groundworks team to clear and level the land:

Total cost for labour and materials: £4,957.22

The Clerk advised that initial estimates from private contractors have been significantly higher than that quoted by DCC.

The Clerk advised that the works are expected to take approximately. 3 full working days to complete and could only commence at the beginning of September 2023 in order to avoid the bird nesting season.

The Committee unanimously **agreed** to support this project and to recommend this to Full Council at the May meeting.

III) To consider funding the printing of additional copies of the 7 Hills Trail map

The Clerk highlighted that most of the 7 Hills trail maps distributed around the parish area had now been taken by visitors to the various venues around the City and there is a need for these to be replaced.

The Clerk advised that he has received a quote for a further 5,000 leaflets of just over £1,200.

The Committee unanimously **agreed** to proceed with this quote and to get these leaflets produced ASAP.

7b. To complete:

I) Progressing the proposal by Cllr R Friederichsen on integrating Durham in Bloom with work tackling the Climate and Biodiversity Emergencies

The Chair thanked Councillor R Friederichsen for his excellent letter to DCC on this issue and the Clerk confirmed that this would be submitted to relevant officers later today.

I) Update on the enhanced police service for Durham City – recruitment of the safer streets' coordinator.

The Clerk highlighted that the SLA with Durham Police had now been agreed by both parties and the new police officers had now commenced (as of 4th April 2023).

The Clerk advised that the remaining aspect of the SLA to be finalised is the new Coordinator role for this Operation. The Clerk advised that an advert had now been posted online for this position and he was expecting to undertake interviews for this role alongside the Durham Agency Against Crime (DAAC) in the coming days.

The Clerk advised that he would keep Members updated on this new role as part of the SLA.

II) Update on the Terracycle scheme in Durham City

The Clerk advised that 33 boxes in total had now been delivered to Boots to last the full calendar year. The Committee welcomed the ongoing support which this scheme had gained since commencing.

8. AOB

None received.

9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

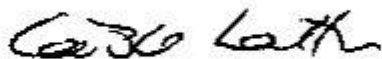
13th June 2023

11th July 2023

12th September 2023

There being no further business, the Chair thanked all those present for attending and for their contributions and closed the meeting.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cathy Lath', is written on the page.

**Chair of the Parish Council's Environment Committee
(13th June 2023)**