

THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Environmental Forum held virtually via 8x8, on Wednesday 10 June 2020, 7.30pm.

Meeting finished: 9.20pm

Councillors Chris Lloyd (Chairman), Marilyn Butler, Joanna Clemens, Stephen King, Phil Williams, Alex Michaels, Jon Tankard, Alison Wall, Peter Loader, Tony Edwards, Adam Birch, Susan Hughes, Coral Bloom and one representative from each of the following organisations: -

Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust	- Tim Hill
Rickmansworth Waterways Trust	- David Montague
Watford & Three Rivers Friends of the Earth and Friends of Croxley Common Moor	- Graham Everett
Colne Valley Fisheries Consultative	- Tony Booker
Maple Lodge Conservation Society	- Keith Pursall
Countryside and Rights of Way	- Tony Bradford
Rickmansworth and district residents' association	- Michael Stimpson
River Chess Association	- Paul Jennings

Officers: Elen Roberts, Jennie Probert and Rebecca Young.

Also, in attendance – Carl Harris

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Alex Turner, Russell Ball, Jane Lay, Matt Dodds, Peter Waters, Roger Bangs, Friends of Chorleywood Estate, Andy King, Nigel Daley

	Action	Lead Organisation
1.	To note that the action table summarising the meeting of the Environmental Forum held on 04 March 2020 was confirmed as a correct record.	
2.	Matters arising:	
2.1	Cllr Lloyd (Chairman) noted Cllr Tankard is the new Chairman of the Environmental Forum, however as Cllr Lloyd had been involved in planning the online forum, he would chair this meeting as his last and pass over to Cllr Tankard for the next Environmental Forum.	
2.2	Cllr Lloyd announced Petrina Llwellyn had left Three Rivers District Council, Elen Roberts will be taking notes on this occasion	
3.	<i>Presentation by Tim Hill "A wilder Three Rivers"</i> A presentation was given by Tim Hill introducing the Hertfordshire & Middlesex Wildlife Trust as a charity aimed at protecting habitats and educating people about wildlife. Tim highlighted the connections between the	

Climate and Nature crises, and showcased case studies from around Hertfordshire explaining what could be done in Three Rivers to improve wild areas and improve biodiversity.

Graham Everett raised that during the last meeting, Tim Hill stated that planting trees is often overrated when trying to fight the climate emergency, and Graham was struck by the importance of soils and therefore asked Tim to elaborate on this.

Tim explained that 80% of stored terrestrial carbon globally is found in soils. Farmed soil holds less carbon and the storage capacity is determined by the complexity of roots. Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust is working to get more academic research to understand this further. The more natural and diverse the habitat, the more carbon the soil stores, therefore while trees are important, particularly old ones, more diverse habitats are more effective at storing the carbon.

Cllr Tankard asked how much carbon an acre of soil holds.

Tim answered that this is currently unknown and where they need more research, and recommends <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/1438141>

Cllr Birch asked if the leaflet resources mentioned in the presentation currently available online.

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/gardening>

Cllr Birch also asked if claims made by developers about preventing or replacing biodiversity loss are followed up. Answer from Tim – There is currently no legality to this, however Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust is happy to discuss this with local council planners and advise. Tim also noted that priority wildlife and carbon storage areas need to be identified, then actions can be discussed around how to prevent their loss, or account for the loss elsewhere.

Cllr Clemens asked for clarification regarding the coverage of Hertfordshire golf courses noted in the presentation, and asked what can be done to preserve biodiversity in the face of growing housing development. Time explained that we need to prioritise areas to protect for example Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). While development must go ahead, biodiversity loss must be mitigated and compensated for.

Cllr Wall asked Tim to expand on how biodiversity and wild areas impact on human health, and asked if this could be used to evidence the importance of maintaining biodiversity while increasing development continues.

Tim expressed how important green spaces and wildlife are for mental health in particular, which has been

emphasised during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Tim also noted the importance to world health, drawing on the links between future pandemics growing in scale in relation to habitat loss.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-52775386>. Each generation is getting a further degraded habitat, and with fewer bugs and smaller creatures which are harder to observe, bird numbers are falling.

Cllr Michaels suggested to the council in 2018 they should work with Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, however this was rebuffed. He asked Tim to help the Council improve their biodiversity and natural habitats. Cllr Michaels also asked if we had an existing stocktake of habitats in Three Rivers which we can use as a baseline to monitor future habitat changes. Tim explained Stevenage Borough Council have adopted a plan from Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust to improve their green spaces, and their green spaces are better for it. Cllr Williams said we do not currently have a stocktake of our habitats, however they are in the process of recruiting a Sustainability Officer for the Council, and this will form part of their remit, in addition to calculating the Council's carbon footprint and how to reduce it, and improving biodiversity as a whole. However it was noted that the recruitment process was presently on hold due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Cllr King asked in the Herts & Middlesex trust worked with the Princes Trust who also work with young people. Tim acknowledges they do not, but would like to be referred to them to help reach out to more young people. This is to happen outside of the meeting.

Cllr Michaels suggested it would be great for Three Rivers District Council to work with Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust. He was also unaware the search for a Sustainability Officer had been put on hold. Sometimes you don't need to start doing new things, but stop doing old things, such as regularly cutting verges. Cllr Williams noted these comments.

Cllr Lloyd thanked Tim from all attendants. Cllr Lloyd noted that virtual meetings may be continued into the future as it reduces car use, and may allow more people to attend who otherwise cannot come to a meeting in person.

Tim Hill thanked everyone for listening, and encouraged people to get in touch with him for more help or information.

	<p>Rebecca Young noted the new Sustainability Officer, once appointed, will sit in her team, and she will ensure introductions are made.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Member Exchange.</p> <p>Tony Bradford stated that Hertfordshire County Council is working hard to maximise significant green spaces for both animals and people across Three Rivers. As part of this they are looking to expand cattle grazing in Chorleywood Estate along with Friends of Chorleywood Estate. Looking to expand grasslands South Oxhey and continue reintroducing wood ants in Bishops Wood. Further to this, they are looking to re-establish wood pastures in woodlands to provide heathlands which has rich biodiversity, and would improve natural flood management. Tony endorses the previous points about the health impacts of improved green spaces for mental health as well as physical, as they have seen a big increase of people out exercising in these spaces with an increased use of around 150% during the Coronavirus pandemic. Tony is additionally working with North Herts District Council and St. Albans City & District Council, looking into their green assets and relaxing mowing of their green spaces over the next 12 months to help bees and other insects for example on grass verges. Their 630 volunteers have stopped as a result of Covid-19, however they are working hard to get these volunteers back out working in the community.</p> <p>Graham Everett added that they have also had an unprecedented number of visitors at Croxley Common Moor and litter was a major issue. Graham asked if anyone else was having this issue and what was being done about it?</p> <p>Cllr Williams thanked Tony for the update from Herts County Council and asked if the previous reintroduction of Wood Ants was successful? Tony said yes it was, and they were now looking to expand the colony.</p> <p>Cllr Williams explained issues around current plans for fencing for grazing cattle in Chorleywood as it is a nesting site for Skylarks which are a protected species. Cllr Williams has received conflicting views on whether this work would disturb the birds or not, with the RSPB recommending the work does not go ahead as it will cause disturbance for the nesting birds. Tony asks that Hertfordshire County Council is put in contact with the RSPB adviser involved to discuss.</p> <p>Cllr Clemens questioned a current deadline to register Rights of Way, and whether failure to register them would mean the loss of ancient routes? It was established that the deadline was 2026 for registering historical Rights of Way which are not currently on maps. Applications</p>	

	<p>submitted up to the deadline will be processed, but this may go beyond the deadline. Rights of Way created by continuous use (more than 20years) can also be submitted.</p> <p>Cllr King noted that Cllr Michaels had previously mentioned the use of glyphosphate weed killer, rules for which had been established at Full Council, however it continues to be used and Cllr King wanted to bring the issue to the attention to the forum. Tony directed Cllr King to Steve Johnson at Hertfordshire County Council to discuss the issue. Cllr Michaels said it was still being used to inject Japanese Knotweed and no longer sprayed as before, but believes the use of glyphosphate should be reviewed and a robust process should be put in place.</p> <p>Cllr Williams agreed and acknowledged the discussion, and said officers are still looking for a suitable alternative, however until then, this will continued to be used for injecting Japanese Knotweed.</p> <p>Cllr Tankard explained Hertfordshire County Council had been specifically asked not to use glyphosphate on the footpath behind Trowley Rise in Abbots Langley, and they used it anyway, so a long conversation needs to be had about their use of the weed killer near people's properties.</p>	
<p>5.</p> <p>5.1</p> <p>5.2</p>	<p>AOB:</p> <p><i>The recent sewage discharges into the River Chess from the Chesham Sewage Treatment Works.</i></p> <p>Cllr Williams explained this issue was the Environment Agency's responsibility to monitor and they are currently looking into the issue.</p> <p>Paul Jennings questioned whose responsibility it was to inform local residents, as it was previously established this was the responsibility of the local councils.</p> <p>Cllr Williams is aware of the issue, with dogs getting sick after being in the river, and the added concern of Covid-19 spreading through the water. Cllr Williams is to deal with this outside of the forum.</p> <p><i>Cllr Loader of Batchworth Community Council</i></p> <p>Batchworth Community Council has made a grant for the Rickmansworth Swift group, and suggested other councils may be interested in how they did this. Firstly they made sure they had a general power of competence, meaning they could spend their money on a wider range of things, and changed their grant policy to include grants to environmental causes and schools. They discovered they can give grants to groups which do not have a bank account if the group provides them with invoices and the money is given directly, making the</p>	

	<p>process meet auditing standards. Through this process, they have also provided grants to local Covid mutual aid groups.</p> <p>The Community Council have also set up a transport working party of which Cllr Loader is the chairman. There is currently a walking/cycling route between Uxbridge and Rickmansworth, however this stops outside the Aquadrome. The working party is looking to extend this route to Rickmansworth train station, to encourage more people from the London area to walk or cycle one way, and get the train back, this would give an economic boost to the town centre, directing walkers and cyclists through the high street to the station.</p> <p>A Batchworth neighbourhood plan has been started in the past, however they have now done a survey of residents asking for input into the plan. Cllr Loader asks people who have an interest in the area to add their input.</p> <p>Tony Booker asked if Cllr Loader would like support in extending the footpath/cycle route, a discussion about which will continue outside the meeting.</p>	
5.3	<p><i>Possible wildflower notice board in Horse Field in Abbots Langley</i></p> <p>Cllr Lay sent the following along with her apologies: “I just wanted to pass on my delight in walking through the Horse Field in Abbots Langley. I found an abundance of wild flowers which I did not find a few days ago. Dog daisies, field poppies plus many others. It was so wonderful to walk amongst the flowers with the visiting bees and butterflies. When I walk there again I will have to take my wild flower book. I am surprised that TR has not provided a noticeboard telling members of the public what flowers you have sown and what they can see. Maybe this could be brought up at the meeting to discuss and put into motion?”</p> <p>Due to poor audio connection, this was not heard by all attendees, and therefore not discussed, but recorded in minutes for future discussion.</p>	
5.4	<p><i>Suggestions for future speakers</i></p> <p>Cllr Wall suggested talks around tree diseases, bat species and associated diseases in light of the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic.</p> <p>Other suggestions are to be emailed to the Chair. (Cllr Tankard)</p>	
6.	<p>Cllr Lloyd requested attendees email with issues during this meeting and what worked well as it is likely the next forum will be also be held virtually. Cllr Lloyd also requested that members contact Mike Simpson with suggestions of other local groups to join the forum.</p>	

EF06/19 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Forum noted that the date of the next meeting was Wednesday the 4th of November.

Associated documents/links related to meeting and action points:

Tim Hill's presentation:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1L1CRjXwGpHzfysiyCFswWAqZaTe_Ka05/view?usp=sharing

Hertfordshire State of Nature: <https://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/stateofnature>

Making space for nature: A review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network:

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130402170324/http://archive.defra.gov.uk/environment/biodiversity/documents/201009space-for-nature.pdf>