

## THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Environmental Forum held virtually via 8x8, on Wednesday 04 November 2020, 7.30pm.

Meeting finished: 9.30pm

Councillors Jon Tankard (Chairman), Chris Lloyd, David Major, Paula Hiscocks and one representative from each of the following organisations:

Abbots Langley Parish Council	- Parish Councillor Jon Tankard
Batchworth Community Council	- Parish Councillor Peter Loader
Croxley Green Parish Council	- Parish Councillors Susan Hughes/Andrew Gallagher
Affinity Water	- Sophie Mortimer
Bedmond Residents' Association	- Wendy Ball
Colne Valley Fisheries Consultative	- Stewart Pomeroy
Countryside & Rights of Way	- Tony Bradford
Maple Cross & West Hyde Residents Association	- Carolyn Weston
Maple Lodge Conservation Society	- Keith Pursall
Rickmansworth Waterways Trust/Croxley Green Parish Council	- David Montague
Rickmansworth & District Residents' Association	- Michael Stimpson
Watford & Three Rivers Friends of the Earth and Friends of Croxley Common Moor	- Graham Everett

Officers: Elen Roberts, Joanna Hewitson, Rebecca Young

Apologies for absence were received from Tony Edwards, Adam Birch, Tony Booker, Alison Wall, Phil Williams, Stephen King, Kelly Barnard

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Organisation</b>
1.	To note that the action table summarising the meeting of the Environmental Forum held on 10 June 2020 was confirmed as a correct record.	
2.	Matters arising:  None.	
3.	<i>Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy Consultation</i>	Three Rivers District Council

<p>3.1</p>	<p>Presentation given by Jo Hewitson introducing the draft strategy. Jo noted the growing climate crisis and need for a shift towards a more sustainable future and gave detail of how Three Rivers can fulfil the promises made when a climate emergency was declared through this strategy.</p> <p><i>An opportunity to discuss the Three Rivers Climate Change Strategy and receive input into the strategy.</i></p> <p>Attendees were split into 3 separate breakout rooms:</p> <p>Room 1 led by Cllr Chris Lloyd, fed back by David Montague</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was highlighted that more joined up thinking within the council, and with external organisations is needed, for example in regards to sewerage and water management which requires work between various sectors of the council including planning, and external stakeholders such as Thames water.</li> <li>• Due to Covid there have been significant shifts in people's behaviours and needs. This needs to be considered in any future planning. In particular local shops and services may benefit as more people work from home and use local café/sandwich shops on their breaks.</li> <li>• There needs to be more education and enforcement around water management – most people do not know that sewerage and surface water goes to two different places – when the rain water enters the sewerage system, there can be huge implications.</li> <li>• There are a huge number of golf courses across Hertfordshire and it was suggested that part of the action plan should be to generate discussions with the golf courses in regards to rewilding and biodiversity.</li> <li>• Chris Lloyd suggested a local water forum may be beneficial.</li> <li>• It was questioned whether there is suitable enforcement of sustainability standards on buildings, both new and old as there may be regulations not being followed, which may contribute to the climate targets if enforced.</li> </ul> <p>Room 2 led by Joanna Hewitson</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Busses belch out fumes and leave their engines idling at stops. Is this something TRDC can work with bus companies on to improve air quality?</li> <li>• Tony Bradford from CMS identified the opportunities for sustainable drainage by using</li> </ul>	
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Natural Flood Management solutions e.g. Woody and leaky dams to slow the flow of water. He suggested exploring the flood pinch points of the District with John Rumble (Lead Flood authority) and then determine which methods could slow flow in these areas.

- The strategy is short on commitment and the Action Plan would need concrete targets.
- The Strategy needs to be honest about the aspects the Council can control and what it cannot.
- Keep abreast of the opportunities presented by Local Nature Recovery Strategies introduced by Defra in 5 pilot areas and be mindful of grant funding opportunities for biodiversity projects.
- Encouragement to invest in the rights of way network to improve cycling and walking, with a suggestion to use simple and inexpensive surface enhancements which could qualify under section 106 monies. In addition the action plan would need a section on Active Travel.
- A suggestion was made that we would need to work to influence farmers to develop margins between farmland and rivers.

Room 3 led by Elen Roberts

- Carolyn Weston was very happy they were being consulted on this, and felt there is often a lack of communication and consultation between Three Rivers DC and residents. Carolyn additionally suggested we discuss the strategy with schools to gain a perspective from the next generation. Elen noted we already have school visits booked and have forwarded the consultation details to our schools contact list. Carolyn suggested more joined up thinking is needed between council departments, for example sustainability and planning, as some areas get forgotten, for example the plan for new warehouses in Mill End which will further contribute to motorway emissions.
- Susan Hughes highlighted a lack of communication and joined up thinking between the council and parish councils, for example with regards to Croxley Green Parish wanting to put out signage and a campaign about littering which became a significant issue during Covid.
- Andrew Gallagher suggested improving school routes for young people to walk to school, stating we do not want to encourage children to walk along dangerous roads, and areas where air pollution is highest – we need to ensure safe routes before we encourage the walking.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carolyn Weston highlighted issues with the local plan – while the council have worked on it for years, residents only have 6 weeks to respond. We need to work with residents from the beginning and include them in the process in order for residents to embrace the change. For example Maple Cross and West Hyde R.A have created a policy/vision plan in relation to the local plan but are yet to have a response.</li> <li>• Andrew Gallagher Suggested we need to mention agricultural land specifically in the biodiversity portion of the strategy.</li> <li>• Susan Hughes responded to Andrew suggested biodiversity in agriculture may be impacted by Brexit, and new grants or subsidies to encourage diversification would be needed.</li> <li>• Peter Loader suggested maps of the area are developed with proposed planning, rewilding etc. which residents can engage with and leave comments/suggestions on. Peter additionally brought up the issue of sewerage across Three Rivers in relation to increasing surface water and flooding. Peter additionally suggested improvements to local broadband provision and quality could reduce traffic by further enabling zoom meetings such as these and others – are there grants from the government we can use for this?</li> <li>• Andrew Gallagher noted there were once plans to connect Watford to the underground via a project called Croxley Rail link. Is this still a possibility, as it could reduce car use in favour of rail?</li> <li>• It was suggested an information pack could be sent to Cllrs and Resident Associations including information about the strategy, the link to the consultation survey, and any relevant graphics.</li> <li>• Carolyn Weston suggests planning for carbon intensive developments such as warehouses are kept near the M25 to reduce heavy goods transportation through the district. Carolyn also asked if the 10% biodiversity net gain and biodiversity units system associated with new developments could be applied to carbon heavy transport.</li> <li>• Peter Loader requested the removal of flexible limitations on developments, carbon and transport which are supposedly covered by mitigation. Peter suggested a list should be made of what TRDC can and can't control, and therefore establish where we need to lobby, and what other organisations/authorities we need to work closely with. We also need to plan for a Covid future with a possible future with less traffic and parking needed due to more people working from home –</li> </ul>	
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	<p>can offices/businesses who no longer need their entire carpark re-wild or rent out parts of it?</p> <p>Cllr Jon Tankard noted our wishes do not always match government regulation, and without this it is hard to push developers to create more sustainable housing – they do not want to go above and beyond national minimum regulations as it costs a lot more.</p> <p>Wendy Ball noted the digital divide, and questioned how we can get those offline to engage in the conversation and have their say? Wendy asked why the meeting was not being live streamed so more people could get involved. This had been looked into by the council and we will reassess for the next forum.</p> <p>Jo Hewitson asked that everyone complete the consultation survey online, and entered any other thoughts and ideas in the comment boxes available. Jo noted the deadline for responses was the 30<sup>th</sup> of November.</p> <p>Wendy Ball noted there needed to be more communication between the local plan and the climate change strategy as they will have conflicting targets and are key to the success of each other.</p> <p>Jo Hewitson stated she had been involved in a pre-planning meeting and suggested if we can get one developer on board, more will follow.</p> <p>Keith Pursall suggested we needed better advice and up to date information in regards to planning and sustainability to allow a stronger argument against developers for more sustainable developments.</p> <p>Chris Lloyd thanked the Officer involved in getting the strategy to this point, and all those who have attended tonight to take part in the consultation.</p> <p>Jon Tankard requested an email reminder one week before the consultation closes.</p>	
4.	<p><i>Sewage and the River Chess</i></p> <p>Michael Stimpson stated Rickmansworth residents are concerned about the raw sewerage appearing more frequently in the River Chess. Thames has advised that sewerage storage in the area will be increased to meet demands. There appears to be a large issue with surface water going into the sewerage system overloading the system. There has also been a burst sewerage pipe in Harefield Road which has caused issues for local residents for several days. Michael suggested more needs to be done to separate sewerage from surface</p>	

water, and educate residents on where their waste water goes. Rickmansworth Residents Association have asked Michael to send a letter to the CEO of Thames Water to get a response on the issue, however they have not yet received a response and would like the help of Three Rivers District Council to get a response and solve the issue. With the new local plan, water must be treated correctly, with surface water being separated. A petition has gone into Thames Water, but more pressure is needed.

Jon Tankard notes the point about new developments and the need for new infrastructure to meet growing demand and will follow up on this.

Paula Hiscocks suggested we should have regular meeting with Thames Water and improve communications with them, possibly in the form of a water forum.

Jo Hewitson noted she has met people from Thames Water and Affinity Water through the Hertfordshire County Council water working group, although these conversations have revolved round clean water, not sewerage, therefore she will push this issue with them in future communications. Jo also seconded the need for a water forum.

Michael Stimpson questioned who will meet the cost of repairs and improved infrastructure.

Jon Tankard raised the question of dealing with older buildings in regards to better sewerage infrastructure.

Stewart Pomeroy noted a local MP has put forward a new Bill to prevent the discharge of raw sewerage into rivers. Stewart has written to 9MP's and other contacts to request they support the Bill, and is now waiting to see what happens with it. Stewart has requested attendees to contact their local MP asking them to support the Bill, and will send further information to Jo Hewitson to raise/follow up.

*Please find the letter in the associated documents section.*

Peter Loader raised the issue of Batchworth sewerage flooding caused by the pumping station which cannot keep up with demand during heavy rain. Peter questioned where highways surface water goes.

Andrew Gallagher is an ex highways engineer and said highways water should not be connected to sewerage lines, however they may be connected on historic routes.

	<p>Jon Tankard raised the issue of new homes raising the regular flow, and therefore leaving no capacity for emergencies.</p> <p>Peter Loader suggested septic tanks for new developments.</p>	
5.	<p><i>Misuse of nature reserves</i></p> <p>Graham Everett gave a summary of some issues in regards to litter and misuse of nature reserves during the COVID lockdown period. There were lots of new people using these spaces resulting in a significant increase in litter and use of BBQs. Meetings were arranged to respond to the issues and a PSCO began patrolling the area in addition to an increase in litter picking. Graham suggested it would be beneficial to generate communications between nature reserves in the area to share issues, ideas, and solutions.</p> <p>Chris Lloyd suggested a new group should be formed to develop a plan to tackle these issues and build communications over the winter before peak use next summer.</p> <p>Stewart Pomeroy noted it was great that more people are using these spaces and connecting with nature, however more education is needed on how to treat the countryside. <a href="https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/keeping-the-colne-valley-park-beautiful/">https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/keeping-the-colne-valley-park-beautiful/</a></p> <p>Jo Hewitson seconded the need for greater education and suggested this could be a larger county wide initiative.</p> <p>Tony Bradford said this was a common issue and they have been working to get messaging out to help with this education including information on the countryside code. They have created a google maps overlay for people to use which shows public rights of way which is currently being pushed out. This has already been visited over 600,000 times in just over a year - &gt;60% of which were since March this year.</p> <p>Jo Hewitson suggested putting the countryside code into their app to make it more accessible.</p>	
6.	<p><i>Member Exchange.</i></p> <p>Tony Bradford – Chorleywood House Estate grazing has been expanded. There has been removal of silt and invasive species. There are COVID safe protocols in place for volunteer groups and health walks.</p>	

	<p>Michael Stimpson – There has been an increase in HGV traffic on Harefiled Road. Residents are unsure where this traffic is coming from and would like TRDC to investigate. Andrew Gallagher suggested it was curious, but not illegal or wrong for them to do so.</p> <p>Chris Lloyd – Thank you to those involved with gaining the districts 4<sup>th</sup> Green Flag award, and requests that anyone else wanting to gain a Green Flag award contact him. Chris also suggested each attendee of the meeting should try to share the consultation survey with three other individuals to boost response numbers.</p> <p>Wendy Ball asked pre-submitted questions, a written response to which was submitted outside the meeting. Wendy also questioned why the Forum meeting was not being live streamed to be more accessible and gain a larger audience. Elen Roberts explained the last Forum was livestreamed, however the change to using zoom had caused some issues with live streaming, but it is something we will look to do at for the next one.</p>	
7.	<p>AOB:</p> <p>None.</p>	
8	<p><i>Suggestions for future speakers</i></p> <p>Thames water and Environment Agency</p> <p>Local Transition Town groups and similar organisations.</p> <p>A biodiversity talk with an invitation to local golf clubs to attend and listen.</p>	
9.	<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 4<sup>th</sup> of November.

*Associated documents/links related to meeting and action points:*

#### **Letter sent to 9MPs regarding the new sewerage Bill**



SewageBillOct2020.  
pdf

## Resources from CRoW:

Gov.uk Countryside Code <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code>

Defra video re litter in the countryside.

[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=943191279437392&id=250525668318834&\\_\\_entstream\\_source=video\\_home&player\\_suborigin=entry\\_point&player\\_format=permalink](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=943191279437392&id=250525668318834&__entstream_source=video_home&player_suborigin=entry_point&player_format=permalink)

Find local footpaths and bridleways at [Hertfordshire RowMap](#)

New to Rights of Way. [Handy user guide.](#)

[Find self-guided walk routes](#)

[Find local parks](#)

As always please follow the Government's guidelines:

[Government guidance on using green spaces and protecting yourself and others.](#)

[Countryside Code.](#)

[Staying alert and safe \(social distancing\)](#)

## Action Points

Look into starting up a new Water Forum/discussion group. *Joanna Hewitson.*

Investigate sewerage infrastructure for new developments. *Jon Tankard.*

Write to your local MP asking them to support the new sewerage Bill. *All*