

THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Environmental Forum held virtually via zoom, on Wednesday 03 March 2021, 7.30pm.

Meeting finished: 9.30pm

Chris Lloyd (Chairman), Stephen King, David Major, Alex Turner, Paula Hiscocks Alison Wall, Phil Williams and one representative from each of the following organisations:

Sarratt Parish Council	- Parish Councillor Coral Bloom
Watford Rural Parish Council	- Parish Councillor Stephen King
Bedmond Residents' Association	- Wendy Ball
Colne Valley Fisheries Consultative	- Tony Booker
Countryside & Rights of Way	- Tony Bradford
Education for a Sustainable Future	- Bob Sherren
Friends of Stocker's Lake	- Russell Ball
Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust	- Matt Dodds
Maple Cross & West Hyde Residents Association	- Carolyn Weston
Maple Lodge Conservation Society	- Keith Pursall
Ornithologist	- Graham Clark
Rickmansworth Waterways Trust/Croxley Green Parish Council	- David Montague
Rickmansworth & District Residents' Association	- Michael Stimpson
SPOKES (South West Herts Cycling Groups)	- Roger Bangs
Watford & Three Rivers Friends of the Earth and Friends of Croxley Common Moor	- Graham Everett

Guest Speakers

Sustainable Three Rivers	- Rosi Jordon
Sustainable Three Rivers	- Annabel Foley
Sustainable Three Rivers	- Michelle Cohen
Watford and Three Rivers Friends of the Earth	- Anna Addison

Officers: Elen Roberts, Joanna Hewitson, Alex Laurie, Rebecca Young

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Tankard, Jane Lay (Abbots Langley Parish Council), Susan Hughes (Croxley Green Parish Council)

	Action	Lead Organisation
1.	<p>To note that the action table summarising the meeting of the Environmental Forum held on 02 November 2020 was confirmed as a correct record.</p> <p>Alison Wall – The date for the next meeting at the end of the notes was incorrect.</p>	
2.	Matters arising:	
3.	<p><i>Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy Consultation</i></p> <p>PowerPoint Presentation given by Elen Roberts on the result of the public consultation.</p> <p>Alison Wall - Asked what we are doing with agricultural land. Jo Hewitson pointed out we are waiting for changes resulting from Brexit in terms of support and funding for farmers. Tony Bradford agreed with Jo, that we are waiting to see AgriEnvironmental government schemes.</p> <p>Anna Addison asked how we are looking to do the biodiversity baseline audit. There is a worry the baseline taken now is of nature already in massive decline, we need to build much more, not just to where we were 20 years ago. Jo Hewitson pointed out it is a county wide initiative which is currently going out to procurement. Tony Bradford stated the Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust acknowledge and understand this issue. The baseline does begin from now, with the target being understanding where we are now to regain what we had.</p> <p>Matt Dodds said it will be helpful to understand what we want to achieve from the 'no mow'/'rewilding' schemes. What pops up will impact our management scheme. All grasslands will try to become woodland so intervention will be needed and land will need to be managed.</p> <p>Belinda stated everywhere should have policies for mowing less often and at a lower level to leave flowers to bloom. People don't like scrubland so mowing paths in may help with resident perception.</p> <p>Angela asked how to access the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy online. <i>You can find the strategy and associated documents here:</i> https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/meeting/policy-and-resources-committee-8-march-2021</p> <p>Matt Dodds warns negative impacts of mowing less – for example invasive plants within super nutrient rich grasses with less frequent mowing, and strong grasslands which don't allow other plants to grow and flower.</p>	Three Rivers District Council

	<p>Alex L points out if the grass is being cut once a year this should prevent the issues Matt mentioned. Matt is happy to advise the council on these issues.</p> <p>Alex Laurie stated CMS are going to be looking across our sites and advise on management plans for increased biodiversity potentially based on what we find growing through the pilot scheme this spring. There will be lots of changes over the coming years.</p>	
4.	<p><i>Talk by Rosi Jordon from Sustainable Three Rivers</i></p> <p>Rosi welcomes Annabel Foley and Michelle C who are also members of the group. Really hoping we can count on your support going forward in our journey. Rosi wanted to get involved in a local environmental group, however wasn't able to find one. Rosi also didn't realise which towns were actually in the district, so hopes this will join more people together and build a community. Rosi contacted the council to see what they are doing and have met lots of great people already, having now been to a Local Area Forum, Watford Climate Action Group, Residents Associations and more to spread the word.</p> <p>They wanted a resource/central hub to find all things sustainability in Three Rivers, raise public awareness, and encourage the sharing of knowledge. They would also like to hold events, talks, festivals, and projects post-Covid to show living sustainably can improve quality of life and help people feel proud of their community. We need to get schools, faith groups, and everyone else involved in creating a new planet. Michelle has started building their website and will next build a social media presence. They have come up with several areas which they are sharing information on. Thank you to everyone who has been involved so far and shared knowledge with us.</p> <p>The key is engagement, one goal is to bring the young people on board and into the conversation. It will take a little while to get things up and running, and gather information, but would like to come back and show the website at a future Environmental Forum. We really welcome any input or ideas.</p> <p>Phil Williams is encouraged community groups are coming along to this Forum and kicking things off.</p> <p>Chris Lloyd is very excited about the new group, and suggests working with the Canal Festival.</p> <p>Alison Wall asked for the website address. Michelle said it is not live yet, but when it's live we would like to come back for feedback.</p>	Sustainable Three Rivers

	<p>Anna joined to promote an event by Friends Of The Earth Watford and Three Rivers on the 15th of March. It's a climate connection event following one for Watford last year, and previous to one in Hertsmere. Their aim is to bring groups together across SW Herts, and bring together individuals and groups to build a network to get faster speed and traction. Requested the invite in forwarded to participants. Plans to have a number of focus events over the coming months to take a deeper dive into some big challenges we face. More the merrier! You can sign up to join the event here: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/three-rivers-climate-action-connection-event-tickets-139952041323?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch</p> <p>Russell Ball from Friends of Stockers Lake states they have 600+ local members who do hands-on volunteer days, so would like to work with Sustainable Three Rivers to link up.</p> <p>If you would like to talk to, or work with Sustainable Three Rivers, you can contact them at this email address: hello@sustainablethreerivers.org.</p> <p>Thanks given to Rosi and team for joining.</p>	
5.	<p><i>Rewilding and Trees in Three Rivers</i></p> <p>Elen introduced the topic: We are looking to do a pilot of 5 areas this Spring, the locations are to be confirmed and will be going to the LEC committee and if accepted, put on service plans. This pilot will consist of reducing cutting regimes on the 5 spaces, only cutting once a year at the end of summer once plants have finished flowering. We are getting 2 audits done – so expect big things next spring.</p> <p>Alex Laurie recently started with Three Rivers and one large piece of work is producing a new tree strategy for the district. More info will be available next week. We have had one before and have lots of information – now we want to pull everything together and set some targets for the next 5 years. We are a land/tree owner so we need to look at our own spaces and trees, we want to review how we deal with our trees and set policies in place. Secondly we need to work with other land and tree owners to protect their trees, and plant more. It will be all encompassing document.</p> <p>Initial stage is to set out a time frame and speak to stakeholders about their views and ideas for the new strategy. After that we will spend several months writing it through to the early summer, which will then go through committees, followed by a consultation in August/September for review. Into the Autumn it will go back through the system for sign off.</p>	Three Rivers District Council

	<p>Similar to the CE&SS an action plan will follow. Alex to circulate more information when available, and points out the information will be available on the website. <i>More information available in the 'Associated Links...' section at the end of the minutes.</i></p> <p>Stephen King explained Watford Rural Parish Council and District Cllrs are planning to create a wildflower meadow this year in South Oxhey and will be looking at two other areas they lease off the district.</p> <p>Alison Wall: Happy that the Tree Strategy is getting started. Will you be a consultee on all planning applications to oversee what happens to trees? Alex Laurie – planning officers will consult us where they think there is a tress issue.</p> <p>Russell works with Fund for trees – It is a national but happens locally too. The money is usually there to plant them, but the long term costs of maintaining these young trees are usually forgotten and trees do not survive, so these costs need to be considered in the strategy. There also appears to be issues with enforcement with new developments and promised trees which never appear.</p> <p>Matt Dodds offers advice to Stephen King for the wildflower meadow development.</p> <p>David Montague stated Croxley Green Parish Council working on a small trail project to create a wildflower corridor, and recognises the long term management strategy needed to maintain these spaces.</p> <p>Alex asked the Council are going to have a native-only policy and further guidance for developers on which tress o plant? Alex Laurie said it is unlikely it will be native-only, but a 'right tree – right place' policy. Resilience, appearance, and the current landscape will also be considered, so they are planning a wide range of species. There will be serious consideration about which species of trees should be planted where.</p> <p>Russell pointed out that the heat island effect can influence what trees you plant in town centres, also there is a need for more large-species trees in open spaces rather than ornamental smaller trees.</p>	
6.	<p><i>Misuse of nature reserves</i> Standing item.</p> <p>Graham Everett asked about a forum for environmental groups to discuss this issue, an idea which was discussed at the previous Environmental Forum in November 2020, however nothing has happened since – is this something to be organised by the council or outside of the council. Chris Lloyd said there will always be space for it here. <i>Elen to discuss with Graham outside</i></p>	

of the meeting. Chris Lloyd points out Croxley Common Moor seems to have the largest issue, however litter has been a massive issue across the district and the country. Graham also stated there is no bridleway across Croxley Common Moor for cyclists to use - therefore people should have permission of the land owner which is Three River District Council who seem ambiguous on the issue. Graham points out people cycle everywhere and needs more control on the path, so would like feedback from other reserves on how they deal with this issue.

Tony Bradford stated Countryside Management Service (CMS) supported organisations with the average footfall on green spaces has increasing by 250% for the year. In first few weeks of lockdown last year, there was an increased footfall of 450%. Fly-tipping has increased, and the combination of more people out, and lack of litter picking volunteers has caused a significant issue. Would like to develop the work programme with TRDC to include cycling. *Action Point*

Roger Bangs said littering in the Aquadrome has become a larger issue. The cafe is selling coffees which has led to more littering, we should be pushing for refillable containers to be used to try and reduce this. Chris Lloyd suggests this could be an issue to do with Covid and another resultant rise of single-use plastics. We potentially need bigger bins, and ones which animals can't pull stuff out of. Phil Williams stated Café in the Park are using a 20p discount for reusables to try and reduce waste.

Phil Williams noted litter is increasing with footfall, however waste crews are not up. Phil advertises the Spring Clean and that we have litter pickers available to those who would like to borrow them. Elen points out issues with crews isolating due to Covid which could be having an impact, there is also an issue with adding more bins, and larger bins as people pile waste around bins, so it usually increases the issue. We need to encourage people to hold onto their waste and take it home.

Michael Stimpson watched the Panorama programme on Fly-tipping and suggested making the punishment fit the crime – for example, can we put pressure on to have people undertake community service involving litter picking in return for the crime they commit. ***Elen to feed back to the relevant team.***

David Montage states Croxley Green Parish do have a litter picking scheme, have invested in a lot of equipment and have lots of events running for schools and residents to get involved. Have already spoken to local businesses to work together on new initiative. Litter bins by the canals seem to attract household waste, and there are many examples in woodland areas where removing litter

	bins has been very effective and prevented people dumping household waste in a way they deem 'acceptable'.	
7.	<p><i>Member Exchange.</i></p> <p>Graham Everett has become aware of private bill going through government – the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill – and asks if TRDC taken up a position on it or conveyed support. Phil Williams encourages all to encourage local people to write to MPs. <i>You can find out more about the Bill here: https://www.ceebill.uk/.</i></p> <p>Tony Bradford stated that the Countryside Management Service is finishing off final elements of the TRDC work programme whilst also developing the work programme on behalf of the council for 21/22. Most recent activity included woodland management in Croxley Hall woods involving “haloing” some old native tress and creating holes in canopies to allow for natural regeneration. We continue to support volunteers and organisations. Currently working with Health Walk leaders since it was stopped for Covid, but looking to restart these projects once safe to do so. Pressure on rights of way have been catalogued, and members have agreed a substantial investment to tackle this issue, particularly to resurface areas and upgrade eroded pinch points.</p> <p>David montage stated the Rickmansworth Waterways Trust will not be holding a festival this year. However, the Trust is commissioning a new boat, which will be in-line with new strategy being all electric with solar panels.</p> <p>Roger bangs says Edbury Way path has great for the local community but Bollards have been removed in the area which were put in to prevent parking. The council has been contacted and was communicated that they were not officially removed, so this need to be looked into. Action Point. Paths around the site of the new hotel and Travis Perkins around lower church road has become dark, narrow, and uninviting for walkers. It was improved 20 years ago but has recently declined. Proposal put forward to change the route to be more open and friendly to use. Action Point. This path now encourages people to go along the canal path instead, however it is also very narrow and the pathway is collapsing so is not safer.</p> <p>Rosi Jordon said Extinction Rebellion have been campaigning for months for adoption of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill. Rosi and Annabel have contacted our MP regarding this Bill but received a negative response, and encourages other to email him.</p> <p>Jo Hewitson provided a River Chess catchment update: Thames water have been granted 3 million in this cycle</p>	

(now to 2025) to upgrade treatment works and increase capacity by 15%. This is a significant project which will address education, awareness, pollution, water flow, and biodiversity. Chris has ideas on pathways so will liaise with Jo on the subject.

Tony Booker – Not unusual that pollution is their largest issue currently. Last August there was a significant storm discharge which wiped out 3 miles of rivers which is very unusual. Another happened around 10 days ago in the same area. Many fish were killed in August. This recent event was discovered while filming for Countryfile which will be aired this Sunday (07/03/2021). They couldn't access the site as it was covered in sewerage, so had to go to another area. Had an initial meeting with a BBC Panorama Team – this programme is being put together to show the issues in the Colne. Averaging 65 exotic chemicals, undertaking flow gauges when level lower back to average, which Panorama are involved in.

Stephen King has seen 2 Kites flying over Oxhey playing fields and hope the playing fields stay as they are. The Parish Council have put in a request to have a village-green status for the playing fields.

Chris Lloyd thanked everyone for joining the meeting and contributing to the meeting.

Stephen King emailed Mike Simpson and asked him to check calendar against Parish Council meetings as there was cross over this evening.

Tony Booker says it is still only anglers posting pollution levels on their app and encourages everyone to use it to report pollution which you can do here:

<https://www.cvfc.org.uk/>

Wendy ball sent questions in advance and would like TRDC, parishes and residents to work together to talk about issues regarding misuse of green spaces, for example dog fouling, injury to livestock from dogs etc. Hertfordshire County Council has a rights of way volunteer scheme which is which has currently been paused. Tony Bradford says we need a County-wide approach and did some work at the start of lockdown to tackle these issues. Herts walking newsletter has 25,000 sign ups which shares the messaging. Messaging will be ramped up with Spring coming and changes in lockdown rules. Wendy Ball points out it's a multi-level approach and everyone needs to be involved.

Coral Bloom stated she has ongoing issues with walkers, particularly young people doing Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) expeditions and their horses. Many don't know what to do when they come across horses, so more education needed and possibly representative to visit

	schools to talk to young people and their assessors/teacher. We could target schools with DofE schemes. (Post Meeting Note – we need to make residents aware of the Country Code)	
7.	AOB:	
8	<i>Suggestions for future speakers – Please contact Elen Roberts.</i>	
9.	Cllr Lloyd thanked everyone for attending the meeting.	

EF06/19 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Forum noted that the date of the next meeting was Wednesday 9th June 2021.

Associated documents/links related to meeting and action points:

Associated Links

1. Watford and Three Rivers Friends of the Earth connections meeting on the 15th of March 2021. You can sign up to join the event here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/three-rivers-climate-action-connection-event-tickets-139952041323?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch>
2. Three Rivers District Council is about to begin production of a new Tree Strategy for the District. The initial briefing document, 'Tree Strategy 2022-2027', is now available and sets out the broad process and timescale to producing the new Strategy. It also highlights the points when stakeholders will be consulted and invited to comment on the emerging strategy. Please follow the link below to our website for more information and to view the briefing document. <https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/consultations> Please feel free to forward this information onto anyone you think may have an interest in the new strategy.
3. Climate and Ecological Emergency (CEE) Bill: You can find out more about the Bill here: <https://www.ceebill.uk/> and track it's progress here: <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2772>
4. Tony Booker says it is still only anglers posting pollution levels on their app and encourages everyone to use it to report pollution which you can do here: <https://www.cvfc.org.uk/>

Action Points

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Elen to discuss with Graham outside of the meeting.
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River District Council who seem ambiguous on the issue. Tony Bradford: Would like to develop the work programme with TRDC to include cycling.

Graham Everett, Tony Bradford, and TRDC

3. Roger bangs says Edbury Way path has great for the local community but Bollards have been removed in the area which were put in to prevent parking. The council has been contacted and was communicated that they were not officially removed, so this need to be looked into.

Roger Bangs and TRDC

4. Roger Bangs: Paths around the site of the new hotel and Travis Perkins around lower church road has become dark, narrow, and uninviting for walkers. It was improved 20 years ago but has recently declined. Proposal put forward to change the route to be more open and friendly to use.

Roger Bangs and TRDC. Chris Lloyd asks to be copied in on any emails regarding this issue.

5. Stephen King emailed Mike Simpson and asked him to check calendar against Parish Council meetings as there was cross over this evening.

Action for Clerk of Parish Council to consult with TRDC Clerk.