

THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

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

Meeting finished: 9.40

Councillors Jon Tankard (Chairman), Phil Williams, Chris Lloyd, Alex Michaels, Paula Hiscocks, Alison Wall and one representative from each of the following organisations:

Abbots Langley Parish Council	- Parish Councillors Jon Tankard
Chorleywood Parish Council	- Parish Councillor Tony Edwards
Bedmond Residents' Association	- Jan Smith
Chorleywood Residents' Association	- Angela Killick
Colne Valley Regional Park	- Stewart Pomeroy
Herts Environmental Records Centre	- Martin Hicks
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
Spokes (South West Herts Cycling Group)	- Roger Bangs
Sustainable Three Rivers	- Rosi Jordon
Watford & Three Rivers Friends of the Earth and Friends of Croxley Common Moor	- Graham Everett

Guest Speakers

Stewart Pomeroy from Colne Valley Regional Park

Dr. Jonathan Fisher – Environmental Economist

Officers

Elen Roberts, Joanna Hewitson, Rebecca Young

Apologies for absence were received from Wendy Ball who will be represented by Jan Smith (Bedmond Residents Association), Bob Sherren (Education for a sustainable future), Tony Booker who will be represented by speaker Stewart Pomeroy (Colne Valley Regional Park), Tony Bradford (countryside & Rights of Way), Angela Arnold (Watford Rural Parish Council), Matt Dodds (Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust).

	Action	Lead Organisation
1.	To receive the Notes of the Meeting of the Environmental Forum held on Wednesday 9th June 2021.	Minutes agreed.
2.	<p>Matters arising:</p> <p><i>1. Wendy Ball asks attendees to raise more awareness of harm to wildlife from misuse of nature reserves where appropriate/possible.</i></p> <p><i>2. Again suggested that a misuse of nature reserves working group is formed.</i> Elen Roberts said an email was circulated clarifying that the Council would not organise or run this forum, however she did offer to put members in contact if needed. No responses were received, therefore it will be for attendees to arrange outside of this Forum.</p> <p><i>3. Stephen King and Three Rivers to discuss moving the dates of the Environmental Forums as they clash with Parish Council meetings.</i> This was reviewed by the Council, it was felt that this wasn't possible to accommodate everyone – apologies to those who can't make it.</p> <p>4. Cllr Michaels said his grass cutting motion date had been changed and asked for details to be circulated with the meeting notes. He asks for support from members of the Forum as Liberal Democrats appear to be against the motion.</p> <p>Update and notes received from Cllr Michaels outside the meeting: The motion will be heard at LEC on 24th of November from 7:30 and members of the public are welcome to attend. Grassland is one of the most unique habitats for wildlife and pollinators in the UK. 97% of species rich grassland in Hertfordshire has been lost since the 1930's and 48% of species associated with it have noticeably declined since 1970</p> <p>(1) Hertfordshire has predominately chalk bedrock (2) which often leads to conditions which support chalk meadows which have been called 'the UK's equivalent of rainforest'</p> <p>(3). Of the total publicly owned land in the District TRDC owns circa 30%. TRDC resolves to look for opportunities to cease mowing up to 50% of the grassland it owns and manages and replace this with hay meadow management (cutting and clearing twice a year). This will exclude unsuitable areas such as football pitches, areas used for playgrounds (etc.) and include verges, areas in parks and all other areas which are mown and do not need to be mown for a specific recreational reason (e.g. football pitch, playground). This motion will aim to decrease grass cutting by up to 50% of TRDC owned land and achieve concurrent gains in biodiversity. Costs for the cut and lift will likely fall into two areas. Firstly new</p>	

	<p>equipment which may be paid for by cost savings, reduced mowing where possible, existing budgets or a request to P&R. Secondly disposal costs which should be mitigated by creating sacrifice areas wherever possible, or by sale to a biodigester (e.g. the plant at Royston). TRDC will aim to have a plan presented to LEC prior to April 2022, which will take into consideration biodiversity data gathered in the 2021 audit. TRDC will review relevant officers job descriptions within the Leisure department and ensure sustainability is incorporated into re-enforce this shifting outlook.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p><i>The Colne Valley Regional Park: Fighting for its life – a talk from Stewart Pomeroy.</i></p> <p><i>Please find the presentation at the end of the notes.</i></p> <p>Stewart Pomeroy comes from a countryside management background and has been working in the Colne Valley in a variety of roles for many years. He is employed by environmental charity Groundwork South and acts as a Managing Agent to the Colne Valley Regional Park.</p> <p>Stewart Pomeroy noted the CVRP is across three different authorities and shared statistics around the Park. CVRP are working with Local Authorities on a number of objectives to plan positively for the green belt. There is a Green Infrastructure Strategy which can be used by a number of different organisations and in responses to developers. Lots of practical projects happening to address the 6 objectives.</p> <p>There is in a pollution crisis in the Colne due to sewerage discharges and water quantity (Hertfordshire is one of the driest Counties in the UK, but has one of the highest water usage per head). Residents and voluntary groups are getting involved to help which has resulted in – 150 trained Colne Valley River Rangers, pollution monitoring via Colne Valley Fisheries Consortium site, water ambassadors helping people to save water and changes to weirs to aid fish in getting up them.</p> <p>Lots more information on the issues and project you can get involved in are available on the Colne Valley Regional Park website. https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/</p> <p><i>Questions:</i></p> <p>Cllr Hiscocks thanked Stewart for his talk, and asked if any of the River Rangers were in Three Rivers. <i>Stewart to find out and report back.</i></p>	<p>Colne Valley Regional Park</p>

	<p>Cllr Wall thanked Stewart for the talk and questioned if the CVRP had had any contact with the Mayor of London as it borders some areas of London. Stewart noted the point and will be forwarding another briefing note to them following previous communication.</p> <p>Stewart responded to Cllr Tankard suggesting the Green Infrastructure Strategy should be given more weight and be used to inform Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans, and would like to see TRDC planning department using and implementing this strategy.</p> <p>Rosi Jordon thanked Stewart for the talk and said Sustainable Three Rivers has identified rivers and our water networks as a key issue. Rosi asked what is best to do to gain public support. <i>Elen to put Rosi and Stewart in touch outside of the meeting.</i> Stewart says linking up is the best way – supporting each other’s initiatives and projects. Keep talking!</p> <p>Andrea Fraser from Batchworth Community Council would also like to be put in touch with Stewart.</p> <p>Jon Tankard says people’s concerns need to be brought to the Council as there are lots of passionate people in the community and change needs to be made – once it’s gone it’s gone.</p>	
4.	<p><i>Chalk Stream Restoration Strategy 2021 – a talk from Dr. Jonathan Fisher.</i></p> <p><i>Please find the presentation at the end of the notes.</i></p> <p>Jonathan Fisher is an environmental economist with more than 45 years’ experience of delivering applied economic analysis of most environmental issues. Currently the chair of the Mill Green and Roman Baths museum Trust. He is a member of the Central Herts Green Corridor Group which aims to protect and enhance the natural capital of the Green Corridor and the ecosystems services that it can provide. Jonathan was previously the Environment Agency’s economics manager responsible for economic analysis for water and flood risk management. Before that he was the then Department of the Environments economic advisor for Climate Change for COP1. This evening he will be talking about the Chalk Streams restoration strategy which was recently launched nationally.</p> <p>England has around 80% of the world chalk streams, many of which are in Hertfordshire and urgently need protection and restoration.</p> <p>Jonathan described the triangle needed for Chalk Streams to function (see PowerPoint). One of the key things needed is ground water flow, however where there</p>	

is excessive abstraction, we end up with dry rivers and altered groundwater. The placement of sewerage treatment works has had a massive impact on our rivers. There were six abstraction points on the River Mimram, however since closing two the river has improved.

Stewart says we need complete use of water meters to improve restoration on over abstracted rivers.

There is a call for a significant and immediate reduction on sewerage discharge into rivers. The sewage infrastructure is overloaded, partially due to increased housing without the necessary increase in infrastructure leading to overflows during storms. The other issue for the streams is increased sediment entering the rivers during storm weather events.

Recommendations to improve can be seen in the slides, some of which have been adopted by local planning authorities. One issue is when new planning is proposed, and water companies ask if they are able to supply water and sewerage infrastructure, they agree as it is their statutory duty – however no evidence appears to be given, and no evaluation of their impact on the local environment.

The EA has just released their third river basin management plans for consultation - this can be viewed online. The deadline is the 22nd of April 2022.

<https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/environment-and-business/river-basin-management/>

Cllr Tankard thanked Dr Jonathan Fisher for the talk and is surprised there is a lack of international pressure to protect this globally rare habitat.

Cllr Hiscocks thanked Jonathan for the talk and said although much of it is out of our control, perhaps promotion of greywater sources and water saving techniques would help protect the rivers. We really need to work with planning on the new builds to ensure we have the best water saving and storage facilities. Paula is shocked water companies must say they can manage the water needs and sewerage without an assessment of the risks to the local waterways for new builds. We must start with ourselves and ensure we are asking and educating where possible.

Cllr Tankard said unfortunately it is not government policy to demand this assessment, and we cannot go above and beyond planning policy.

Jonathan Fisher responded to say if you ask the wrong question you will get the wrong answer – if you ask what are the risks or what are the implications, you will get a better answer than asking can they supply water and sewerage facilities. There are current discussions with

	<p>OFWAT about increasing water prices to pay for the essential upgrades in infrastructure.</p> <p>Cllr Wall echoes everything Cllr Hiscocks said. There should not only be these policies in place with new large-scale planning but smaller ones too.</p> <p>Cllr Tankard stressed we cannot demand more than planning policy, we can say require but developers do not have to do it. One way to tackle this is to make these new builds appear less attractive to buyers – this is something they are doing in Bristol as locals refusing to buy new-builds which aren't up to a higher environmental standard.</p> <p>Jan Smith said we live in a very watery area, and the Council has tried a number of times to reduce flooding in a number of places unsuccessfully. We have a field which is 2.7ha which has a perched aquifer underneath which is part of a link of springs – the field is now up for development and they have been told it may cause subsidence and damp for local houses. With your experience Jonathan – is there anybody we can contact as a Residents Association to raise the profile of this field to protect the area? <i>Elen Roberts to put Jan Smith in contact with Jonathan Fisher outside of the meeting.</i></p> <p>Cllr Tankard says the Council does not want to build on the land – they have removed the sites they can through policy. Jan says they have sent a significant volume of biodiversity information along with Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust but have currently had no response. Cllr Tankard would be interested to hear more about this outside of the meeting. <i>Elen Roberts to put Jan Smith and Cllr Tankard in contact outside of the meeting.</i></p> <p>Phil Williams said they had 3000+ responses so may take them some time to respond. If it is unsuitable land, it may still be thrown out by inspectors further down the line.</p> <p>Michael Stimpson asked if there was an update on Thames sewerage discharge. Cllr Tankard noted that Thames have brought forward the upgrades to a local facility to 2022 to be operational in 2023.</p>	
5.	<p><i>TRDC Climate Emergency and Sustainability Action Plan and current initiatives – an update from Joanna Hewitson.</i></p> <p>TRDC have developed an Action Plan which was voted on last month and has now been formally adopted. One of the main actions is that we have procured a consultant to establish our route to zero – we are working with APSE to calculate a baseline for our emissions, carry out audits of our buildings, calculate the costs, and draw up a plan to get us there to be completed by March next year. There is currently money coming out of Government so</p>	Three Rivers District Council.

	<p>this work will allow us to access grant funding when available.</p> <p>We have been running a series of communication projects and events including a new newsletter entitled Greener Living where we share projects we are working on, tips for residents to love more sustainable, and local stories of organisations and individuals doing amazing things (sign up here) and an event at Watersmeet in the build up to COP26. We have also attended ‘Greener Together’ in Chorleywood event, and will be joining the ‘One Small Change’ event in Croxley Green on the 13th of November.</p> <p>The Action Plan is available in the Leisure Committee meeting notes on our website.</p> <p><i>Andrea Fraser to contact Joanna outside of the meeting to discuss.</i></p> <p>Cllr Hiscocks thanks Joanna for the work.</p>	
6.	<p><i>Misuse of nature reserves</i> Standing item.</p> <p>Nothing to be reported or discussed.</p>	
7.	<p><i>Member Exchange.</i></p> <p>Roger Bangs – Three Rivers District Council and Watford Council have been working together on a cycling and walking plan – there is a presentation available on the SPOKES website.</p> <p>Elen Roberts - There is a sustainability market happening at Hertfordshire County Council on the 27th of November – I will be there supporting a WasteAware stall (the public facing part of the Herts Waste Partnership). You can find out what other events are happening across the County via the HCC website.</p>	
8.	<p><i>AOB:</i></p> <p>None.</p>	
9.	<p><i>Suggestions for future speakers – Please contact Elen Roberts.</i></p> <p>Cllr Wall would like a presentation from Affinity Water.</p> <p>Cllr Hiscocks would like an update from HS2.</p> <p>Cllr Tankard recommends everyone visits Sustainable Three Rivers for the wealth of information and asks if the Environmental Forums could be advertised on there. Rosi Jordon says one of their main objectives is to raise people’s voices in the area to demand action. T=You can visit their amazing website here.</p>	

10.	Cllr Tankard thanked everyone for attending the meeting.	

EF06/19 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Forum noted that the date of the next meeting is Wednesday 9th March 2022.

Associated documents/links related to meeting and action points:

Associated Links

Stewart Pomeroy presentation slides:



CVP_Intro_CommBoards2.pdf

Dr Jonathan Fisher presentation slides:



Jonathan Fisher
Presentation for Env

Action Points

Cllr Hiscocks thanked Stewart for his talk, and asked if any of the River Rangers were in Three Rivers. *Stewart Pomeroy to find out and report back.*

Following the meeting...

Since the meeting Jonathan Fisher has advised that a debate took place on Chalk Streams in House of Lords – the link is available on BBC iPlayer.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0011bdv> The debate began at 19:55.

Starts at 4.56 with an introduction by Lord Chidgey (making points about the chalk stream strategy) then at 5.15 Baroness Hayman of Ullock (Shadow Environment Minister) who emphasised concerns about our high water use (greater than in other countries) and need to reduce it and also that abstraction is higher than recharge and the need for abstraction reductions.

In particular see at 5.19 government response from Minister Lord Benyon, in which he made on the record the following strong statements of commitment for the implementation of the strategy's recommendations:-

- He recognised the international importance of chalk streams (for which we have 85% of the world's stock) so that chalk streams are key for our international reputation on the environment.

- . He usefully said that earlier as Environment Minister in 2012 he had set out the catchment based approach to delivering the inclusive engagement and inter agency and bodies' collaborative actions needed to prepare RBMPs to implement the WFD. However, since then the EA Board has cut to a third their catchment managers that did such a good job of delivering this in the second RBMPs in 2015 so that there is now little chance of this good performance being repeated in the current RBMP3 round.
- . He committed the Government to pursue the strategy's pragmatic recommendations with the various bodies identified.
- . Flagship restoration programme as exemplars of integrated catchment mgt.
- . Increased water metering and reduced water use.
- . Improve WINEP to be more outcome focused and for it to be more ambitious.
- . Increased water company investment to improve infrastructure and reduce storm overflows and achieve a progressive reduction in sewage discharges.
- . At 5.27 in the video, he said that the Government will publish next year a nature recovery green paper. You might like to pass on that info to the lead of your Biodiversity WG.
- . Finally he expressed caution about estimates of the costs of corrective measures – citing that the costs of the Thames Tideway had been reduced from the original estimate of £85 per hh pa to actually just £18. I have made this same point in my full report to the CaBa on economic appraisal for chalk streams in which I highlight that water companies have an incentive to overestimate their costs which requires careful scrutiny of their cost estimates by OFWAT and the EA. When I was at the EA my technical expert colleagues at the EA with OFWAT scrutinised water company scheme proposals and cost estimates in their draft business plans for PR04 which lowered the costs (by about 40%) of some environmental schemes in their final business plan.

We now just need to scrutinise and hold to account those identified in the Chalk stream restoration stream strategy as being responsible for implementing its recommendations – most notably Defra, EA, Ofwat, WRSE and water companies.