

WNCF June 2017 Committee Meeting

Present: Brian Martin, Rob Smith, Paul Speake, Roger Lamming, Les Jones, Tony Parker

Apologies: Geoff Settle

Minutes taken by Andy Pearson

Mr Lamming (acting chair)

There has been a promising start with the published pieces in the Warrington Guardian and there are three further articles on the stocks. Mr Martin agreed with Ms Lacy's comments on content and re-use of previous articles from the group's own archive.

Dr Speake will check through the archive for suitable topics.

The preference for a generally accepted name for the Risley restored landscape area was discussed and Silver Lane seemed to be the preferred appellation.

It was agreed that would be no summer visit this year.

PLANNING ISSUES

Mr Settle had drawn attention to the WBC Local Plan, specifically as it relates to green belt and land designated for future development. The plan is due to be published for consultation in July.

The Grappenhall Heys housing proposal has produced quite a significant amount of local protest. This is for 800 homes and seems to have some existing planning approval. There is infrastructure in place.

Developments such as this are a concern from the point of view of increased traffic and this aspect of the Peel Hall project is also worrying.

The site of HMS Gosling on Lady Lane now has some nice interpretation.

Mr Martin discussed signage relating to wildlife and the flood defences at Westy, Woolston Weir etc. The person involved in producing this asked if any members had photographs that could be used as backgrounds for the panels. Mr Jones has some images of the river that may be suitable.

SIGHTINGS

Female goosander with 14 young seen under Thelwall viaduct.

Cuckoo sightings seem to be up at Woolston Eyes whilst Mr Smith noted a decline at Silver Lane, particularly in females.

There is an abundance of Marsh Orchids near Houghton Green Pool. This led to a discussion of the damage to orchids by indiscriminate grass cutting. An area near the Morrison's store

on the A49 seems to have scraped by a machine of some description, perhaps related to arboreal work.

Mr Martin has met with Angus Lord and Kevin McCready on site who knew nothing of the damage but agreed to leave a 3 metre strip round the adjacent copse and do just one cut in September.

There is another orchid area near the old Greenhall's building that had been cut.

Mr Smith suggested that some basic I.D. programme for those involved in grass cutting might help the overall situation as WBC seem to be able miss the wildflower planted areas.

Mr Jones said that it would be helpful if verge areas could be left uncut but it was pointed out that objections by local residents could be a problem here.

HOUGHTON GREEN

Mr Settle wished to run a bio-blitz here. This will be on 17th June at 9am. Mr Smith will run a bat survey on the evening before, starting at 21.00hrs.

Mr Lamming suggested that a similar approach could be taken to sensitive areas highlighted in the WBC Local Plan (see above).

FLOOD DEFENCES

Mr Jones noted that a lot of scrub had been removed at the weir which had displaced the lesser whitethroats. Could we ask for some mitigation? WBC don't have a good record in this area so the possibility of residents buying some wildflower seed to scatter was discussed, as was the possibly better option of letting nature take its course.

Mr Martin will try and arrange a three-way meeting with Connor McIlwraith.

BANK MANDATE

Mr Martin said that the relevant forms are now completed. The committee agreed unanimously that Mr Martin and Mr Lamming should be joint signatories for WNCF banking matters.

A.O.B.

Dr Speake asked for any comments on the website. Other than a couple of detail comments there was the suggestion that we should include a link to meeting minutes.

Mr Martin discussed a meeting that he and Ms Lacy had with the Rector of St Elphin's regarding accommodation for swifts. The new rector, Paul Wilson, seems enthusiastic. Ms Louise Bentley is helping set up boxes, sound system etc.

There are also swift boxes at Woolston and the swift tower seems to be successful.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 29th August 2017