

BURLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Draft minutes for approval at the meeting on 8th October 2014

Present	Cllr P Daubeney (Chairman), Cllr N Martin, Cllr J Kendall, Cllr V Thorpe, Cllr R Clarke, Cllr P Russell,
In attendance	Emma MacWilliam (NFNPA planning officer), Nick Wardlaw (FC), Paul Garrod (Cascade Consulting/Land Use Consultants), Sarah Oakley (FC), Steve Avery (NFNPA), Helen Kent (LUC), MaryAnne Bergin the Clerk Mrs S Gale
Also present	31 members of the public, a representative from New Milton Advertiser
Date	Wednesday 24 th September 2014
Opened at	4.30pm Closed at 6.30pm
Subject	Burley Parish Council Planning Committee meeting

Presentation of Wetland Restoration Scheme at Harvestslade Bottom and Public Participation

Presentations were given by: 1) Sarah Oakley of the Forestry Commission (FC) on Wetland Restoration and the aims of this type of work, 2) Helen Kent (LUC) on the proposed work to be done at Harvestslade Bottom and 3) Paul Garrod on Hydrology. Helen Kent summed up by saying the main aims of the proposed project are to restore the internationally important habitats in this area of the Forest and to reduce the flow of water at peak flow times. A question and answer session was then held including the following:

The Chairman asked for details of the cost of the project and funding. The cost of the project was not known. Ms Bergin stated that EU funding was held by the Verderers and that the project would be paid for from the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme (HLS) scheme as it was on open forest.

Cllr Russell asked for details of how access would be gained to the site. It was explained that access would be from the A31 and using existing forest tracks. The access plan is available as part of the Planning Application.

An elector asked what research had been done on the possible effects of the project to surrounding sensitive areas at Turf Croft Farm and how this area may be changed. Sarah Oakley said that a secondary flood plain channel had been included in the plan following discussion with the resident, to reduce the impact of flooding at Turf Croft Farm; therefore at high rain levels there will be less flooding as there will be two channels to hold water. However some flooding will occur as happens currently during times of peak rain fall. The elector asked whether hoggin infill would be used. Sarah Oakley replied that it would, as hoggin is a geologically comparable substance accepted by Natural England and that it would be sourced from the Avon Valley i.e. locally. An elector asked whether the flow of the stream would be impeded. It was then explained that the gradient of the stream would be reduced by restoring a meander. Thus as well as erosion being reduced, the velocity of water during times of peak flow would also be reduced. During low to medium flow no change in flow should be seen.

An elector commented on: the current fish stocks of the stream including spawning sea trout, the stream providing drinking water for animals at a ford and the possible effects on the endangered water beetle currently present. Representatives from the FC replied that as the stream was not being dammed there will still be water flow and that work on the project will be done in conjunction with the Environment Agency to ensure that work is done at times of the year when fish are not spawning. Fish that remain in the stream during times of work may also be removed temporarily and returned to the stream when work is complete.

An elector commented that a general decrease in water flow in the stream had been observed over the last 20 years and that it dries up in the summer. A question was then asked as to why no research has been done or information provided on the effects of reduced water flow downstream of the proposed work. The elector said that this particular area of the SSSI had been designated as "unfavourable" but recently "improving" and also currently has the endangered water beetle present. Ms Bergin replied that the site would have been recently labelled as "improving" because of the money that has been given to the Verderers to do the proposed work. The elector commented that the planning application indicates there will be reduced flood flows and Mr Garrod replied that at low to medium flow there will be no flooding and therefore the water that comes in at the top of the stream will travel to the bottom of the stream. It was also confirmed that studies have not been done downstream of the proposed works.

A question was asked regarding funding and the Verderers interest in the project. Miss Dionis McNair (Verderer) said that if Natural England (formerly English Nature) have said work should be done (if an SSSI is failing) and then that work is not done, the funding will be withdrawn. She went on to say that there would be increased grazing land as the bog would act as a sponge which slowly releases water into the stream during dry times and Ms Bergin said the quality of grazing would be improved due to flooding at high flow times taking nutrients to grazing land.

An elector asked why, if Natural England is simply an advisory body, the work must be done. Ms Bergin replied that as land managers of a site of SSSI that is failing there is a legal obligation to do work to improve it.

A question was asked regarding trees recently felled. Ms Bergin replied that this was to protect a lawn area from becoming woodland as this is another important habitat.

An elector said that the current fast flow by Narrow Water and deep pools in some areas provide a good habitat for spawning sea trout and that this would be lost if the stream was meandering and shallower. Replies stated that meanders create a greater diversity of habitats and that those features (mentioned in the question) would not be completely removed.

Cllr Kendall asked why more research had not been done further downstream. Mr Garrod replied that this was because the outflow of the stream should be the same as it is now and that it would be the velocity of the water that would change at normal flow. An elector commented that there is no proof for this and asked for the results of other projects.

Cllr Clarke asked for examples of projects where further works have been required to rectify projects that had not had a favourable outcome. The FC said that 100 similar projects had been done successfully throughout the New Forest. Cllr Daubeney commented that the Friends of Latchmore have evidence of an unsuccessful project at Ditchend. FC representatives said there have been snagging issues due to exceptionally high rainfall last winter and that they continue to monitor projects after their completion. They said a more robust system is being put in place at Ditchend.

Cllr Clarke said that there is evidence of stagnant water at Ditchend and a stream is no longer evident. Representatives replied that the stream naturally dries out at certain times of the year. Ms Bergin said that no obvious scar should be left by any project. An elector commented that there is an obvious scar at Ditchend.

Cllr Kendall questioned why many people living in the area of the proposed works were not informed of the Planning Application. The reply was that green site notices had been placed and that agencies involved were working to improve communication.

An elector asked why steep banks of the stream caused by erosion and providing a habitat for kingfishers and also the deep pools creating fish habitats could not themselves be conserved, rather than spending money on different conservation issues. FC reps replied that to stabilise the mire, the stream must be stabilised by reducing the erosive force of the water.

An elector asked what the consequences would be if the land manager's legal obligation to improve the SSSI was not given planning consent. Ms Bergin said that the FC may be fined. Mr Avery (NFNPA) said this was unlikely as the FC have shown a willingness to do the work.

Cllr Kendall asked whether it would be possible to defer the work until further evidence of monitoring was available. Ms Bergin said that there is evidence of successful projects from the last 15 years available to view on the HLS website, along with the Wetland Management Plan 2006 document.

Cllr Clarke reported how many tonnes of hoggins would be brought into the site: 4700 tonnes in 235 truck loads. Helen Kent reported that this equates to 12 deliveries per day over 4 weeks. Sarah Oakley said low ground pressure vehicles designed to work on Wetland would be used.

An elector asked whether any ancient trees were planned to be felled. FC reps said that no ancient trees would be felled and all tree felling that had been planned was now done. Emma MacWilliam (NFNPA planning officer) said that although the tree officer involved was initially concerned, she had now spoken with Sarah Oakley about the modified plan and is happy that no ancient trees will be felled.

Burley Parish Councillors then returned to the published agenda: -

1 Noting of recent decisions

Planning Decisions communicated by NFNPA since BPC Monthly Meeting on 10th September 2014: -

Application No. & Date	Address	Proposal	BPC Recommendation	NFNPA Decision
00618 01.08.14	White Buck Inn, Bisterne Close	Positioning of External Air Conditioning Units on roof	R5 – No Objection	Granted
00629 13.08.14	Rooks Acre, Bisterne Close	Replacement Conservatory	R5 – No Objection	Granted

2 Consideration of Wetland Restoration Scheme by BPC

After discussion in light of the presentation Councillors agreed: **Recommend R4 - Refusal of the scheme.**

Reasons to be given for this are: -

A). The consequent Environmental Impact to be expected on properties downstream of Harvestslade/Turf Cross Farm needs yet to be properly assessed. This then needs to be explained to the Parish Council and, more particularly, to the riparian owners along the Mill Lawn Brook in Burley village.

B). Other earlier completed schemes in similar locations need to be identified and compared to what is proposed at Harvestslade Bottom. The current state of their hinterlands, works executed and downstream effects then need to be examined in order to reassure us of the promised results of this scheme (in light of what has been seen to have happened elsewhere).

3 Any Other Business None. There being no other business the meeting closed at 6.30pm.