

Whixall Parish Council

Chairman: Ian Mercer

**Minutes of Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 8th February 2017 at
Whixall Social Centre starting at 7:30pm**

Present:

Chairman: I Mercer

Councillors: C Platon (Vice Chair), J Hardiman, J Fitton, J Spenser, S Marlow, M Howard

Shropshire Councillors: C Mellings

Clerk: K Hatton

Members of the community: 19

14/17 Introduction

Cllr Mercer declared the meeting open.

15/17 Apologies for absence

B Harris, D Edgerton, P Dee

16/17 Presentation from Dr J Daniels of Natural England and Luke Neal of Shropshire Wildlife Trust

Cllr Mercer introduced Dr Joan Daniels and Luke Neal.

Dr Daniels thanked the Parish Council for the invitation to provide an update on the plans for the moss since receiving a large amount of European funding on 24th June, their application for which was referred to the last time she and Luke had addressed the council at the Annual Parish Meeting on 11th May 2016.

Dr Daniels outlined the significance of the mosses site showing maps of the boundary of the SSSI, lowland raised bog and rare habitat of world importance which was devastated by commercial extraction of the peat which soared during the 1980's. Dr Daniels showed slides illustrating the international significance of the site and its rare species and of some of the work that they have done to date to clear the scrub and trees. The funding will support the management and restoration of the site and help to purchase of parcels of land which are not currently owned by Natural England (NE).

Luke explained that the work to develop the scrap yard site is funded from a separate pot of money from the Heritage Lottery Fund. This is expected to be received in March so, land that Shropshire Wildlife Trust (SWT) is going to purchase is currently held in trust on their behalf.

Luke explained that NE is managing the conservation and SWT is managing the people orientated things.

Dr Daniels described the restoration of the moss as growing a different crop- conifer forest is a crop but timber is not an economical crop, it does not do well because of the peat. The crop which Natural England is growing is 'Bog Moss'.

Reference was made to the Environment Agency web site and a project named 'Slowing the Flow' which describes a new approach to flood management being tried in North Yorkshire.

The following points were made by Dr Daniels to illustrate the work Natural England are doing to restore the bog/ moss:

- Peat stores carbon so when peat land is drained it releases carbon into the atmosphere and accelerates climate change, if the moss is restored it will retain the carbon and hold rainwater within itself.
- Pollution and ammonia levels are problems that they are tackling as part of the restoration.
- The land in the centre of the moss has sunk. (Referred to contour map of Moss) due to drainage.
- Rainfall pattern is erratic and the drainage network is unable to cope.
- The water has to be pumped away which makes for uneconomical farming.
- The system of drainage is 150 years old and NE want to properly engineer the drains around the moss.

In order to deal with the contamination at the scrap yard site they plan to take turf of the flooded fields and put it on the scrap yard.

Dr Daniels reiterated the world importance of the site for its flora and bird life citing examples of Merlin, Hen Harriers and Kite being present.

Luke Neal explained that Shropshire Wildlife Trust was community and education focussed. SWT has got outline planning permission on the scrap yard site and shared artist's impressions of the proposed visitor centre. There is a three year plan: 1 year to clean the site, they are looking at turning tyres from waste to a useable material. In year 2 the site will be used as a processing yard for timber and year 3 to see the development of the visitor centre. Luke talked about the proposed viewing platform to illustrate the original height of the moss. Obviously the details of the proposal will have to be approved as a full planning application.

Luke went on to explain that SWT also has outline planning permission for a bird hide on the flooded fields and associated car park.

Luke referred to the recent feature of the project on popular TV programme *Countryfile* adding that it is hoped the development will contribute to the local economy but that it is not intended to be anything large scale.

Cllr Mercer thanked Dr Daniels and Luke Neal for their presentation and invited questions from members of the public.

R Stoodley (RS) directed her question to Dr Daniels (JD).

-RS lives to the south of the canal close to Morris' Bridge. RS wanted to know how the fields that flood south of the canal will be managed in the future and wished to look more closely at the boundary of the SSSI. RS was concerned that NE want to raise the water table by her garden and that this would have a detrimental impact on her services and access to them.

-JD stated that NE cannot and do not do anything illegal and that RS's house will have to be able to drain. She stated that the fields have flooded for 25 years but RS stated that there has not been standing water all year round as there is now and that there is a culvert problem. JD said that their plans for the fields would depend on an engineering investigation and permeability and that they may lower the ground surface rather than raising the water level.

Luke Neal (LN) added that they can't completely solve the issue of flooding but legally cannot cause flooding to her property.

After a number of comments were exchanged on this matter the Chairman requested that this conversation was moved on as others had questions.

JD commented that they were open to discussion and wanted to liaise with those who are directly affected.

Cllr Mercer reiterated that people can come to monthly meetings and raise issues and that the Parish Council can raise issues on the behalf of residents.

Cllr Fitton raised a question about changes to Dr Daniels' role as Senior Reserve Manager. It was explained that there had been changes and who the team comprised of.

He went on to ask "Do you want to raise the water level on the moss?" and "where will the water go?"

JD explained that "the moss is not like a bath that is filled to the top, the peat holds and releases the water slowly". Cllr Fitton asked again "where will the water go?" and inferred that agricultural land was now only good for birds. JD insisted that NE do not stop anyone else's water from getting away.

Cllr Fitton asked whether NE is trying to divert drains rather than use a pumping system and controlling what landowners can do on their land.

JD stated that NE is doing locally what they are told to do nationally. Where they have diverted the drains they are working much better. She said that they want a win- win situation and work with the local landowners.

Comments from other members of the public were in the context of "why try to control nature?"

JD explained that they have a national responsibility to restore the moss.

T Hughes commented about the flooding since NE took on the moss. JD conceded that flooding did occur after Natural England took over but that was only 2 months after, inferring that that was too soon for it to be caused by NE. She added that there was flooding nationally at that time and this was due to climate change.

Cllr Mercer commented that it seemed that those who are unhappy with the work of Natural England felt too small to take on the organisation and asked what should their course of action be to complain, who holds Natural England to account?

It was agreed that contact details of Dr Daniels' line manager be sent to the Clerk but that ultimately the Secretary of State for Environment or the local MP was the process to raise a complaint.

There were further exchanges about the following issues:

- If NE is concerned about ammonia levels, what about sulphur from the aluminium works?
- The installation of gates, JD said that they were to stop trespass and fly tipping.

Cllr Mercer declared the discussion closed.

17/17 Public Participation

No comments.

18/17 Disclosure of Pecuniary Interests and requests for dispensation.

C Platon declared a pecuniary interest in the approval of transparency code grant as it pertains to payment for website training delivered by him to the Clerk. * (amendment)

19/17 Minutes of the meetings held on 11th January 2017

A request from Cllr Mellings to include reference to the written report that he had sent to Cllrs prior to the last meeting in the minutes was approved and the Clerk amended the document. It was then proposed by Cllr Spenser that the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting. This was seconded by Cllr Hardiman and agreed by all present.

It was resolved that the minutes of 11 th January 2017 be signed by the Chair as an accurate record of the meeting.

20/17 Clerk's report

-Correspondence to note

- Letters of thanks from all those in receipt of recent donations.
- Briefing note stating changes to the way in which Parish Councils are consulted on planning applications.

-Other matters to note

- Clerk's request to attend training- The Clerk was given permission to decide whether to attend this training.
- Parish Conference invitation- It was agreed that the Clerk and Cllr Harris should attend.
- Transfer of funds between accounts- Task completed.
- Town and Parish Council forum- Clerk to assess worth in attending once agenda is published.
- North Shropshire Area Committee- Clerk to attend.

21/17 Parish Matters

a) Renewal of Whixall Bowling Club lease- To consider

After some consideration and a short discussion with Mr A Cornes, Chair of Whixall Bowling Club it was proposed by Cllr Mercer that:

- i) The Clerk should begin the process of registering the land upon which the club sits with Land Registry and

Signed by Chair on approval of accuracy on 08/03/17

ii) On receipt of agreement from Whixall Bowling Club that it will cover all associated costs (solicitor's fees), the Clerk will begin the process of drawing up a new lease for 65 years.

Seconded by Cllr Howard and agreed by all present.

RESOLVED: The lease to Whixall Bowling Club be renewed for 65 years.

RESOLVED: The land be registered with Land Registry.

b) Flooding- Review of current situation

Cllr Mellings provided a report of his efforts to liaise with the Drainage Team at Shropshire Council. There has been mixed feedback on the situation but ultimately it is hoped that another meeting with residents affected by the flooding will be arranged at the earliest opportunity.

c) Senior Citizens' Party- Planning for 2017

After some consideration and discussion about the fact that the usual date clashes with late night shopping and Christmas lights switch on in Wem, the following was agreed:

RESOLVED: To change the date of the party from 1st December 2017 to 8th December 2017.

RESOLVED: To book Aaron Evans to play at the party.

d) Planning for forthcoming elections and Annual Parish Meeting

Cllr Mercer gave a brief explanation of the election process to those present. The Clerk shared some ideas about ways to promote the elections. Cllr Platon offered his support to put information on the web site.

RESOLVED: The Clerk is to draft an advert/ poster to include the relevant information and include that those interested can contact any of the existing councillors to chat about the role.

It was agreed that the subject for the next Annual Parish Meeting be considered at next meeting in March.

21/17 Planning

-All planning applications and decisions can be tracked on line at www.shropshire.gov.uk

Applications received- to consider response

Ref: 16/05704/FUL- Erection of single storey building for A1 (retail) and A3 (restaurant/cafe) use; formation of vehicular access with visibility splay; formation of car parking area; creation of balancing pond; installation of boundary fencing at Platt Lane Bridge, Platt Lane, Whixall, Shropshire

Stance: Support

Comment: Whixall Parish Council supports the concept of a shop and small café but it has concerns about the proposed access due to the proximity of the bridge on the one side and the sharp bend in the road on the other side impacting on visibility.

The Parish Council would also like assurance that drainage, both surface and foul, is constructed and maintained to a particular standard and doesn't cause pollution.

Finally, it would also like assurance that there is no loss of privacy to the neighbouring residential property.

-Ref: 17/00274/FUL - Erection of two storey side extension at Hatchcroft, 4 Garners Lane, Whixall, SY13 2NF

Stance: Support

Comment: No comment

-Ref: 17/00229/FUL- Change of use of land and erection of garage and workshop building; erection of single storey extension and conversion of existing garage to games room at Chestnut House, Gilberts Lane, Whixall, SY13 2PR

Stance: Support

Comment: No Comment

Current Applications

Planning application Ref: 16/05514/FUL -Extension to slurry lagoon (retrospective) at Moss Lane Farm –Still awaiting re-consultation from Shropshire Council, this application will not be considered at this meeting.

Decisions- to note

No new decisions

22/17 Financial Matters

a) Monthly Balance Record- Noted

The January balance record was presented and confirmed as accurate with the current bank statements, signed by Cllr Mercer in the presence of the council.

DATE	ACCOUNT NAME	AMOUNT
27.01.2017	Community Account	£4,647.51
	Business Saver Account	£923.94
TOTAL		£5,571.45

b) Application for Transparency Code funding- To approve

Having viewed the application Cllr Hardiman proposed it be approved, seconded by Cllr Howard and agreed by all present.

RESOLVED: The application is to be submitted as seen.

c) Marlot Grazing Project- Approve payment for mini digger hire and training for volunteers.

The Clerk explained the upcoming payments related to the Marlot Grazing Project to install a drinking trough.

Cllr Mercer proposed that these payments be approved although the cheque for training will be issued on receipt of invoice from Harper Adams. Seconded by Cllr Howard agreed by all present.

RESOLVED: Cheque for M Dickens is issued and listed below, cheque to Harper Adams is approved but will be issued upon receipt of invoice.

d) Outstanding accounts- To approve:

Orders for the payment of money (listed below) as per the financial report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)/ Clerk were proposed by Cllr Hardiman, seconded by Cllr Howard and agreed by all present.

DATE	CHEQUE NO.	DETAILS	AMOUNT	LEGAL POWER TO SPEND
8 th February 2017	101125	K Hatton- Clerk's pay for January	£314.34	LGA 1972 s. 112(2)
	101126	SALC- Clerk's training	£22.00	LGA 1972 s. 111
	101127	North Salop Wheelers- Parish Membership	£25.00	TA 1985 s.106A
	101128	M Dickens- Digger Hire- Marlot Project	£120.00	CA 1899 s.5 (Grant funded)
TOTAL			£481.34	

LGA= Local Government Act

HA= Highways Act

TA=Transport Act

CA=Commons Act

Resolved: The outstanding accounts should be paid and the cheques signed by two authorised councillors.

23/17 Highways

a) Referrals to Shropshire Council
Green Lane to Abbey Green land- still flooded.

b) Scheduled works by Shropshire Council
Whixall Hall – Abbey green will be resurfaced week commencing 20th February.
The section of road between Holly House and The Waggoners crossroads also to be resurfaced week commencing 20th February.

24/17 Councillors' Reports

a) Parish Councillors
Cllr Hardiman-Reported that she had been asked by members of the public about the following: New signage that was expected with symbols warning of Horse riders etc. and the matter of request for the footpath at Whixall Primary School to be extended. The Clerk was able to confirm that the signage is now likely to be produced in the new financial year, April, and similarly a response to application for footpath will likely to be in March/ April.

Cllr Fitton- Reported that he had heard concerns from residents on Moss Lane about the potential large movements of soil.

b) Shropshire Councillors
Cllr Mellings provided a written report prior to the meeting which listed emails he has circulated and referred to the following:

- Efforts to liaise with drainage team regarding ditch clearance to resolve flooding.
- A new national schools funding formula to be introduced. Based on the initial information, Whixall primary school would receive an additional 4% in funding for next year whilst Newtown 2.6%. Primary schools with a NOR of 150+ lose funding. The two secondary's that most Whixall children attend are about 1.5 /1.7 % better off. The final detail is yet to be agreed but this is an indicative position.
- Council on 23rd February will agree the budget and Council Tax levels for 2017/18.
- A list of issues that Scrutiny Committees have considered.

25/17 Shropshire Council's budget cuts and transfer of services –Future role of Parish Council

Nothing further to add.

26/17 Consider future agenda items

Scheduled date of next meeting: **Wednesday 8th March 2017 at 7.30 pm**

Consider topic for Annual Parish meeting.

The meeting closed at 10.00pm

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Wednesday 8th March 2017 at 7:30 pm
