

MINUTES OF THE SEVERN HAM COMMITTEE HELD ON
TUESDAY 7TH MARCH 2017 AT 9AM

Present: Councillors P Aldridge (Chairman), K Brennan and P Clatworthy

Independent Members: Mr J Lucas and Mr Alan Purkiss

Also Present: Ms A Swanson (Advisor to the Committee)

1. Apologies

- i. Mr T. Perry
- ii. Ms. C Corsie

2. Declarations of Interest

None

3. Dispensations

None

4. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 5th January 2017

The minutes of the meeting on 5th January 2017 were agreed as a true record.

5. To receive a summary of Receipts and Payments

The committee stated that the payments made to Caroline Corsie should have the same code as Severn Ham Consultancy as it was noted that a part payment had been made but under a different code. The committee would ask the Town Clerk to clarify and if it can be changed on Scribe.

6. To receive correspondence

The Chairman noted the letter received from Simon and Melanie Hopkins last year volunteering to help with the Bund when repairs are made. This had already been before the Committee and no action was taken.

Department for the Environment – The Chairman explained the contents of the letter regarding area designated as a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone – there were no comments made about this.

Natural England – they want to install a secured box/bench to monitor fish on the adjacent lower Lode weir.

Fisher German – Details about the Abbey Mill sluice repairs. The committee wondered why the repairs are taking so long. There were pictures detailing the effect on the land. They have not removed the bridge yet. Alan Purkiss asked about the fence and the structures across. The Chairman replied that this was for the fish so that they can take the fish away before they remove the sluice.

7. To approve the specification for the Bund

Alan Purkiss commented that it needs to be repaired. The Chairman said that the Committee had to agree to pay for the specification and agree a timescale. The money that has been budgeted for the repairs will be carried into the next financial year. Alan Purkiss said that the work cannot go ahead during the tourist season. The Chairman said that hopefully by the end of May. Alan Purkiss commented that it should not be undertaken in the middle of the season. Alicia Swanson said that the Curlews must not be disturbed. Alan Purkiss suggested the end of August. Alicia Swanson said the committee would need permission from Natural England. If the committee writes to Alicia Swanson by email with the suggested date of the start of the work permission can be given.

8. To approve payment for the specification

Cllr Aldridge asked if the Committee was happy with the specification and agree to pay the bill. Committee agreed. It was decided to post the specification on the Tewkesbury Town Council website. Alan Purkiss asked if we could concentrate on local contractors. Andy Noble has already recommended two being Hartell and Carters. Cllr Aldridge said that the tenders would go before the Committee.

The specification needs to go on the Tewkesbury Town Council website. The deadline should be 6 weeks. Work can begin in September 2017.

9. To receive an update from Cllr Aldridge on Environment Agency and Severn Trent works to the Severn Ham

Cllr Aldridge said that he had sent emails to the Environment Agency and Severn Trent that the leak had not been repaired. There was no further correspondence and Cllr Aldridge will have to contact them again and ask for a progress report. There has been a major leak at the valve and the hole has got bigger. The Mythe water works valve seized up. There has been a lot of damage at the bottom of the Ham. Alicia Swanson said that Severn Trent had asked to go on the Ham. She had written to them to say they were not within the law. Cllr Aldridge is not sure if the work has been finished as the barriers are still there. He thinks that once the area has dried out the barriers will be removed.

Alicia Swanson mentioned that the leak was an emergency, but it took several weeks to sort out. Cllr Aldridge has chased Severn Trent three times but Severn Trent has still not finished. Severn Trent should have been asked for Assent and then given a deadline.

Cllr Aldridge would ask the Town Clerk to write on behalf of the Severn Ham Committee to Severn Trent and ask them to do it formally.

Cllr Brennan said that the people living around the area felt that it had been an emergency. Alan Purkiss said that the start of the repairs had been delayed and a large lake had been created by the leak.

Cllr Aldridge said the leak is long term but Severn Trent have to repair it and stick to a schedule. Alan Purkiss said that if Severn Trent destroyed the surface they would have to reinstate. Alicia Swanson said that the leak will happen again.

Cllr Aldridge said that the pipe was very old and under stress and was cracking. It needs to be replaced and re lined. There were major issues throughout and it is a long term problem.

Alicia Swanson said they had to make sure that Severn Trent did not harm any plants and no negative impact. Severn Trent have a scheme for funding which they can tap into. There is an opportunity to see the Ham as a local nature reserve. Alan Purkiss said that we don't want to lose the SSI status. Alicia Swanson said the Severn Ham wouldn't lose the status.

Cllr Aldridge said that Western Power want to replace the cables. At the moment they can't do this because of the Curlews and would have to wait until August.

Alicia Swanson said that all repairs are collective. Everybody needs to chip into the vision. If we don't control Severn Trent now another leak will happen in 3 years and be more long lasting. Cllr Aldridge said it needed to be sorted out now. Alicia Swanson said that nutrients on the Severn Ham change.

Cllr Aldridge mentioned the Kayaker who got into problems when he tried to go over the sluice but the water levels had been dropped. Also the weeds were growing back.

10. To receive a report from Caroline Corsie, Conservation Advisor

Caroline Corsie was unable to attend so Alicia Swanson gave a Report.

11. To agree a replacement for the current auctioneer due to retirement

Cllr Aldridge said that John Richards is retiring this month and a new auctioneer has to be appointed. Mike Cluley was suggested from Carver Knowles as someone who knows the Severn Ham. Is the Committee happy to make this formal? The Committee was in agreement. Jan Lucas said he would check with the Commoners. Emails from Caroline Corsie were read.

12. To discuss the design and placement permission of Tewkesbury Borough Council/Regeneration Partnership's information boards on the Severn Ham

Cllr Aldridge said that Alan Purkiss was involved with this. He was yet to see the formal designs or an application. Alan Purkiss said there would be 4 boards one at each entrance with more information about the Ham. Half way there would be a lectern on the Bund about Flora, Fauna and the history as per the leaflets Tewkesbury Town Council had. He said that it would need Planning Permission. Alicia Swanson said that TBC had not gone to Natural England and would need to inform them of this. Cllr Brennan said it would have to go back to TBC. Alan Purkiss said the signs were well designed, robust and vandal proof. Alicia Swanson asked if they were able to change the information? Alan Purkiss said that contributions can be made. There would still be boards up about what you can't do on the Ham. Cllr Aldridge said that the Committee should ask the Environment Agency to replace these boards and ask them to pay for it.

Alan Purkiss said that TBC have the Planning Permission in place and he would contact Andy Noble for more information. Cllr Aldridge said that he wanted to make sure everyone is consulted. Alicia Swanson said that Natural England won't have an issue. The information boards will not be near the nettle beds.

13. To consider new noticeboards and sign posts for the Ham and explore the offer of support made by the Environment Agency

Cllr Aldridge said this is not relevant as discussed above. The committee should ask for money from the Environment Agency for other things. For example repairs to the Bund. Alan Purkiss asked if the Bund can be widened to take vehicles? Cllr Aldridge said they would not like to encourage vehicles otherwise would get motorbikes and accidents will happen. Want only to pedestrian access with buggies and motorised disability scooters.

14. To discuss the long term legacy of the Severn Ham

Cllr Aldridge said they were looking at the next 10 years at the nature reserve and the Curlews. Alicia Swanson said people need to bring their ideas and submit it to the Heritage Lottery Fund. With half of the Common as hay meadows and maybe the wetter section having board walks over it. Alan Purkiss said that the Heritage Lottery Fund will run out and we need to anticipate future funding. Want to keep the Ham as a nature orientated place and hold onto the SSSI.

Cllr Aldridge said that a future meeting should be scheduled to discuss the legacy of the Severn Ham preferably on a Tuesday.

The Meeting ended at 10:25am