

TEWKESBURY TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the SEVERN HAM COMMITTEE
Thursday 29th MARCH 2018

The meeting started at 09.00 am

Present: Cllr P Aldridge (chair), Cllr C Danter, Cllr J Raywood, Mr A Purkiss, Ms C Corsie, Mr J Lucas, Mr T Perry

Members of the public observing: Mr J Raywood,

1. Apologies

Ms A Swanson, Mr M Cluely

2. To receive declarations of interest

None received

3. To receive dispensations

None received

4. Minutes of the Severn Ham meeting held on 9th January 2018

No minutes were attached for approval. This item is deferred until the next meeting on the 10th May.

5. Matters arising from the previous minutes

None

6. Chair's report

Received.

Further to that report, the first leak has now been sealed with a new collar and most of the soil around the site of that leak has been reinstated.

The annotated aerial photograph that was sent to committee members identifies the sites of possible further leaks along the line of that same pipe, together with an indication (expressed as a percentage) of how confident ST is that there is actually a leak at each individual site. Work is now on-going to identify with certainty those further leaks and then fix them.

Action

<p>6. Continued</p>	<p>It has also become apparent that some of the valves were leaking too, but their seals have been packed so that they no longer leak. All that remains is for them to be cleaned out.</p>	<p>Action</p>
	<p>PA has been invited to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting at TBC on the 9th April. Evidence is being collected from every parish that was affected by December's water outage but, as yet, PA is not sure exactly what evidence is required.</p>	<p>Cllr Aldridge</p>
	<p>It is possible that, due to the scale of the repair works, compensation will be sought from ST, as the ground conditions may prevent the grazing of cattle on the Ham this year. However, it will be possible to mow some areas.</p>	
	<p>The leaks on the Ham endanger its SSSI status and, as yet, we don't have a timeframe for the instatement of a future-proof solution to the problem of recurrent leaks. PA is to meet with Matthew McKinner of ST (and possibly also CC) on the morning of 3rd April to look at the history of leaks. There may be a need to consult TTC/TBC committee minutes and also fishing records in order to compile a history of leakages.</p>	<p>Cllr Aldridge Ms Corsie</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Report from Caroline Corsie</p>	
	<p>ST, MC and PA are liaising over the restoration of the site, following the water leaks. A restoration plan is required, in respect of which there is a need to act cautiously, in order to avoid causing more problems in the process of carrying out restoration. We must bear in mind also that if ST put a complete stop to the leaks that will change the ecology of the leak-affected areas.</p>	<p>Severn Trent Mike Cluely Cllr Aldridge</p>
	<p>NE have been asked for permission to spray the docks, but they don't want us to do this. There is a concern that restoration work could cause the docks to spread.</p>	
	<p>It is understood that NE, the NFU and ST are holding high level meetings and that Peter Holmes (NE) is very concerned that the Severn Ham SSSI has been so endangered.</p>	
	<p>The leaks have created additional good habitat for birds. There is a reluctance to let ST do any further work until a future-proof plan is in place, as there are currently on the site 2 pairs of curlew plus a third male, also skylark, wagtail and snipe. They must not be disturbed. Although some restoration is needed we must not stir things up. Wheel tracks, in particular, have a lasting impact on the ground. It might be useful to visit a site where restoration has taken place, to see how successful it has been.</p>	
	<p>There has been an email from Laura Williams of EA, indicating that they are happy with the grass reinstatement below the bund and that they wish to spray the area for docks. The fence, having served its purpose, can be removed. Although grass reinstatement is good flower</p>	

7. Continued	<p>reinstatement is not and dock spraying would kill off the flower seeds, so no spraying will take place. Instead, it is recommended that the normal practice of frequent cutting should be used to eradicate docks and encourage flowers.</p>	Action
	<p>Birds nesting will delay haymaking this year. We need to be ready (with all necessary permissions etc) to be able to mow at short notice once the ground is dry enough and the birds are no longer nesting.</p>	
	<p>There should be no difficulty in grazing sheep this year although, since the grazeable area will be smaller, we won't be able to have so many sheep.</p>	
	<p>MC is ensuring that the recommended processes are followed, for the Countryside Stewardship application for compensation over the flooding. NE are carrying out a parallel process, to make sure that all is in place, so that we can move quickly when we have the derogations.</p>	Mike Cluely
	<p>There is an opportunity to apply for a Water Environment Grant, though we only have 8 weeks in which to do this. It is proposed that we apply for funds to cover the cost of a study to look at the hydrological status of the site, in respect of haymaking, grazing, species and the Commons Act, with a feasibility study to explore different directions for the site and find the right one. Once the study is done, then we can apply for pots of money from ST, EA and CRT, to carry out the recommendations. This work could underpin decision-making with regard to the future-proofing process. CC will email a one page list of components of the feasibility study on Tuesday and she and PA will work together on this, with support from MS and AS.</p>	Caroline Corsie Cllr Aldridge Mike Smart Alicia Swanson
	<p>A photography student has asked permission to take photographs of environmental conservation work on the Severn Ham for her project. Permission is granted, so long as the birds are not disturbed.</p>	
	<p>The urban debris in the Swilgate is an EA problem (especially re. willow regrowth) and we can write to EA to ask them to remove it. Friends of the Earth are also willing to clear debris.</p>	
	<p>CC will aim to organise the second of our planned future-proofing meetings on a date towards the end of May.</p>	Caroline Corsie
8.	Report from Mike Cluely	
	<p>Re. removal of the fence around reinstated grass, sand will be used to fill the holes left by the fence posts, to protect sheep from harm.</p>	Mike Cluely
9.	To discuss the request from the Army Cadets to use the Severn Ham for training	
	<p>Although the Cadets have used the site for orienteering and map reading practice for many years, they are now required by law to obtain permission formally. Permission is granted so long as the birds are not</p>	

9. disturbed. CC to meet with the cadets to explain. The cadets will be encouraged to carry out a litter pick at the end of practice sessions.

Continued

Action
Caroline
Corsie

10. To discuss the Environment Agency Fish Pass

Re. the proposed fish pass between the Mill Avon and the Swilgate, EA wants to bring vehicles and machinery onto site in order to do some bore holes. Permission to do them in this way is denied, but the bore holes could be excavated by hand. There is some doubt as to whether the proposed location for the pass is the best place. A pass is needed, as a result of the construction of the sluice, but there is no stipulation as to where the pass has to be, or what form it should take.

11. To approve the erection of signs on the Severn Ham in relation to nesting birds

Approval has been given. There are 12 signs to erect. PA was shown a location plan for them. They will be erected by Mike Smart on Friday 30th March. AS is to be given notice of this happening.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 10.50 am.