



TEWKESBURY TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES

of the

Severn Ham Committee meeting

Held at Tewkesbury Town Hall on 18th November 2021 at 9.30am

Present: Cllrs P Aldridge (Chair), J Raywood, C Danter, R Gurney, Ms C Corsie, Mr Cluley (Carver Knowles), Mr A Purkiss, Mr T Perry, Mr S Kerr (Severn Trent), Mr T Wright (Severn Trent), Ms Martyn-Smith (Dalcour Maclaren), Mr N McGovern (Geda Construction), Mr T Callaghan (Turner & Townsend), Ms M Gaden (Fisher German), Mr P Herickx (Environment Agency)

In attendance: J King (Assistant Town Clerk), one member of the public

SH 21/018 To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Cody, Cllr S Raywood & Mr Lucas

SH 21/019 To record declarations of interest

Mr Purkiss – Clerk to the Commoners.

SH 21/020 To consider requests for dispensations

None received.

SH 21/021 To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd September 2021

It was RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd September 2021. Proposed by Cllr J Raywood, seconded by Cllr Aldridge.

SH 21/022 Matters arising from the previous minutes – for information only

SH19/056 Land ownership issue – has been submitted – ongoing.

SH20/024 ELMS Model for the Severn Ham – ongoing.

SH20/029 Investigating floristic diversity & NE approval – complete see SH21/011

SH21/008 Futureproofing project – Karen Colbourne – ST to report back

SH21/008 Baseline monitoring for Ham – ST to speak to Steve Pullen, JK to speak to Hartpury College

SH21/011 Hay spreading on bund – date to be circulated when conditions are favourable for spreading hay

SH21/012 SUP Access – referred to Buildings & Moorings Committee and Victoria Gardens access referred to Tewkesbury Borough Council. Mr Purkiss advised that the disabled fishing platform is on the wrong side of the barrier across the Avon.

SH 21/023 Public Participation

There was no public participation.



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SH 21/024

To receive an update from Severn Trent and agree any actions

A written report had been provided by Severn Trent. Mr Kerr & Mr McGovern provided the following additional information:

The four connections have been made and the new mains are in use. The old mains have been decommissioned and the risk of burst pipes under the Ham has now been removed.

The plan is to remove the haul road in the spring, due to the risks of topsoil being lost during flooding if the work was done now. The haul road will be wrapped and weighed down to prevent any movement during winter flooding. The road is heavily compacted at this point, so the risk of material washing away is very low. If the Ham floods, the haul road will be monitored each time the site flooding subsides by Geda.

Works will ideally recommence in March 2022, although this is dependent on ground conditions. The haul road will be removed, starting from the south and the topsoil levelled and a green hay donor crop to be spread at the beginning of July. Bird dissuasion work will be required again in Spring 2022.

The Assistant Town Clerk advised that they will be part of the Severn Vale monitoring project for curlew next year in conjunction with WWT, which may make identifying where the birds are nesting easier.

Next steps are to look at the issues from prior to this work:

- Ruts alongside the working strip
- Footpath under the mill
- Docks, caused by wet conditions from previous leaks

It was RESOLVED to approve the actions as detailed in the report from Severn Trent dated November 2021 regarding the proposal for the haul road for the winter and the Spring reinstatement plans.

Proposed by Cllr Aldridge, seconded by Cllr J Raywood.

SH 21/025

To receive an update from the Environment Agency and to agree any actions regarding the proposed eel pass at Abbey Mill

Mr Herickx provided an update on the proposed works for the Environment Agency. Mr Herickx is the Project Lead for the eel passes in Tewkesbury, the Stanchard Pit has been installed and the plans are now in place for the pass around the Abbey Mill, this is the larger and more complex pass.

The initial plan was for work to start in August 2021, but there have been delays in obtaining consents and permissions. Work is now planned to begin in Spring 2022. Installation during the spring and summer means that low river conditions make the



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installation easier. The work should take four to five months to complete. It is proposed that an HDP matting system is used to form the haul road for the project and it would use the previously used route along the inside of the bund. The matting system spreads the weight of the vehicles and causes less compaction. The Environment Agency are mindful of the issues that occurred last time.

Committee members raised the following as considerations for the work programme:

- Lapwing nest on the Ham as well as curlew
- Flooding can affect the Ham at any time of year – consideration for the haul road
- Requirement to use TTC contractor to carry out reinstatement due to their knowledge of the Ham
- Clear information regarding footpath closures, as documents show the closure of both access points for six months, which is not the case
- No soil should be brought on to the Ham
- Have barges been considered as a means of access for plant machinery rather than a haul road. **Action:** Environment Agency to investigate possibility, but it is likely that the environmental impact would be greater due to creating a loading / unloading point.
- Is planning permission required? No, the Environment Agency have their own powers and the consent processes give the public the opportunity to comment

Mr Cluley advised that there has been little communication with the Town Council from the Environment Agency up to this point. The relationship works really well when parties are all kept informed. There is a wealth of knowledge for the Environment Agency to tap into and there have been lessons learned from the work with Severn Trent that will be of benefit.

SH 21/026

To receive an update from Caroline Corsie, Environmental Advisor

Ms Corsie provided an update. The SSSI assent for the Environment Agency work has been received at 9am this morning. This is the first time we have had sight of it. There are conversations being held with Natural England about reinstatement and what this might look like, but no representative of the committee has been involved in these conversations. It would be useful for a site meeting to take place soon with all the parties involved.

The work being planned for during ground nesting bird season (both Severn Trent and Environment Agency) is naturally a concern. The north east corner has had nesting birds in the last couple of years due to it being wet. Now that the leaks have been fixed the birds may not behave in the way we expect due to changing conditions.



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Severn Trent have mentioned spot spraying, as the 75% that has been sown with oats is seeing a large germination of docks. A plan needs to be established for dealing with this. It should involve topping on multiple occasions and potentially spot spraying.

The Higher Level Stewardship requires sward to be a certain length and it is now felt that it is being grazed too tightly. **Action:** Assistant Town Clerk to request removal of sheep.

A concern was raised about the removal of the willow behind the Mill Avon caravan park, as all of the brush and debris has been left below the caravans. If this is not removed, it may end up in the river.

Ms Corsie asked whether the committee was happy for her to feed the birds on the Ham during the winter as in previous years. The committee advised that they were happy for this to take place and it could be covered by nesting project budget.

- SH 21/027** **To receive an update from Mike Cluley, Carver Knowles**
Mr Cluley advised that all items had been covered in previous items.
- SH 21/028** **To receive the committee budget report**
The budget report was received.
- SH 21/029** **To approve payments list**
There was no payments list.
- SH 21/030** **Correspondence**
Questions were received from a member of the public as follows, the Council's responses are shown in blue:

A) Correspondence

Why is the item for Correspondence at the end of the Severn Ham Agenda rather than near the start of the meeting so that any points raised can be included in discussions during the course of the meeting? This seems at odds with the agendas for other Council committees - why is this?

[Reports from external bodies take priority at Severn Ham, as they are not always able to stay for the whole meeting and any written correspondence is dealt with at the end.](#)

B) Attendance by the Public/Press

Presumably members of the public and press are welcome to attend the Severn Ham Committee meetings? There is nothing mentioned in the Agenda to confirm this - unlike other Committee meetings - why is this?

[Press and public are welcome at all Committee meetings – item 6 covers Public Participation.](#)



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C) Single Payment/ELMS

I note that the "Single Payment" income is set to fall over the next four years (according to the proposed budget submission for the SH committee). Is ELMS funding likely to replace this funding - partially or completely? Why is this funding not captured in the Committee's budget? Does the Committee have doubts that ELMS funding will be forthcoming? (I thought that the ELMS scheme was meant to replace funding previously provided by the European Union).

No budgetary provision has been made as there is no information from the Government about how the calculations for ELMS will be made. Therefore any numbers projected would be guesswork. The Severn Ham is in a strong position to qualify for ELMS funding and is part of a local trial ELMS project.

I note the comments in the minutes of the previous meeting that this reduction in funding may have an impact on the Council's precept in future years. Has the Committee raised this concern with the Full Council? Has there been any discussions at Full Council on the priority of funding for the Severn Ham compared with other Council services e.g. Watson Hall events, Youth Services, Children's play areas? No as until a decision is made by the Government on how ELMS funding will be calculated, there is no discussion to be had, as any shortfall or increase is unknown.

D) Funds from Natural England

I also note that the income from Natural England is not planned to rise next year or the year after - based on the budget submission from the Committee. Why is this? I note that it is reported that Natural England is to receive a 47% increase in government funding in 2021.

The Higher Level Stewardship is not increased and will also be phased out as ELMS is introduced.

E) Budgeted increases.

I note that a figure of 2% appears to have been used for budget increases between the current budget and the 2022-2023 budget - is this realistic given the general consensus is that inflation will reach 5% in the next year. Some budget lines have no increase between the current year and 2022-2023. Should the Committee look again at its budget submission? Or is it too late?

The Committee feels that the 2022-23 budget is realistic given the current earmarked reserves.

F) Earmarked Reserves

There are several Earmarked Reserves assigned to the Committee:

- "Severn Ham" £6140
- "Weeding" £3000
- "Severn Ham Tree Maintenance" £8000
- "Hay Sowing Project" £8675
- "Carver Knowles" £2050

I.e. a total of £27865, 76% of the current proposed budget for 2022-2023

Does the Committee have a detailed description of what these earmarked reserves are intended for? If not, what is the justification for having such large reserves? If there is a detailed description where is this information published for viewing by the public of Tewkesbury? Is the Severn Ham Committee the sole authority that can authorise drawdown on these reserves? What's the deadline



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for spending each of these reserve amounts before any unspent reserves go back into the Council's general reserves?

These large earmarked reserves seem to make a mockery of the budget process. Does the Committee agree?

Due to the current Severn Trent works on the Severn Ham it has not been possible to carry out some of the planned work over the last two years. For substantial projects – such as tree work and weeding, it is necessary to build up the reserves before the project can be undertaken. It is also the case that weather conditions impact on the ability to carry out work, both in terms of access to the land and the availability of suitable seed (with reference to the hay sowing project). The reserves are reviewed by the Committee at Year End.

The large reserves are the result of prudent budgeting which means there is sufficient resource for long term projects or for covering shortfalls between the phasing out of the Basic Payment Scheme and the introduction of ELMS, rather than it resulting in a jump in precept request from the Committee.

G) Sewage Storm Overflows

How do storm overflows into the Severn and the Avon affect the Ham? Should the Committee be asking Severn Trent for details of how they plan to reduce the use of storm overflows as a matter of priority?

The Committee is naturally concerned about storm overflows into the Severn and Avon and is watching the outcome of the Government's recent report as to the proposed actions.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/storm-overflows-evidence-project>

<https://deframedia.blog.gov.uk/2021/10/25/defra-response-to-environment-bill-storm-overflows-amendment-coverage/>

H) Tewkesbury Nature Reserve

What proposals are there for working with Tewkesbury Nature Reserve? Tewkesbury Nature Reserve is generally more accessible for people to walk than is the case with the Severn Ham. due to the measures to protect the SSSI status of the Ham. Are there any proposals, now or in the future, to restrict access to the Nature Reserve in order to gain ELMS funding?

The Council is talking with the Nature Reserve about mutual projects that we may work on together. The Council is not able to comment on whether access will be restricted to the Nature Reserve as it is not the owner of this land.

The meeting closed at 10.36am.

Next meetings: 24th February & 12th May 2022.



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Signature of Chairman upon approval of the minutes 24th February 2022