

## THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

**At a meeting of the Environmental Forum held virtually via zoom, on Wednesday, 8 November 2023 7.30pm.**

**Present:** Councillors Jon Tankard (Chair), Chris Lloyd (Vice-Chair), Andrea Fraser, Kevin Raeburn, Stephen King, Narinder Sian, Chris Mitchell, Stephen King and one representative from each of the following organisations:

Batchworth Community Council	- Cllr Andrea Fraser
Watford Rural Parish Council	- Cllr Stephen King
Bedmond Residents' Association	- Gwendolyn Ball
Colne Valley Fisheries	- Tony Booker
Consultative/ColneCAN	
Herts Ecology	- Martin Hicks
Rickmansworth Waterways Trust	- David Montague
Sustainable Three Rivers	- Liam Moore

### **Guest Speakers**

Sarah Burgess from Grand Union Canal Energy (GUCE).

### **Officers in attendance:**

Elen Dolder, Joanna Hewitson, Tom Rankin, Emma Sheridan, Rebecca Young

## **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from:

Keith Pursall (Maple Lodge Conservation Society), Carolyn Weston (Maple Cross and West Hyde Residents association), Valarie Coltman (Carpenders Park), Cllr Reena Ranger to be represented by Cllr Andrea Fraser, Graham Everett (Friends of Croxley Common Moor and Watford and Three Rivers FOTE), Michael Hyde (Friends of Chorleywood Common), Bob Sherren (Education for a Sustainable Future), Roger Bangs (SPOKES), Cllr Raj Khiroya, Cllr Ian Morris, Cllr Chris Mitchell, Stewart Pomeroy (Groundwork South), Jan Smith (Bedmond Residents association) to be represented by Gwendolyn Ball.

## **2 NOTES**

The notes of the Environmental Forum, held on 21 June 2023 were agreed.

Matters arising:

Three Rivers District Council to continue discussions outside the meeting with Tony Booker and ColneCAN to establish protocol and responsibilities for pollution incidents.

Update to be provided on the coverage of the Three Rivers District Council grassland management plan.

- The two main headlines would be surrounding hay meadow management and conservation grazing. In addition to this the grass was managed as amenity, rewilded (sites introduced in 2022) or using a flail/reduced cut conducted during the autumn/winter weather depending.
- The hay meadow management has gone well this year, thanks to the Council's Grounds Maintenance team and also a local contractor who both undertook the works. Approximately 60 hectares of grassland was managed using hay meadow management.

- The conservation grazing also went well this year at Croxley Common Moor, the Withey Beds, Chorleywood House Estate and the Horses' Field (Leavesden Country Park), the cattle have now left the sites due to return next spring/summer. Approximately 64 hectares was conservation grazed by cattle this year.
- An update will be submitted to Councillors in Spring 2024 via the members information bulletin to update on the progress so far and recommended amendments where necessary. Following this, the update can be forwarded onto the Environment Forum for circulation.

Chris Lloyd – Asks if these 4 grazing sites are the only ones which will be grazed again next year? Emma Sherriden - Currently these are the only 4 sites to be done again next year, however sites are always under review.

### **3 A TALK BY SARAH BURGESS FROM GRAND UNION COMMUNITY ENERGY (GUCE)**

Presentation by Sarah Burgess:



Environmental  
Forum Presentation

Sarah asks that anyone who knows of any community buildings in Three Rivers District which could benefit from a community energy scheme, please contact Elen Dolder.

Question from Martin Hicks: Was this done at Ovaltine?

*Answer: When it was the factory, they drilled 7/8 boreholes into the aquifer and used the water being extracted in their factory process, but it was never a part of a District Heat Network. Nothing has been done since, the aquifers were capped off and are not accessible now. However, it may be possible to recreate these on the other side of the river or another part of the aquifer.*

Response from Martin Hicks: It's great to see this is being investigated, but we need to start seeing results on the ground and follow up this research.

Question from Councillor Sian: Passed along his thanks to Sarah for the presentation and is interested to look at what can be done in Croxley Green.

Question from Gwendolyn Ball: Asks for some posters on the Transition Streets for local notice boards – these will be provided by Sarah. Second question: It could be very valuable to discuss this with RES Energy Company to try to link in with the work they are doing on renewables.

Councillor Andrea Fraser asks if the presentation could be attached to the notes? *Answer: Yes*

Resident: Where will this funding come from? Even if we get millions from the Government it won't be enough?

*Answer: Sarah Burgess says there are multiple capital funds available, however these community projects are funded mostly by private companies, and investment from the local community/residents. These have a payback period, which some councils are getting involved in these projects as a source of income.*

Second question: Is there a chance Council Tax will be increased to help cover this? *Answer: There is no intention to raise council tax to fund this, we are currently looking at different and creative ways to fund these projects.*

#### **4 AN UPDATE FROM JO HEWITSON ON BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN**

Apologies that the HCC officer we were hoping to be here to support the piece on BNG was unable to attend, therefore Joanna Hewitson will instead give an update on the TRDC Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy.

Question from Councillor Tankard: When will BNG come into force? It has been delayed a number of times.

*Answer:* "The original timeline for BNG to become mandatory was November 2023 when building new housing, industrial or commercial developments; however, this has now been pushed back to January 2024 and BNG for small sites will currently still be applicable from April 2024 as originally planned. Further guidance and secondary legislation is expected from the Government in November, which will add clarity and aid understanding."

Papers are available on the website [here](#) including the list of achievements listed by Joanna Hewitson. The report is going to Full Council in December.

Question from resident: All sounds good to have lots of trees being planted, but why in winter? Is it a waste of public funds with the risk of snow/frost?

*Answer:* *If you plant over winter, trees can get bedded in, ready to begin growing in Spring. Most tree planting or pruning is done in the winter for this reason. Emma Sherridan adds the dampness of soil and lack of sunlight allows the plant to focus on rooting, rather than growing leaves which it would do in the Spring/Summer.*

Question from Councillor Tankard: Are we any closer to closing the eye watering funding gap needed to decarbonise the Councils estate? How much grant money is available?

*Answer from Joanna Hewitson:* *Grant money won't cover this, we are currently in the research phase and looking for more creative ways to fund the decarbonisation. For example, carbon bonds – they go out to the public to put money into a bond which they will get a return on, Westminster have done this recently.*

#### **5 MEMBERS' INFORMATION EXCHANGE**

Tony Booker: Tony now has a lead role in the [ColneCAN](#) group, with the main aim of securing and delivering Smarter Water Catchment funding from Thames water. Most will be aware of the micropollutants study they have undertaken, and Tony would like this to be expanded. They now have another member of staff working on this to track all pollution incidents and sources. Currently trying to get real academic interest in this which they are now having some success with. [ReAP](#) have now achieved charitable status and were supported by Three Rivers Council to be able to recycle plastic products collected from the environment, not previously recyclable due to the 'dirtiness' of it. If you are out collecting any waste from waterways, please look into the project for recycling.

Andrea: We have our last 50 free water butts to give away in Batchworth Community Council, please encourage any residents in the Batchworth area to apply.

#### **6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS (TO ALERT THE CHAIRMAN IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING PLEASE)**

Liam Moore from Sustainable Three Rivers to provide an update on Rickmansworth Community Garden.

The community garden has now been built behind the Rose Gardens by the TRDC council building. This is open to hosting events, has three beds and working to educate residents on planting and food growing. We have had support from a large number of different

organisations – thank you to everyone who has been involved and supported. If you would like to get involved in the community garden at all or use the space, please let Sustainable Three Rivers know and drop in for a visit.

Councillor Andrea Fraser would like an update on air quality monitors: what we have in the district, where the new ones are going to be fitted, what they are measuring how often, who is monitoring etc? Could we get more monitoring, particularly around schools? Can we have more information on air quality in Three rivers? Batchworth have been told more monitors are being put up in the high street and would like more information on.

*Answer received from Environmental Health Manager: We monitor Nitrogen Dioxide using diffusion tubes at 25 locations around the Three Rivers area. These locations can be seen in the Annual Status Report <https://www.airqualityengland.co.uk/local-authority/hnb-reports> (the 2023 report which has been agreed by DEFRA has now been requested to be added and should show the latest data, this should be available by the 8<sup>th</sup> Nov).*

*We reviewed and increased the number of diffusion tubes locations for 2022 to ensure we monitoring in the areas where pollution was likely to be most significant.*

*We are aware that HCC have installed monitors across Hertfordshire with one along Rickmansworth Road, Chorleywood. These monitors are being monitored by HCC and Iknaia. These Airscan units are not MCERTS certified, so are not recognised as indicative ambient monitors.*

**Action: Air Quality officers to be invited to the next forum to present on Air Quality in Three Rivers.**

Resident: Are there any plans to put something similar to a Low Emission Zone across Three Rivers? *Answer: We wouldn't have the authority to do this.*

Councillor Narinder Sian: We have a portable air quality monitor they are going to be moving around Croxley Green to gather evidence for further investigation and action. Cllr Tankard would like to borrow the equipment.

Question from resident: Why is the bridge near the Aquadrome being replaced when it's already been repaired, why wasn't it replaced before?

*Answer: It's reached the natural end of its life so needs replacing – we didn't have funding for replacing the bridge before, repairs were done to give time to secure the funding. The funding has been secured through CIL money and bids are currently out for the remainder of the funds necessary.*

## **7 \_\_\_\_\_ SPEAKERS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

Please contact Elen Dolder with suggestions for future speakers.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Air Quality (including any results from Cllr Sian in Croxley Green from the portable monitors).

Elen Dolder noted she is on leave next year, attendees will be advised closer to the time who to send AOB and other queries to.

## **8 \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Forum noted that the date of the next meeting is Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

Associated documents/links related to meeting and action points:



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Presentation slides and links from Sarah Burgess at GUCE.

CES webinar on decarbonising schools next week: [Decarbonising Your School - Community Energy South](#)

The microsite to the Heating Kings Langley  
project: <https://communications4282.wixsite.com/website-3>

Our website: [Our Projects – GUCE](#)

**CHAIRMAN**