



**Minutes of the meeting of Whitworth Town Council's Environment and Wildlife Committee
held on Monday 19th May 2025, 1 pm, Council Chamber**

1. Welcome

Attendees were welcomed by Sue Neilson to the meeting of this committee, and each attendee introduced themselves with their specific areas of interests and responsibilities.

2. In attendance:

WTC Councillor Sarah Rhodes (SR) (Chair)
WTC Councillor Michael Whitworth (MW)
WTC Councillor Janet Whitehead (JW)
Kim Olaolu (KO) E&WC member
Sue Neilson (SN) E&WC member
and 3 members of the of the public.

Andrew Thorpe (AT) Farmer, Landowner and
Chair of the Commoners Association
Karen Cowley (KC), Rochdale Field Naturalist
Society (RFNS)

Apologies: Ian Wright (IW), Treescape, LCC

Minutes taken by Rachel Hodson (RH), Town Clerk.

3. Election of Chair

It was resolved that Councillor Sarah Rhodes be appointed Chair of the Committee. This was moved by Cllr Rhodes and seconded by Cllr Whitworth.

SR chaired the meeting from this point.

4. Election of Vice Chair

It was resolved that Councillor Janet Whitehead be appointed Vice Chair of the Committee. This was moved by Cllr Rhodes and seconded by Cllr Whitworth.

5. To approve minutes of the last meeting

It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 13th January 2025, copies of which had been circulated to each member, were correct and should be approved by the signature of the chair of the committee.

6. Matters arising from minutes of the last meeting

See below.

7. Updates from members:

(i) Updates on local building works

a) Brenbar Crescent

SN reported that herself and KO had written, as a committee, to Rossendale Borough Council (RBC)'s planning and enforcement officers regarding violations of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) in advance of planning applications being submitted. She reported that there had been no response as yet. She hoped that WTC councillors would follow this up on her behalf.

b) John Street

SN reported a recent felling of 6 trees with nesting birds on John Street. She has written to RBC to request that there should be a retrospective review of BNG loss for any planning applications submitted in future for this site.

c) Minnie Street

KO reported that she had accompanied the RBC enforcement officer to the site over a year ago who had ordered the developer to stop, but despite this the works have continued and cited a continuation in the loss of biodiversity in this area.

d) Barlow Bottoms

SN reported that people have been seen with equipment scoping for potential development and wondered if these were representatives from the Forestry Commission or a developer and stressed the need for WTC to be vigilant. KC reported that the Rochdale Field Naturalists are planning another survey on the 29th and will report any findings back to KO. KC said there was a need to grow expertise in ecological surveying in the local area.

e) Albert Mill

SN reported that the appeal against the developers had been overturned, and additional work is raising the level of the land.

Action: SN requested if all five of the above areas could be reported back to RBC, JW agreed to do this.

(ii) Update on tree felling and replanting at Britannia

SN reported on behalf of IW. LCC officers have met with specialist forestry workers to discuss the felling options. This work won't start until after the next meeting. AT expressed concerns regarding the loss of shelter to his land if all the trees are felled. JW reported that only the diseased trees would be felled.

(iii) Tree planting plans at Waingap

SN reported on behalf of IW. He had offered two options for Waingap woods – a Miyawaki style planting or further augmentation to the trees already planted. AT spoke about the issues with deer in the area. SR spoke about the Woodland Improvement Scheme for woodland management. This could include scrubland, signage and a higher-level stewardship scheme. SR considered that Waingap Woods required signage. The committee agreed to investigate the options in more detail and agreed to set up a working group to do this of KO, resident Steve Haigh, SN and SR and they will feedback to IW.

(iv) Cowm Quarry – Holcim conditions for new leaseholders

SN reported that Marshalls will be taking over the leasehold, which runs until 2042. She reported that Geoff Storey (Holcim's Regional Estates Manager, North & Scotland) has informed her that LCC will be forming a Community Liaison Committee, and new LCC Councillor Daniel Matchett will be represented on this. SN also reported that 2 representatives from WTC can be nominated to be represented on this committee. The committee discussed the wheel washing, which had been polluting the water courses and the conditions imposed on quarry vehicles.

(v) Peat presentations in local primary schools

SN reported that the peat presentation had been given to all local primary schools and had gone well. She stated that the poster winners and runners-up in each school would be presented by the Mayor. KO said it was hoped that the winners will be invited to the Council Chamber for prizes and photographs. The committee also said that the winners will also be included in the EWC's next piece in the Whitworth Valley News.

(vi) Picnic area and pond at back of Cowm Reservoir

KO is trying to get this reinstated. She reported that she is due to meet with Dan Crook as United Utilities had put this in 20 years ago. KO reported that the fire brigade had recently refilled it, but the water had only lasted 24 hours. A resident reported that it is gravity fed and cost the taxpayers £20k in the 1970s/80s for the conceptualisation of it and considered it to be an absolute wreck at present. AT reported that it is fed by a water run off the hillside into a tank in the ground.

(vii) Any other updates

Stiles and gates were discussed and SN reported that she had passed all the information to former LCC Councillor Scott Smith. SR reported that LCC's policy is to replace all stiles with kissing gates over time.

8. To discuss a proposal for EWC delegates to scrutinise weekly planning application list and prepare report for clerk if needed.

The committee agreed with this proposal and that JW will take responsibility for this, with assistance from MW, SN and KO.

9. Any other business

KC said there was a need to grow expertise in ecological surveying in the local area to support the work of RFNS at Barlow Bottoms.

The committee discussed inviting John Lamb (Senior Conservation Officer, Lancashire Wildlife Trust) to the next meeting. SR said that she would forward on some BNG training that John Lamb was doing to RH who could then cascade this out to the rest of the committee.

A resident asked about the stile at Tong End Top. KO will speak to United Utilities about this. A resident also reported that a gate put into the wall needs aligning as it is almost impossible to move.

A resident also asked about the progress with the restoration work required at Cow Clough and spoke about this issue being raised at a previous Whitworth Community Partnership meeting. SR requested that photos of the area be sent to her. SN will enquire with RBC regarding this.

A resident asked about a bird wildlife survey that was raised at a previous meeting. Details of the survey were discussed.

10. Date and time of next meeting

Monday 11th August, 12 noon, WTC Council Chamber.

11. Thanks for attendance and close of meeting

Attendees were thanked and the meeting was closed at 2.35pm.