



## Minutes of the meeting of Whitworth Town Council's Environment and Wildlife Committee held on Monday 15 July 2024, 1 pm, Council Chamber

### 1. Welcome

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

### 2. In attendance:

WTC Councillor Sarah Rhodes (SR)  
WTC Councillor Michael Whitworth (MW)  
RBC and WTC Councillor Mike Royds (MR)  
WTC's Deputy Mayor Councillor Kim Olaolu (KO)  
and 2 members of the of the public.

Sue Neilson (SN) E&WC member  
Richard Whittle (RW) Countryside Ranger  
Rochdale BC  
Andrew Thorpe (AT) Farmer, Landowner and  
Chair of the Commoners Association

**Apologies:** Gillian Whitworth (GW)

### 3. To appoint officers

- (i) Chair – Councillor Kim Olaolu (Nom. MR – Sec. SN)
- (ii) Vice Chair – Councillor Mike Royds (Nom. KO, Sec. SN)
- (iii) Secretary – Gillian Whitworth (Nom MW, Sec. MR)

Appointments to be reviewed annually.

**KO chaired the meeting from this point.**

### 4. Terms of Reference

It was agreed there was need for two amendments: firstly, to change the schedule of meetings to quarterly meetings and secondly to call emergency meetings as necessary.

### 5. Key agencies to be invited as members

It was agreed that Andy MacNae, MP for Rossendale and Darwen, and Emma Mackenzie, LCC's Principal Nature Recovery Officer, were to be invited as advisory members.

#### Updates from agencies

##### (i) Ecological Survey

Rochdale Field Naturalists Society (RFNS) have been invited to carry out an ecological survey at Barlow Bottoms. It was agreed in committee that the wetland meadow between the river and greenway would be the most suitable site to survey.

At the initial site review on 10 July, RFNS members met with SN and were excited by the wetland meadow and the level of biodiversity it represents and are keen to undertake an ecological survey. They reported that Alder trees are encroaching on the meadow and need managing.

**Action:** SN to contact RFNS to arrange date and time for the survey to commence. SR will contact Natural England to see whether SSSI status could be viable here.

(ii) **Update meeting with Dan Crook, United Utilities**

Meeting arranged on 18 July regarding the water pollution at Cowm Reservoir. SN and KO in attendance.

**Action:** To report back at the next meeting.

(ii) **Albert Mill Update**

KO, SN and the Mayor, Gareth Baron, met on Sunday 14 July to review Albert Mill site to look at the evidence of pollution and the encroachment on land outside the permitted development area.

**Action:** All agreed that KO would contact Gareth Walker, RBC Enforcement Officer, as Winterburns contravening planning permission and building regulations.

(iv) **Michael Whitby's letter**

Suspected oil pollution at Cowm reported in this letter will be raised with Dan Crook.

**5. Lancashire Environmental Fund**

It was agreed that RW's suggestion for maintenance work in Healey Dell was ideal.

**Action:** RW to prepare associated costings and fill in the forms to upgrade and repair the middle lodge on the Rossendale side of Healey Dell.

During the discussions about the proposed project for the Lancashire Environmental Fund, the committee felt that it was essential for a Rossendale ranger to be appointed.

**Action:** MW to follow up and report back on ranger funding opportunities and schemes. SN to follow up with Jackie Flynn re wider Rossendale ranger services.

**6. Planning permission for redevelopment of historical buildings**

The barn referred to was the Tonacliffe 16<sup>th</sup> century barn, which had become a home to barn owls. Its demolition highlights the issue of buildings being demolished with planning permission but without consideration of heritage or wildlife.

**Action:** Vigilance is required by all members to guard against inappropriate development. MR asked to keep an eye on RBC planning applications.

**7. Tree planting at Waingap Woods**

The newly planted trees have been eaten by escaped cattle and other animals. The Woodland Trust have agreed to supply 420 replacement trees. KO is putting in a bid to WTC for funding for sapling protectors. RW suggested block planting was the best option, protected by stock proof posts and 8 ft high wire fencing to deter deer. AT suggested 2 strands of electric wire may be needed too.

**Action:** KO to follow through with plans.

**8. Ideas and plans for future events**

(i) **Engagement with local schools**

To include visits to primary schools, explaining biodiversity, wildlife conservation and environmental protection. RW reported that Hollingworth Lake Rangers do nature talks in schools. Farm visits were suggested as a possibility and SR offered educational visits to her farm.

**Action:** KO and SN to follow up.

(ii) **Biodiversity conference** SN has been liaising with Emma Mackenzie, LCC's Principal Nature Recovery Officer, to organise a biodiversity conference in Whitworth and to invite planning departments and dignitaries from local townships in order to educate and raise

awareness about the need to comply with current biodiversity legislation.

**Action:** SN and KO to follow up.

## **9. AOB**

- (i) The top meadow of Barlow Bottoms is privately owned by members of the Train family. SR explained there was funding available to encourage owners to maintain land as wild areas rather than to sell for development.

**Action:** SR needs to provide funding details for follow up. SN and KO will meet privately with the Train family. SR also suggested contacting Mike Holding – Ex Natural England Coordinator, and Ex Lancashire Wildlife Trust and now a land management trainer for advice and support.

- (ii) The boundary of LCC adopted land and registered ownership at Barlow Bottoms needs to be clarified.

**Action:** SN already following this up with LCC and Cllr Scott Smith.

## **10. Date and time of the next meeting**

Monday 7 October, 1 pm, WTC Council Chamber.

## **11. Attendees were thanked and the meeting was closed at 3 pm.**