

## THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Environmental Forum held virtually via zoom, on Wednesday 08 June 2022, 7.30pm.

Meeting finished: 9.20

Councillors Phil Williams (Chairman), Chris Lloyd (Vice-Chair), Anne Winter, Shanti Maru, Andrea Fraser, Chris Mitchell and one representative from each of the following organisations:

Batchworth Community Council	- Cllrs Andrea Fraser/Craige Coren
Chorleywood Parish Council	- Parish Councillor Harry Davies
Croxley Green Parish Council	- Parish Councillor Emma Whitmore
Bedmond Residents' Association	- Jan Smith
Chorleywood Residents' Association	- Angela Killick
Colne Valley Fisheries Consultative	- Tony Booker
Friends of Croxley Common Moor	- Graham Everett
Friends of Stocker's Lake	- Russell Ball
Rickmansworth & District Residents' Assoc.	- Michael Stimpson/Ash Pattni
Spokes (South West Herts Cycling Group)	- Roger Bangs
Sustainable Three Rivers	- Rosi Jordon/Annabel Foley/Gillian Lipton

## Watford & Three Rivers Friends of the - Graham Everett Earth


### Guest Speakers

Jess Hodges and Alex Laurie from Three Rivers District Council

### Officers

Elen Roberts, Jess Hodges, Alex Laurie

Apologies for absence were received from Angela Arnold from Watford Rural Parish Council, Tim Hill and Matt Dodds from Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Bob Sherren from Education for a Sustainable Future, Cllr Alison Wall, David Montague from Rickmansworth Waterways Trust, Stewart Pomeroy from Colne Valley Regional Park, Cllr Stephen King, Cllr Reena Ranger.

	Action	Lead Organisation
1.	To receive the Notes of the Meeting of the Environmental Forum held on Wednesday 9th March 2022.  Minutes agreed	
2.	Matters arising:  Roger said there were matters outstanding. <i>Elen Roberts to get written responses for any matters arising.</i>	
3.	<p>A talk by Alex Laurie and Jess Hodges from Three Rivers District Council: Biodiversity and Nature Recovery in Three Rivers</p> <p> Nature Recovery Strategy Briefing Do</p> <p>Jess Hodges talk on the Nature Recovery Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Asks that people comment on the current consultation which closes on the 13<sup>th</sup> June.</li><li>- Rickmansworth Aquadrome consultation closes Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> June.</li><li>- Both consultations can be found here: <a href="https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/consultations">https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/consultations</a></li></ul> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Jan Smith: How much does the strategy link in and influence the local plan.</li></ul>	

*Written response: "TRDC's Nature Recovery Strategy and the local plan are not directly linked. A new Local Plan, which considers the plan's impact on biodiversity, is currently being prepared by TRDC, more information on this process can be found at: <https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/new-local-plan>.*

The NR Strategy will set out the Council's approach to the protection and conservation of the natural world within the District, it will include an Action Plan outlining key objectives to help guide the council's work on wildlife over the next 5 years."

- Cllr Craig Coren: How do you plan to protect the green-belt from development in your plan? In terms of rewilding, I have seen what you have done so far, but there doesn't seem to be clear maps/delineation? We need to ensure maintenance teams know where these areas start and stop to ensure they don't overgrow. Cllr Phil Williams states Jess Hodges is not in the local plan team so not best placed to answer the first question. We are still fighting the numbers. Jess Hodges said updating the GIS mapping system will be part of the project, to ensure all are aware from Officers and Maintenance teams to residents. Cllr Craig Coren says it's important to discuss with local residents on where the rewilding will start and end.
- Annabel Foley: Where does the grassland management fit into the wider project? Signage is so important in smaller sites to explain the importance of what we are doing. Jess Hodges agrees and says the reassurance and explanation is necessary. Alex Laurie is about to talk about the grassland management project which is separate but there is a strong overlap. Annabel Foley asks how residents will keep up with how the grasslands management, Jess Hodges said to keep an eye on the website, and more will be done to communicate with residents. Phil Williams asks if it will be in the Councils Newsletter – yes it will!
- Rosi Jordon: I know you are looking to increase reduced mowing over the next 5 years, could this be sped up? Jess Hodges said numbers and percentages were calculated based on mapping and accounting for areas which will need to be cut due to being amenity areas. We currently have management contracts so when any are renewed, we will look to reduce cutting where possible on those larger sites. Jess Hodges and Rosi Jordon emphasised the importance of sending in supportive comments as lots of negative ones are received, we have to respond to residents wishes.
- Cllr Chris Lloyd: We all live in different areas with different skills, we rely on all of you and would like all areas of the Council represented at this Forum. Cllr Chris Lloyd shares the Monkey Puzzle Tree book, written by Jess Hodges about Leavesden Country Park. Cllr Chris Lloyd encourages all to visit the park.

Alex Laurie talk on Grassland Management

Questions:

- Annabel Foley: Have you got plans to do insect surveys? Is that something residents could get involved in? Alex Laurie

says it is a specialist area, and we don't have the knowledge in-house but would be interesting to see the data. The sheer number of sites (60-70), makes it impossible for us to assess them all so it would be useful if people could let us know what they are finding and their abundance. We do anticipate changes in vegetation so will be looking at this as part of the nature recovery strategy. Annabel Foley notes there are lots of people in this Forum who may have the knowledge to help! Cllr Phil Williams notes there are already facilities for people to submit their findings.

- Cllr Chris Mitchell: Do we have any information on our bee population? Is there anyone in the District with a bee specialty? Are they covered in any strategies? How do we plan to help them? Alex Laurie said we do not have the data or specialty in house about bees but HCC might. There are no current specific plans for bees, but they should be helped by the larger project indirectly. We are also looking at enhancing locations but this will be done based on which plants will thrive in the area rather than to help specific insects. Cllr Chris Mitchell questioned how high up our priorities bees should be? Do they need more emphasis? Alex Laurie says maybe it does need more emphasis and can be considered as part of the Nature Recovery Strategy.
- Cllr Craig Coren: Does the plan extend to road verges? Currently they are growing wild but don't seem to have a plan. Alex Laurie notes that highways are done by HCC, and they have their own plans for their grassland maintenance. Cllr Craig Coren asks if the two should be working alongside each other. Cllr Williams notes that last year one of the areas we put aside was cut by HCC, however they are making positive changes. If you would like changes, speak to your local County Councillor.
- Cllr Emma Whitmore: In Croxley Green we did a rewilding project along a path between two roads where lots of wildflowers were planted which were really well received and is being repeated this year. Lots of primary and secondary schools may be able to help with bug and plant counting.
- Cllr Chris Lloyd: If people want more information on bees, you can find out here: <https://www.sehbka.co.uk/>
- Russell Ball: We need to ensure we are spreading biodiversity across the District, particularly in more deprived urban areas to create wildlife corridors. Alex Laurie says the strategy will include urban areas.
- Rosi Jordon: Bugs Matters Survey from Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust is out this summer, you can download the app to take part.
- Cllr Phil Williams: Asks how are the Wood Ants? There were none left in Hertfordshire 5 years ago, the second release appeared to be going well? Alex Laurie says he visited a number of weeks ago and one nest was very strong so they are hopeful they will continue to spread. Upcoming woodland works should further benefit the ants. They have large distinctive nests and are the biggest ant species in Britain. No issues with Badger attacks or vandalism so far.

4.	<p><i>Misuse of nature reserves</i> Standing item.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tony Booker says there have already been behaviour issues including wild swimming which is particularly damaging for fisheries and nesting birds. Tony was involved in works with the River Gade and has been looking at an Aquatics Plastics Recovery scheme. 8x 1tn bags of waste were collected from the short stretch of river, including tyres, over two hundred tennis balls, gas canisters, footballs, tents and more. The project looks to have been successful. The plastic waste was taken to Hull to be recycled which can be reused in the local area. It is the only place in the UK that does this kind of recycling. You can take discarded fishing lines to Angler's shops to be collected and recycled. You can watch what happened to the waste here. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=heuvibKQF6k">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=heuvibKQF6k</a></li> <li>- Cllr Chris Mitchell: Litter – The Parish Council have done some projects with the Green Croxley Schools group around taking your litter home with you. Are people still having significant issues with litter? Should we have better signage? <i>Elen Roberts to ask about signage.</i> Gillian Lipton asks if the new signage in the Aquadrome or in regards to the litter could be made from the recycled aquatic plastic. <i>To be discussed outside the meeting.</i></li> </ul>	
5.	<p><i>Member Exchange.</i></p> <p>Micheal Stimpson: TRDC are to be applauded for the animal bins encouraging young kids to use the bins in the Aquadrome, unfortunately the adults continue to leave bags of waste by the bins.</p> <p>Rosi Jordon: Sustainable Three Rivers have been speaking to TRDC Officers and Batchworth Community Council about a possible community garden in Rickmansworth. If anyone else is interested either as an organisation or individual please get in touch.</p> <p>Cllr Chis Lloyd: Requests that people could put the group they represent in their Zoom name in the future alongside their name.</p> <p>Notes from the Water Partnership shared by Cllr Lloyd:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Water Partnership has been formed at TRDC. The group meets twice yearly and consists of stakeholders connected to the preservation of our chalk stream, security of water supply, flooding and sewage. Its purpose is to have a forum where we can discuss and try to address key concerns in the area. We have met twice now. The first meeting was largely scene setting. At the second the HS2 contractor explained in detail the background to their permit variations, which were raised as a concern by our water specialists.</li> <li>• We learnt of 2 pilot projects for Sustainable Urban drainage Schemes for the district in South Oxhey and Northwood, which have arisen due to the severe floods in 2016. We discussed the complexities of making this happen.</li> </ul>	

- Thames water feedback the outcomes of their investigation into the flooding of Harefield Road, and sadly no simple solutions are available. The investment requirement for this and Maple Cross Sewage Treatment Works would need to be submitted to OFWAT for the next AMP cycle 2025-30. Sadly there is no guarantee OFWAT will approve.
- Thames reported that the infrastructure improvement work connected to Chesham Sewage treatment work is progressing well, with repairs to sewage pipes and manhole replacements. There have been no discharges by the treatment works since October last year. It is too early to tell if this is purely down to the improvement works as ground water levels have been low, however the signs are positive.

The next meeting is on November, however as a group we work on issues in between times to keep momentum flowing.

Roger Bangs: The outstanding matter from the previous meeting is in relation to item 6 regarding the footpath at Edbury Way. *Elen Roberts to chase again. Response from our transport Officer: Three Rivers DC continues to develop our improvement scheme to the part of the Way owned by Three Rivers DC. This includes consideration of diverting the NCN path away from the section by the Hotel, as the District Council has no control over this path, which is private and has not been designated a public right of way.*

Cllr Andrea Fraser: As Batchworth Community Council, we were inspired by previous speakers here and have been finding out local interest in Water Butts, there was great interest and we have spoken to Affinity Water about providing them, however they have a minimum order of 25,000. Looking at pollution eating plants to be planted along Money Hill Parade and Rickmansworth High Street, could more of these be planted and could we have a relevant speaker attend to talk about air quality? Cllr Phil Williams shares it is Clean Air Day next week. Elen shared information about planned Great Big Green Week event.

Russell Ball: We are monitoring diversity changes in relation to grazing being implemented in the area. Looking at doing hedge laying in the area following a course on the meat cleaver technique, this happens on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of every month, so please come along and join.

Cllr Chris Mitchell: Is TRDC doing anything towards the Queens Green Canopy? Alex Laurie: We have planted 21 standard trees so far across a range of sites, and this Autumn we are planning to hold two community planting events, one in Denham Way and one in the Horses Field. There will be around 1000 trees in total. (<https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/news/planting-a-green-canopy-fit-for-a-queen-across-three-rivers>). Volunteer events will be shared with the group when dates are confirmed.

Cllr Harry Davies: We have a sustainability sub-committee with a detailed action plan covering a number of projects including

	<p>biodiversity on the common (bringing cows back for grazing and encouraging wild bee colonies). Cllr Phil Williams put forward a motion to prevent slug pellets being used on Parish Council Allotments and suggests it is something other Parish Councils look into. Angela Killick asks what pesticides/HCC use. Cllr Phil Williams wanted TRDC to stop all use of use Glyphosate, TRDC said they won't use it so the contract has been passed back to HCC, it is only used on very specific roots for example Japanese Knotweed.</p> <p>Jess Hodges: Please get online and fill in the consultation responses.</p> <p>Tony Booker: We have been delivering accredited conservation training courses. The venue for this is in TRDC by Edbury Way, filming was happening the other day to take the concept nationally as part of a Love Fishing Love Nature campaign as many of the best kept wildlife sites are fisheries. The wetland area is deemed to be one of the most important areas in the catchment. The funding received for these projects spreads beyond our borders. Site visits in the future may be possible. Tony Booker is now working on Colne Can. There is a project called Chalk Streams First, the concept is don't abstract from chalk streams, but abstract from further down the river – Affinity Water are considering this which would have significant impact on local areas, it would present a risk to the SSSI lakes and further. Tony Booker will continue to feedback on the issue.</p> <p>Cllr Lisa Hudson: During the winter we recieved money from the Welcome Back Fund, we have started a new market in Rickmasnworth High Street with a focus on reduced waste and sustainability – the stall holders are being carefully controlled to suit the sustainable theme. The market happens on the last Sunday of every month from 11am – 3pm – and we encourage you all to come along! The next one is Sunday the 26<sup>th</sup> June. Lisa Hudson asks how many households could potentially respond to the Aquadrome Survey? There's over 200 responses already. Jess Hodges notes this consultation is open to people beyond our borders as we get lots of people travelling to the site from outside the District.</p>	
6.	<p><i>AOB:</i></p> <p>The water quality analysis which has been happening up stream – the report is currently being put together and will be shared – over 300 micro-pollutants have been found so far in the water and silt. Thanks to Affinity Water and Thames on this. Report expected around August this year.</p>	
7.	<p><i>Suggestions for future speakers – Please contact Elen Roberts.</i></p> <p>Suggestions from the meeting include Air Quality and Bees.</p>	
8.	Cllr Williams thanked everyone for attending the meeting.	

The Forum noted that the date of the next meeting is Wednesday 2<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

*Associated documents/links related to meeting and action points:*

**Associated Links**

**Action Points**

**Guest Speaker information**