

Minutes of Biodiversity Group Zoom Meeting, Tuesday, February 16th, 2021 at 7.00pm

1. **Present:** Tim Lloyd (chair), Andy Eardley, Drew Bellis, Chris Jackson Apologies: Andy Ankers
2. **The minutes** of the last meeting were agreed.
3. **Matters arising** :Neil had written NP S55 and it was unsure what the S55 referred to, but Neil was not present to explain.
4. **Comments on the CWT report:** as this report has only just arrived today not all the group has had chance to look at it thoroughly. Drew and Chris had looked briefly so gave an overview:
 - SPA just outside the Ince boundary but links with Ince so important. Wetland and wading birds mentioned -the Curlew is recorded in significant numbers on Ince marshes yet in decline elsewhere indicating how important the marshes are to wildlife. Retaining them is of International importance.
 - Key species are also mentioned as being noted within the parish e.g., Song thrushes, Barn owls and lizards -Tim questioned whether Sanctuary Housing site still had lizards or whether they had relocated due to disruption of building as the site may no longer be suitable.
 - In relation to this, Bare Brick House site is termed a **Mosaic area** within the document meaning it is a **High Value habitat** for wildlife. This raised the question as to whether we should remove our suggestion of allowing development there. However, it is still the only area which the Steering group could consider for development and it is the last piece of "green land" between Ince and Elton. This would need discussing further at the next Steering group meeting.

- There is frequent mention of undertaking “more in-depth study” on certain areas to ascertain whether areas are of higher value than the report suggest. This, however, would mean more financing and under the current grant there is no spare funding. It is something that the group felt could be done at a later stage through extra funding avenues. The question arose as to whether Peel would allow a further study on Bare Brick House land.
- The report mentions that if land were to be found to be of a higher value than anticipated then landowners may be compensated for not being allowed to develop the land.
- It mentions that Protos has created 2 habitat sites on Ince Park Ecological Mitigation areas and that maintenance of these is important. The group queried the level of maintenance that these sites receive.
- Mistle Thrush recorded which is likely to support bats
- Farming techniques are mentioned especially in relation to hedge cutting and buffer zones. It was suggested that hedges should not be cut as frequently as they are and that trees within the hedges were not flailed but allowed to grow into mature trees. Also, that trees should be added to hedges. Buffer zones (of rough grass) should be left alongside crop fields (2m from the centre of the hedge) to help bolster ecological connectivity. Planting more hedges would also help provide linear connectivity. This applies to ditches too which need maintaining correctly. Having a positive approach to farmers re planting was discussed as we need them to agree to actions suggested. It was mentioned that we already have an organic farm in the village and that farmers, in general, must abide by rules to claim Single Farm payments. Getting rid of hedges (as has happened in the past) would not be allowed now.

- It was recommended that the corridor network (Map 12 p 40) should be identified within the Neighbourhood Plan and that it should be protected from development.
- Grass should be cut after flowering plants have set seed.
- Non native bluebells should be eradicated and replaced with native ones. This raised the question of the vast amount of non- native bluebells on the Reservoir. It was suggested that this work could provide a project for the village community.
- More wildflower meadows could be planted as well as woodland corridors between existing ones to create a linear corridor. It was also suggested that the Forestry Commission be used for advice on species to use and where best to plant.

In general, what was known of the report was helpful to the Neighbourhood plan. The group agreed that the report should be an item for discussion at the next Steering group meeting.

5.Actions from previous meeting:

Consider the objectives and adjust accordingly

Tim read through the Vision and objectives to remind everyone of these. They were agreed as still appropriate. A further objective was suggested: ***To work with the local community and landowners to enhance the natural environment***

Contact Biodiversity officers to see if they can help in any way.

Tim agreed to contact them

Contact Mel Bellingham with regards to doing a Moth count (Summer)

Tim agreed to contact him.

6. What can the local community do to enhance biodiversity?

*It was mentioned that the Church group was already doing something to help within the churchyard; when the grass was being cut certain areas were being "left for Nature". It was agreed that John Phillips and Simon Eardley should be contacted regarding this work and informed of the N Plan group's work within the area of Biodiversity. Thanks, should be given for their support of biodiversity.

*The Parish Council could suggest leaving certain areas of the Parish field "for nature".

*The Reservoir could be used as a Community Project to enhance native plants.

7. Wish List for Habitat improvement

*Consider decreasing distances for wildlife to move from one area to another - examples given - Elton Lane (near Quinn Glass), land on the MSC bank near docking area, buffer zones along MSC where crops grown (although the pigs graze this off).

*Maintenance of Snipe haven needs mentioning at next Protos meeting (cycle paths are disappearing, bridlepath still overgrown, plastic covers for young trees are not correctly removed). Who is responsible for this work?

* Will the Lagoons be returned to nature or are there other plans for this area?

* Planting more hedges with native species

* Get Woodland Trust involved to research Ancient trees within the village

* Ask Wildlife Trust if they can do further study on Bare brick House land in relation to comments made in the CWT report.

8. Actions for next meeting

Action	Who	When
Contact Biodiversity officers to see if they can help in any way	Tim	Before next meeting
Contact Mel Bellingham regarding a moth count	Tim	Before next meeting
Contact John Phillips and Simon Eardley to pass on thanks and information about Biodiversity actions planned (reservoir work, Parish field buffer zones)	Andy	Before next meeting
PC to consider leaving a buffer zone before next cut (inform company)	PC	Discuss at next PC meeting in March
Reservoir project to be investigated (bluebells)	Tim	Before next meeting
Protos to be approached regarding maintenance of Snipe Haven	Tim Andy	At next Protos meeting
Get Woodland Trust involved to research Ancient trees within the village	Drew	To be approached before next meeting
Ask Wildlife Trust if they can do further study on Bare Brick	Drew to approach Andrea	Before next meeting

House land in relation to comments made in the CWT report.		
Report to be sent out to rest of NP group and asked to read in time for next Steering group meeting	Chris	18 th February

9. Date of next meeting : this was set for Tuesday ,March 16th at 7.00pm