

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT FORUM HELD ON TUESDAY, 19TH OCTOBER, 2021

MEMBERS: Councillors Mahmut Aksanoglu, Katherine Chibah (Associate Cabinet Member (Enfield West)) and Lindsay Rawlings

Officers: Ian Russell (Principal Engineer), Doug Wilkinson (Director of Environment and Operational Services), Koulla Panaretou (Mayoral Services Manager)

Also Attending: Sam Bentley-Toon (Thames 21), Denise Ghandi (Federation of Enfield Residents and Allied Associations), John West (The Enfield Society), Dave Cockle (Enfield Transport Users Group), Paul Hutchinson (Grange Park Conservation Area Study Group), Neil Paddon-Smith (Meadway Conservation Area Study Group), Dennis Stacey (Bush Hill Park Conservation Area study Group), Andrew Newman (Clay Hill Study Group), Robert Wilson (Hadley Wood Conservation Area Study Group)

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Cllr Katherine Chibah (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies for lateness were received from Cllr Mahmut Aksanoglu.

Apologies for absence were received from Sarah Cary (Executive Director - Place), Cllr Saray Karakus, Ann Bishop-Leggett (Federation of enfield Residents and Allied Associations), Juliet Barnett, Trent Park Conservation Committee).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest registered in respect of any items on the agenda.

3. AGREE MINUTES FROM THE ENVIRONMENT FORUM ON 27TH JULY 2021

The minutes of the previous meeting dated 27th July 2021 required some minor amendments and have been republished accordingly.

Matters Arising:

Attendees expressed their disappointment that the meeting to be held on 28th September was cancelled and apologies were given.

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Attendees at the previous meeting were disappointed that the format of the meeting was based on break out groups/sessions. The minutes broadly reflected discussions held within the groups.

Attendees

AGREED that:

1. Andrew Newman (Clay Hill Study Group) to clarify and put together some views collectively.
2. Thereafter, the Chair will report these back to the relevant Officers.
3. The Chair to speak to Sarah Cary with regard to an update on enforcement and chase Cllr Savva.

4. RESTORING ENFIELD'S RIVERS PROJECT

A presentation was received from Sam Bentley-Toon (Engagement Manager Thames 21) updating the Forum on the restorations of Enfield's Rivers Project.

The following information was highlighted:

1. Thames 21 are working in partnership with Enfield Council on restoring their key rivers, namely Turkey Brook, Salmons Brook, River Lea and Pymmes Brook.
2. Issues affecting Enfield's Rivers include pollution, litter, invasive species, highly modified watercourses and risk of flooding.
3. There are 9 wetlands in the borough, with their main aim being to store rainwater and avoid floods Working with Thames21 and involving volunteers helps to look after these features better"
4. River Action Days are run on Tuesdays, Thursdays and the last Sunday of each month and a variety of activities take place with volunteers, for example volunteers help to remove Himalayan Balsam and carry out river clean up sessions.
5. Wetland and bankside vegetation management takes place periodically by volunteers also.
6. Citizen Science Days take place, monitoring rivers and sampling pollutants etc. Weekly River Action days with Enfield Clubhouse also take place.

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7. Wild walks are available for those interested in wildlife. Different wildlife species support rivers in Enfield.
8. Nature prescribing - Work with health referral partners link people to projects provides multiple wellbeing benefits of volunteering to improve nature.
9. Partnering with local community groups and youth groups help provide inclusion.

In response the following comments were received:

1. Regarding to tree planting, it was noted that volunteers are hoping to start planting trees this season involving schools and the local community. Enfield Society can advertise.
2. Boats were suggested to collect duck weed instead of nets, but this was not deemed the best method. **ACTION: Ian Russell to speak to Marcus Harvey about possibly using boats.**
3. More information is needed to guide residents on the disposal of vehicle oil which has been seen in Pymmes Park Lake.

Information Boards will be installed in Albany Park to provide valuable information on how the river restoration and wetlands function and to help address concerns. It was noted that the seating and bins etc were going in first and the Boards would be the last items to be erected. Information can also be put on our Council website.

4. Pupil Referral Unit are not being used but other schemes in the youth service have been contacted and this needs to be followed up. **ACTION: Sam Bentley-Toon.**
5. Advertising takes place through the Enfield Social Newsletter and Andrea De Lucy will assist with advertising posters on the Council's website and target specific groups. Ward Councillors are notified of bigger events going on in the Borough and this can be extended to the smaller events also.
6. Looking at the overall structure of the watercourses, do Enfield create wetlands to make the Borough more attractive or manage water going into the River Lea? Does Enfield Council have a future strategy to manage where water is going to?

In response, much work is being done with Enfield Council. Monies are being received from the Environment Agency and DEFRA through the green challenge recovery fund and a one-year project through the national lottery.

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In line with the London and Local Plan, all developments have sustainable drainage. If all pipes are covered in concrete, this can make pollution worse - changes in hydrology of the urban area will significantly reduce Enfield's flood risk for the future. The 2016 Local Flood Strategy identifies national floodwork and this is being updated within the next 2 years but will not change significantly.

Enfield Council have an in-house engineering team and a high level of knowledge is available, although no water scientists and the best outcome for these projects is to continue the work with Thames21 who have the expertise to deliver community engagement work.

Submitting bids jointly has proved more successful and this helps to keep the 10 year + relationship going.

7. Sustainable drainage on future accommodation units was discussed. This is already in Enfield's local planning policy i.e. Local Plan
8. Within the Local Plan, Enfield Council leads on construction and delivery by using sustainable draining systems (SuDS) in line with planning policy and developers should also be introducing green roofs etc to help with flooding, biodiversity and making places nice to live.
9. New farming rules have come in from the Environment Agency and no farming is permitted to the edge of the rivers.
10. Many young trees were planted in Montagu Recreation Ground a few years ago. Unfortunately, many of these trees were cut down by mistake and schools have since organised tree planting projects to restore planting.
11. Beavers are planned to be reintroduced into the Borough from Scotland - the first sites in London for over 400 years. They will be in an enclosure and will be used as nature's best way to create a wetland. Based in Forty Hall Estate on the north side of Forty Hall and Natural England will monitor progress with the help of historic maps to maintain historic landscapes.
12. With a high level of resource present at the moment - enthusiastic volunteers will be trained well alongside the parks department.

5. NEW RIVER LOOP

The Forum received a presentation from Ian Russell, Principal Engineer, updating the panel on work undertaken on the New River Loop.

The following information was highlighted:

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1. The New River Loop was completed in 1613 and the New river remains a vital part of London's water network, providing clean water to drink. Water is sent to three of Thames Water's large storage reservoirs, The King George, Hornsey and Stoke Newington to be treated. It then provides 8% of London's water supply.
2. Major improvement works were carried out in early 2000s funded by the Lottery Heritage fund.
3. Problems incurred by the New River Loop include; lack of water due to dry sunny periods, pollution, algal blooms and dead fish.
4. Actions to be taken include:
 - upgrading pumps and investigating opportunities to divert rainfall (Chase Green Wetlands).
 - chalk treatment will help break down organic silt alongside silt removal in selected areas
 - Improve footpaths and revetments and provide signage.

A management plan has been sent to Councillors to provide feedback. Once consultations received, the information will be publicised.

In response, the following comments were received:

1. Thames Water is constantly doing work on their assets. They have agreed to top up the water supply in the loop subject to availability. This will help to alleviate problems with dead fish and algae.
2. Good communications between the Council and Thames Water is held, they will be updating their management plan which needs to be a shared document to demonstrate their commitment to collaborative working.
3. Any misconnections from bad plumbing, resulting in excess household wastewater coming into the river should be reported. Surveys are conducted and reported back to Thames Water. Prosecutions by the Council can be a protracted process but are sometimes successful.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their informative presentation.

6. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS AND NOTE UPDATED WORK PROGRAMME

The updated work programme was agreed.

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 24th November 2021.

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