

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 5 OCTOBER 2022

Present

Chairman: Cllr R. Smith

Members: Cllr B. Bawden, Cllr P. May, Cllr D. Sarson

Officers: M. Adamson-Drage (operations manager), A. Mullins (support services manager)

Absent: Cllr G. Turner

Guests: V. Elcoate (River Lym Monitoring Group), J. Flory (Environment Agency), Jacqui Besley (Round Britain eRib), Harry Besley (Round Britain eRib)

22/12/ENV Public Forum

There were no members of the public who wished to speak.

22/13/ENV Apologies

Cllr J. Broom – illness
Cllr B. Larcombe – illness
Cllr D. Ruffle – holiday
Cllr G. Stammers – holiday

22/14/ENV Minutes

Cllr B. Bawden requested an amendment to minute number 22/09/ENV as Cllr G. Stammers had commented that the gardeners would benefit from carbon literacy training due to the biodiversity element; however, the training dealt with the carbon crisis, not biodiversity. It was agreed 'due to the biodiversity element' would be removed from the minutes.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, the minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2022, with the above amendment, were **ADOPTED**.

22/15/ENV Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

22/16/ENV Dispensations

There were none.

Carbon literate organisation accreditation

Cllr D. Sarson clarified that the Human Resources Committee hadn't yet considered ways of integrating Carbon Literacy into the performance management and assessment systems of the organisation.

The operations manager said it wasn't clear what was required of the council to meet the silver level of accreditation for the organisation in this respect so he had contacted the Carbon Literacy organisation to get more of a steer as to what it wanted, so that more guidance could be given to the Human Resources Committee.

River Lym project monitoring

Cllr P. May asked if a response had been received to the council's letter to Chris Loder MP regarding water quality on the River Lym.

The operations manager said a response had been received and the MP said he was championing the issue on the council's behalf. He said he would forward the response to members.

Climate change director

Cllr R. Smith asked how Dorset Council's (DC) new climate director was getting on and when the council might be able to meet him.

Cllr B. Bawden said he was in post but was still physically based in Cornwall. Given he had come from Cornwall Council, DC was adopting a similar approach and using the decision wheel used at Cornwall Council. She said this was very promising as DC would be integrating the climate and ecological emergency plan much more with the local plan and every decision had to take into consideration the climate and ecological impact.

22/18/ENV Update Report

Investment in Nature

Cllr D. Sarson suggested the River Lym monitoring group might want to consider applying for a grant.

Cllr R. Smith agreed there might be some local businesses and groups that would want to apply. He asked the operations manager to obtain more information about how they would apply.

Litter Free Sustainable Awards

Cllr R. Smith asked whether the council could get its leaseholders involved with the award.

The operations manager said they could be invited to get involved.

V. Elcoate from the River Lym monitoring group was invited to present her report. She said a Freedom of Information request to the Environment Agency (EA) had provided some shocking data on the river; the agency was monitoring water quality between May and September four times a month and it showed high levels of bacterial contamination in both wet and dry weather and the readings were very high all the time. The EA had identified a number of contaminated surface water discharges and were working with South West Water (SWW) to resolve this.

V. Elcoate said the other issue was Front Beach, a designated bathing beach, so it was monitored every week between May and September and there had been two incidents of bacterial contamination; as a result, the EA said the water quality at the beach was at risk of being downgraded from 'good' to 'sufficient'. Because it was a threat to businesses, tourism and the reputation of the town, she suggested the council asked for an urgent meeting with the EA and SWW to discuss this and determine their action plan for sorting it out.

V. Elcoate said they had learned from the EA there were two possible causes for the issues at the beach. One was a sewer running along Marine Parade, as there had been a problem in the past which had caused similar pollution and it might have reoccurred. The other was a possible failure of the outfall pipe on Monmouth Beach as people had reported seeing sewage coming out of the manhole.

With regards to the river, V. Elcoate said there had been a meeting of residents and some groups the previous night and there was support for forming a River Lym action group. She said the meeting discussed the seven-year gap in monitoring, as it was last monitored in 2015 and was monitored again in summer 2022, presumably because there were so many complaints about the water quality and the smell. She said they assumed monitoring stopped in 2015 because Church Cliff Beach was de-designated as a bathing beach, which indicated that having a bathing beach drove resources being put into cleaning up pollution.

V. Elcoate said it would be helpful for the EA's monitoring of the river to continue through the winter so there was more data available. She said they had met SWW and EA to walk the river and look at outfalls and they had taken action to deal with it. There did seem to be a slight improvement but they wouldn't know if it was working unless the monitoring continued.

V. Elcoate said SWW would not be publishing the results of its additional monitoring of Front Beach until next year and under the current circumstances, she suggested the town council could write to SWW to ask for more prompt release of this data.

J. Flory of the Environment Agency was invited to give a presentation on water quality.

J. Flory said sampling took place between May and September each year, with 20 samples taken per season. He said the beach controller was responsible for putting forward to Defra beaches for designation and the EA was then responsible for monitoring the beaches. He explained what the EA sampled and the standards that were given – Excellent, Good, Sufficient or Poor. He explained the classification history for Lyme Regis bathing waters and said it looked like the results for Front Beach would be 'Good' for this year and these results would be confirmed in November. He also explained the process for publicising pollution risk forecasts.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** that the town council asks for an urgent meeting with the Environment Agency, South West Water and Dorset Council to discuss how to prevent Front Beach's bathing waters from being at risk of being downgraded from 'Good' to 'Sufficient'.

J. Flory said he could provide contact details for the relevant person at SWW to attend any meeting.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to write to South West Water asking them to release the data on the bathing water investigation carried out on Front Beach between May and September before Christmas.

It was proposed by Cllr P. May to ask the Environment Agency to continue monitoring the River Lym beyond September to determine if solutions put in place by South West Water to improve water quality have been successful.

J. Flory said this request would come to him and it would be considered in relation to the resources the EA had. He said the water quality wasn't part of the decision for Defra in designating a beach; it was about usage, safety and access. He said if the town council was interested in re-designating Church Cliff Beach as a bathing beach or designating another beach, that would give the EA the rationale and he could tie up the funding and sampling time to do that.

Cllr P. May withdrew his earlier motion and proposed an amended motion.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** that the council considers furthering the re-designation of Church Cliff Beach as a bathing beach so further monitoring resources of the River Lym can be deployed.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr R. Smith, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to ask the Environment Agency to monitor the River Lym in the winter so it can be determined if the actions South West Water have taken are having any effect on the water quality.

22/20/ENV eRIB Round Britain 2023

The chairman invited J. Besley and H. Besley to give a presentation about the Round Britain eRib challenge. They explained how they were attempting to set two world records in summer 2023 for the fastest circumnavigation of Great Britain by electric boat and H. Besley as the youngest skipper to circumnavigate Great Britain by powerboat.

They set out their missions for the challenge, the challenge objectives and how organisations like the town council could get involved. J. Besley said they would like the support of the council and there were a number of ways it could do this.

Cllr B. Bawden asked what would be involved in getting the charging infrastructure for charging electric boats installed in Lyme Regis and how much this would cost.

J. Besley said to do it permanently and properly it would be part of the infrastructure upgrade to the Cobb. She said once there was three-phase supply at the end of the

Cobb, charging infrastructure could be installed there. However, for their challenge, the harbourmaster was going to install a charging pillar outside his office.

Cllr B. Bawden said Western Power Distribution had repeatedly said there wasn't enough of an electricity supply in Lyme Regis and asked how that would affect the challenge.

J. Besley said the supply they needed was already in place at the harbourmaster's office so no further connections were needed.

The operations manager reminded members the substation at Monmouth Beach was also being upgraded by Western Power Distribution so this might help with any future installation of charging infrastructure.

J. Besley said they expected to be in Lyme Regis on 1 June 2023 to do range trials and the challenge would take place in the summer when there was a three to four week still period of weather.

Proposed by Cllr R. Smith and seconded by Cllr B. Bawden, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve Gold Level sponsorship at £5,000 for the Round Britain eRib, to be paid from the budget for environmental purposes.

22/21/ENV Hedgehogs R Us Highway Project

Cllr P. May suggested some hedgehog highway surrounds could be offered to Uplyme Parish Council to purchase, as well as Charmouth Parish Council.

Members agreed the surrounds should be given free to Lyme Regis residents.

Proposed by Cllr R. Smith and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to purchase a box of 50 hedgehog surrounds at £150, to sell 10 surrounds at £30 to Charmouth Parish Council, to offer to sell a quantity to Uplyme Parish Council, and to give the surrounds to Lyme Regis residents free-of-charge.

22/22/ENV Mares Tail Treatment

Cllr R. Smith said mares tail was an indigenous plant so it wasn't the case that the gardeners were trying to tackle a non-native plant. He was concerned using glyphosate in this instance was a slippery slope to using it on other plants.

The operations manager said the gardening team felt it was a particularly difficult issue and nothing else would touch it, although they could try some alternatives before considering glyphosate again.

Cllr P. May said there was an alternative that claimed to be able to tackle mares tail and as the council did agree to stop using glyphosate where possible, members shouldn't forget that.

Proposed by Cllr R. Smith and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to trial a non-glyphosate product to treat mares tail and if this fails, to allow limited use of glyphosate.

22/23/ENV School Tree Planting Project

The operations manager said he believed everyone would like to support this project but space for planting trees in Lyme Regis was limited. He said the only possible area he could suggest was Anning Road playing field.

Cllr P. May said the council didn't want to upset residents living nearby so it would have to be done sensitively, although he felt the council should be encouraging schoolchildren in this initiative.

The operations manager said he could come back to the next meeting with more information about where it might be possible to plant trees on the playing field.

Proposed by Cllr D. Sarson and seconded by Cllr P. May, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to ask officers to investigate whether there might be space at Anning Road playing field to plant trees as part of the School Tree Planting Project.

The meeting closed at 8.56pm.