

**SOUTH EAST SHEFFIELD COUNTRYSIDE AND ECO ADVISORY GROUP MEETING
ON WEDNESDAY JANUARY 25TH 2012, 1.30PM AT REIGNHEAD PRIMARY SCHOOL
(MEETING HELD IN MOBILE CLASSROOM THAT CAN BE ACCESSED OFF GRANGE
ROAD BEIGHTON, NEAR BLACK AND WHITE BOLLARDS IN ROAD, ENTER SCHOOL
SITE VIA BACK GATE, ECO ADVISORY MEETING WILL BE LABELLED FROM THIS
POINT)**

AGENDA

- 1. Apologies for Absence.**
- 2. Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 28th September 2011.**
- 3. Matters Arising.**
- 4. Presentation on recent Large Scale Environmental Projects in South East Sheffield involving Sheffield Landscape Trust and the Local Community.**
- 5. Climate Change and Eco Schools Scheme Update.**
- 6. Shire Brook Conservation Group Report.**
- 7. Friends of Shirtcliffe Report.**
- 8. Moss Valley Wildlife Group Report.**
- 9. Crystal Peaks Centre Eco Update.**
- 10. Owlthorpe Heritage and Nature Trail Update.**
- 11. South East Area Assembly Update.**
- 12. Sheffield Biodiversity Action Plan Update.**
- 13. Any other Business.**
- 14. Date of next Meeting.**

Please contact Sally Pereira (Landscape Planning Officer)

For any further details Tel: 2735030

MINUTES OF SOUTH-EAST SHEFFIELD COUNTRYSIDE AND ECO ADVISORY GROUP

MEETING HELD ON 28th SEPTEMBER 2011

PRESENT:

Steve Byers:	Sustainable Development, Sheffield City Council (Chair)
Sally Pereira:	Environmental Planning, Sheffield City Council
Councillor Chris Rosling Josephs:	Elected member Beighton Ward
Peter Wolstenholme:	Shire Brook Conservation Group/Woodhouse Washlands
Debbie Matthews:	Reignhead Primary School
Kevin Hill:	Sheffield Landscape Trust/ Shire Brook Conservation Group
Roger Marsh:	Owlthorpe Community Forum
Mark Kirby:	Friends of Heathlands Park
Sam Wall:	Woodhouse resident
Richard Pearson:	Shire Brook Conservation Group/Friends of Shirtcliffe
Brian Armstrong:	Biodiversity Section, Sheffield City Council
Don Ellks:	Beighton Environment Group
Adrian Burke:	Sheffield Landscape Trust
Derek Bateson:	Sorby Natural History Society
Alan Webber:	Halfway resident
Lee Greenwood:	Crystal Peaks Centre
Pat Howells:	Friends of Shirtcliffe
Mike Howells:	Friends of Shirtcliffe
Mick Fellows:	Area Assembly
Chris Wilson:	Environmental Protection Service, Sheffield City Council
Ed Thatcher:	Parks and Countryside, Sheffield City Council

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Councillor Ian Saunders:	Elected Member Beighton Ward
Councillor Bryan Lodge:	Elected Member Birley Ward
Councillor Karen Mc Gowan:	Elected Member Birley Ward
Councillor David Barker:	Elected Member Mosborough Ward
Councillor Isobel Bowler:	Elected Member Mosborough Ward
Councillor Helen Mirfin-Bourkouris:	Elected Member Beighton Ward
Mike Peat:	Westfield resident
Liz Barraclough:	South Yorkshire Badger Group/Moss Valley Wildlife Group
Patricia Ibbotson:	Shire Brook Valley/Moss Valley
Ian Ibbotson:	Shire Brook Valley/Moss Valley
Paul Garland:	Friends of Shirtcliffe
Celia Jackson:	Moss Valley Wildlife Group
Terry Jackson:	Moss Valley Wildlife Group
Malcolm Hill:	Owlthorpe Community Forum

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY MAY 25th 2011

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Application for Listing of historic Stone Stiles at Owlthorpe and Mosborough

Celia Jackson previously reported that following her submission of evidence, City Council officers and the South East Area Assembly all supported and had recently agreed the local listing of the 3 way Stone Stile at Owlthorpe, and also 2 other historic stone stiles in the Moss Valley. Sally Pereira updated that South East Sheffield had been the first Assembly Area to agree local listing and the process was still ongoing in some other areas. When local listing had been completed throughout Sheffield it is intended that this information will be available on the City Council website.

Action: Conservation Section

3.2 Recent Ecological Records and Sheffield Bio-blitz 2012

Roger Marsh reported following on from flora and fauna surveys carried out last year, and also linked to the assessment of the impact of traditional grazing that was reintroduced at Owlthorpe in July 2010, further ecological survey work was currently being carried out in the Owlthorpe area, and new species were being found such as a colony of “tree bees” a first record for Sheffield.

Action: Owlthorpe Community Forum/ Environmental Planning/Ecology Unit

It was also reported that the recent “bio-biltz” at Shire Brook Valley had been very successful, with over 550 species records to date including 230 new records. Derek Bateson updated that it was anticipated that the total for the Shire Brook Valley may go over 600 species when all the information gathered had been correlated.

Sally Pereira reported that in 2012 under the co-ordination of Sorby Natural History Society there was to be a special 48 hour Bio- blitz in Sheffield starting 3pm on Thursday 17th May and running continuously until 3pm on Saturday 19th May. It was hoped that schools and local communities would all get involved and help increase the ecological data base for Sheffield. Species lists and images of anything unidentified with location can be sent through to Western Park Museum. It was noted it was not always possible to identify species from photographs and it was suggested photos from different angles could aid identification.

Action: Sorby Natural History Society/ Ecology Unit/ Local Communities and Schools

3.3 Enhancement of Christmas tree site, Beighton

Following a request for help from the Beighton Environment Group to achieve a wildflower meadow which required low level management, a low maintenance butterfly and bee attractive seed mix was sown in spring by Sheffield Landscape Trust and Beighton Environment Group agreed to take responsibility for managing the new meadow. Don Ellks indicated it was hoped the site would be cut and raked next month.

Action: Beighton Environment Group

3.4 Community Groups’ Yorkshire in Bloom success in 2011

It was noted that Beighton Environment Group had entered Beighton Orchard in Yorkshire in Bloom under a new category of “Neighbourhood” Don Ellks reported that the judges had been very impressed and had described the project as “thriving”.

Roger Marsh, Chair of Owlthorpe Community Forum was also pleased to report that Owlthorpe had also done well in Yorkshire in Bloom, in 2010 Owlthorpe had been awarded a Silver Award in the Urban Communities category, and this year they had progressed to a Silver Gilt Award. In addition Roger had been given a special award in recognition of his outstanding service to the community. Roger thanked Environmental Planning and Sheffield Landscape Trust and the Area Assembly for all their invaluable support in this success story and accepted the Award on behalf of Owlthorpe Community Forum.

4. PRESENTATION ON RECENT LARGE SCALE ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS IN SOUTH EAST SHEFFIELD COORDINATED BY ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING INVOLVING SHEFFIELD LANDSCAPE TRUST AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.

Sally Pereira handed out the current list of forthcoming Sheffield Landscape Trust public Eco Events and Activities in South East Sheffield from October onwards. All of this work is part funded via the Area Assembly "Promoting Eco Action and increasing Community Pride" initiative coordinated by Environmental Planning. Thanks to Peter Wolstenholmes' outstanding photographic record of recent positive environmental action, Sally gave a comprehensive update of the current large scale environmental improvements taking place at various sites including, Halfway, Woodhouse, Owlthorpe, Holbrook, and Beighton, involving many local community volunteers, school children, businesses etc... and staff from Sheffield Landscape Trust.

5. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ECO SCHOOLS SCHEME UPDATE

Steve Byers reported that the most comprehensive regional review to date had recently been completed on the impact of climate change on Sheffield in relation to Council Services, landscape etc. The City Council was also reviewing all its Environmental policies and producing a new Corporate Plan. New initiatives in relation to reducing Sheffield carbon footprint included the "solar city" initiative, and the biomass power station at Tinsley.

Steve updated that the Sheffield Eco Schools Scheme project continued to progress very positively, in 2004 there were no schools in Sheffield registered with this internationally recognised scheme, and now 140 schools are registered with the scheme and over 100 have achieved Awards, and 10% of Sheffield schools have achieved the top Green Flag Award. Concern was raised about the future of funding for the Eco Schools project, but Councillor Rosling - Josephs indicated that the Cabinet had agreed to top slice the Climate Change fund to provide additional funding support needed for the Eco Schools Project in 2011/12.

It was also noted that the National Eco Schools Show, the biggest school event in the country, was to be held at the Arena in Sheffield in June 2012.

Debbie Matthews updated that it had been recently confirmed that the solar panels at Reignhead School would qualify for feed in tariff payment and that this money would go towards eco community benefit and part fund the public Beighton Orchard Apple Day. Reignhead School were providing advice to other schools in Sheffield who were also interested in getting solar panels. 21 Sheffield schools had recently applied for funding for solar panels as part of a National Eco Schools Scheme initiative.

Action: All to note.

6. SHIRE BROOK CONSERVATION GROUP REPORT.

Kevin Hill reported that the Shire Brook Conservation Group volunteers continued to carry out a wide variety of regular conservation work including tree guard removal from Linley Bank Meadows and reuse on recent hedge planting at Beighton Road, the recycling of old post and rail fencing into the creation of compost bins, wildflower seed collection from Sally Clarkes Meadow e.g. betony and knapweed to the new meadow near Carr Forge, ragwort removal from Sally Clark's and Rainbow Meadow, balsam removal at Normanton Tip and Nether Wheel, path clearance work in the Valley and the continued support of Woodhouse School garden. The Group were thanked for all their hard work and for sharing their time and expertise to assist other local conservation groups.

7. FRIENDS OF SHIRTCLIFFE REPORT.

Pat Howells reported recent environmental work had included the repair of the Centenary Wall by John Gilpins team and path clearance work by local volunteers. 24 people attended a bat walk where whiskered and pipistrelle bats were recorded.

Concern was expressed about recent fire damage in the valley and concern for the safety of properties that border the Valley. Pat reported that the fires started in early summer and continued to the end of the school holidays. On one occasion 3 young boys were seen near a

fire during school time and had run off when challenged. Some of the fires had been extensive and resulted in the loss of recently planted trees and included areas where harvest mice and butterflies and moths had been recorded. The Friends of Shirtcliffe were working closely with the police and fire brigade and Handsworth Community Forum. The police were now patrolling the area and working in conjunction with the air operations unit. The Group were encouraging property owners that lie next to the Valley to keep hedges clear of clippings, not to dump garden waste next to the boundary and to create a fire break where feasible and to remain vigilant at all times and report any suspicious activities to the police..

Action: All to note and remain vigilant

The Group were thanked for their report and hard work.

8. MOSS VALLEY WILDLIFE GROUP REPORT

A written report from Celia Jackson secretary for the Moss Valley wildlife Group was read out at the meeting. Recent activities by the Group had included attending the Heathlands Park official open day in July , a bat survey in September where Common and Soprano Pipistrelle, Whiskered and Brown Long Eared Bats were all recorded. It was also reported that sadly Red Signal Crayfish were rapidly colonising the Moss Brook. During the third year of Himalayan balsam pulling 17 days of pulling had taken place attended by 69 volunteers resulting in around 140 one ton rubble bags being filled with balsam, sincere thanks were expressed to all volunteers that had contributed. The results of this concerted campaign were very encouraging it was estimated at Plumbley Hall Farm there had been a reduction of 80% in balsam growth compared to 2010, within the SSI known as Sheffield Marsh there was a 70% reduction in balsam compared to 2010 and in the ditch area adjacent to Lady Bank Wood a 50% reduction in balsam compared to 2010.

Action: All to note.

A comprehensive current species list for the Moss Valley covering for example mammal, birds, invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians, fish, flora had been compiled by the group

9. CRYSTAL PEAKS CENTRE ECO UPDATE

Lee Greenwood was pleased to report that in the Business category of Yorkshire in Bloom the Crystal Peaks Centre had been awarded a Gold Award. Lee thanked all those who had contributed to the environmental improvements made to the centre. The bird boxes made by local schools with the help of Sheffield Landscape Trust and Owlthorpe Community Forum that are widely distributed around the site would be checked in the autumn to see if any had been used, an update was promised for the next meeting. Other recent eco improvements had included the creation of a vertical garden, wildflower seeding, and the development of a stumpery. Lee reported that 30lb of honey had been harvested this year from the bee hives and it was hoped that the hives could be expanded in 2012. It was also proposed to put a greenhouse on the roof in the future. A rare bee orchid was found on site and relocated from its very vulnerable position, to the top of the north bank.

It was suggested that in the light of all these positive changes that Lee should run a public event in Sheffield Environment Weeks providing a guided tour of all aspects of eco improvements at Crystal Peaks.

Action: Lee Greenwood

If local groups needed financial support they should contact Lee.

Action: All to note.

10. SOUTH EAST ASSEMBLY UPDATE

Mick Fellowes indicated that the Climate Change grant would again be available in the near future. As part of a new initiative community information screens were being introduced by the Area Assembly, if anyone wanted to use this facility to promote their group or events then link with Mick Fellowes. The next South East Community Assembly meeting was scheduled to take place on 6th October in the Hall at Reignhead School at 7pm.

Action: All to note.

11. BEIGHTON MARSH WATER POLLUTION MONITORING UPDATE

Chris Wilson Land Quality Officer for Sheffield City Council summarised the findings of a recent ecological survey and chemical analysis of the water quality at Beighton Marsh Local Nature Reserve, following concern raised about water pollution in 2010, and which continued into early 2011, resulting in the loss of most of the pond life in the boardwalk pond including growth of oxygenating weed. The recent pond survey commissioned by the City Council seemed to indicate that during drier conditions the eco - system of Beighton Marsh was being knocked back as a result of ground water contamination from Beighton Tip with high levels of for example nitrogen in the form of Ammonia being recorded and then associated low levels of oxygen in the water reducing the biodiversity value of the Nature Reserve. However, results also indicated that the Marsh was acting as a natural buffer and the recent survey demonstrated that the impact of contamination reduced with the distance away from the inlet near the boardwalk, and that the Marsh had seemed to recover over the summer following increased rainfall after the very dry spring. Chris indicated that the additional development of a new reed bed upstream from the boardwalk was being considered, in the area previously sown with wildflowers to try and reduce the contamination issue, but Chris was also interested in receiving any other suggestions from the local community or information on the Marsh. Chris indicated that his water quality analysis of the Marsh would continue.

At Linley Banks Meadows (the former Beighton Tip site) Chris was also involved in monitoring the methane levels and looking at how to manage the site safely and allow public access.

Action: All to note

12. SHEFFIELD DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK UPDATE

A written update from Gary Dickson in Forward and Area Planning was read out at the meeting. The update included that the City Council may be consulting on additional sites in the new year, Cabinet approval is likely to be in May/June 2012 and formal representations would be in September or October 2012 followed by submission with any amendments to the Secretary of State. Public hearings would be around Easter 2013 with the Inspectors recommendations by the end of 2013 with formal adoption in 2014. A review of the SDF Core Strategy, approved in 2009 will commence prior to the adoption of the City Policies, Sites and Proposals Map.

Roger Marsh expressed concern that it appeared that the Government was changing Planning Policy in favour of housing developers and that greenfield sites in Beighton, Mosborough and Woodhouse could be vulnerable. Roger requested clarity over the consultation process for any major changes and reassurance that projects that the community had worked on would be safe in the future. Councillor Rosling - Josephs responded that more homes would need to be built in the future, but that Green Belt areas, green open space and areas that the community have worked on would be protected. At present Councillor Rosling- Josephs felt that more clarity was needed from Parliament as the Localism Bill contradicted the potential changes to Planning Policy, those concerned were encouraged to express their views to their local MP.

Action: All to note.

It was requested that Gary Dickson attend the next Eco Advisory meeting.

Action: Sally Pereira

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

13.1 WOODHOUSE WASHLANDS LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

It was reported that there were 30 English Longhorn including calves currently grazing Woodhouse Washlands at present.

13.2 COMMUNITY FORESTRY SECTION UPDATE

Ed Thatcher is currently replacing Leonie Kapadia whilst she is on sabbatical. Current tree planting projects planned in the South East include at Beighton, Waterthorpe and Handsworth. Any further ideas email to edward.thatcher@sheffield.gov.uk or tel 07816596228

Action:All to note.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING.

Wednesday, 25th January 2012 1.30pm- 3.30pm at Reignhead Primary School, Beighton, Sheffield. Access via Grange Road side entrance to school. Items for agenda welcomed to Chair 1 month in advance of meeting- Tel 2734641 or e-mail steve.byers@sheffield.gov.uk