



Minutes of the Environmental Focus Group Meeting held on 23rd April 2009, 8.00pm, at the URC Hall, Twyford

Present: David Bounds (ex Ramblers & Footpaths secretary), Stephen Lloyd (FORWOOD coordinator), John Illenden (Charvil Parish Councillor, Footpaths secretary for Wargrave), Gerry Wise (Ramblers Association, Footpaths representative for Twyford & Ruscombe), Gavin Robinson (FORWOOD), Audrey Curtis (Local History Society), Denise Wilkins (Local History Society), Bobbie Crickmore (Local History Society), Sue Goddard (TVP), Kathy Peck (TVP).

Apologies: Diane Thirtle (Twyford & Ruscombe Horticultural Association)

Overview

Sue Goddard welcomed those present and gave a brief introduction covering progress on the Parish Plan thus far and the aims and objectives of this focus group.

Suggestions and points arising from the general discussion that followed:

- The style in Stanlake Meadow needs to be rebuilt or modified (mounting block or squeeze-style?) as there is a big drop on one side and it does not meet current standards for styles.
- The Broadwater is Twyford's water way. We could start a group along the same lines as Wokingham's 'Friends of the Embrook' to tidy up the Broadwater with the aim of creating habitats for wildlife such as water voles or the Loddon Lilly. We would need to check ownership of the land either side of the Broadwater. The section that runs through the bottom of the Millennium Garden is an excellent example of an area that can be improved for the community.
- There are plans for the Charvil lakes to become part a WBC Country Park but there are issues regarding fishing rights as some of the lakes have been sold off to fishing groups although there are still several public rights of way crossing that area.
- Can we re-instate the old bridge (now closed due to health & safety) that crosses from the nature reserve into Charvil Meadows?
- We need a major footpath plan linking Twyford Parish with all the surrounding parishes.
- It would be good to create a car park and access point for Twyford residents to get into the Charvil country park between White Bridge and the car repair people.
- The Parish Council could nominate a member to be a Biodiversity champion and attend the Biodiversity meetings at Dinton Pastures.
- Do Twyford Parish Council have a 10 or 20 year plan for all their green areas? This would ensure continuity of care for these areas as councillors leave and are replaced. For example, the newly layered hedge along Stanlake Meadow needs to be manually trimmed every two years to allow fruiting and support the wildlife. If it is mechanically flailed it will undo all the good work that has been done. Thought needs to be given to the location of any new trees planted beside the hedge.
- Although polytunnels are changing the agricultural landscape, the farmers need our support if they are to compete with imports from overseas.
- Is there any way of encouraging residents and developers of properties along the Wargrave Road to keep their hedges? There is a worrying trend of hedges being dug up and replaced with fences which is changing the whole character of the road.
- Twyford has character but no vitality (built Environment EN1). The disproportionate number of restaurants and Estate Agents encourage people from outside the area to come to the village,

particularly for a meal out in the evenings, but there is nothing to encourage residents into the village during the day. A well-stocked hardware shop for example would be a welcome addition.

- White gate-posts or flower beds with daffodils were suggested as ways of marking the point of entry to Twyford when entering the village by road. Another suggestion was the planting of boundary trees – Ruscombe has boundary oaks located around the parish borders.
- Aircraft noise remains an issue - both from Heathrow and from smaller leisure aircraft.
- The local History Society have a video which could be converted to DVD or audio CD. They also have a wealth of archive material that would make a lovely display if a suitable space could be found. They produce an annual journal that could be made available for sale; back issues are also available on DVD.
- If Twyford had a better website then environmental links or old photos could be better accessed.
- We could produce a plate or a tea-towel with buildings of local interest and sell it at the Christmas Fayre or through Newburys.
- If we produce a list of 'buildings of traditional local character' i.e. buildings that do not meet the criteria to become a listed building but are still considered to be of local historical interest, then Harold Saunders (conservation officer at WBC) will look into getting the list accepted.
- Various uses of the old Polehampton School building were discussed. The internal layout of the building is unsuited to becoming a library, various representatives from WBC have visited to check it out as a possible location but it has been discounted as a possibility.
- The awkward layout of the off-set cross roads in the centre of the village and the 1960's shops were also discussed. In an ideal world these shops would face the other way to form a pedestrianised central square, surrounded by shops with the roads going around the outside.
- Gaps in the network of footpaths were discussed e.g. from Mallard Close to the bottom of Broad Hinton.
- It was agreed that we need to produce a map. On one side a large scale map showing walks across the area between Castle End and Dinton Pastures. On the other side a smaller scale road map of Twyford showing alley ways and footpaths to emphasise accessibility by foot or bike. Not only will this help parents who would rather walk their children to school, the map could also pinpoint buildings of historical interest, linking up with the booklet published by the Local History Society. Another source of information – a book entitled 'The Old Road to Bath' – was suggested as a point of reference as it has a big section on Twyford.
- The name Twyford comes from 'two fords', however many residents are probably unaware of where these two fords are. Could we make a feature of this somehow?

General discussion ended with a request for volunteers to join a working group - to sort through and prioritise the action points resulting from this focus group and the questionnaire responses.

The meeting closed at 10pm with thanks expressed to all those who attended.