

Climate Change Forum

Minutes

2nd July 2024, 7.30 pm at Gardiner Memorial Hall, Burwell

Present: Clive Leach (Chair), Liz swift, Michael Swift, Geraldine Tate, Jim Perry, Lea Dodds, Paul Webb, Nicola Hallows (Wild Burwell), Martin O'Leary (Spring Close Management Group) Alima Adams (Burwell Environment Group - BEG) and Nicole Drath (BEG Website Developer).

Clive Leach started the meeting by explaining that as Yvonne Rix is retiring from the role of Parish Clerk at the end of July, this would be her last Climate Forum meeting and he thanked her for everything that she has done for the group. He then introduced Nicole Drath who is compiling the website on behalf of BEG.

1. Apologies for absence

Ian Woodroofe.

2. Approval of the minutes of 23rd April 2024

It was noted that Wild Burwell has its own website and is now unlikely to use the BEG Website. The minutes were approved and signed by the Chair.

3. Updates from previous meeting

The Chair explained to the forum that time had not allowed for much community engagement. He continued by reporting that the Greener Together Day had been a good opportunity to liaise with others involved in climate change matters. Emma Danielsson from ECDC would like to come along to the next Climate Change Forum. Paul Webb to organise this. Liz Swift stated that it is important for the forum to work with the District Council. Clive Leach reported that he has now registered with Cambridgeshire County Council for the next round of funding for EV charging points.

Martin O'Leary suggested to the forum that with more people interested in climate change, if the Climate Change Forum should be open to the public. It was noted that if this was to happen then Council would need to approve the change. It was also suggested if more people were involved in the group, then should a major emergency arise, it would be easier to get together more volunteers to assist. Paul Webb explained that it is the intention of ECDC to hold an Earth meeting in Burwell in the autumn and if this is successful, although the initial intention is for Earth meetings to move around the district, there is no reason why Burwell could not set up their own regular meetings. Paul Webb raised concerns about members of the public attending meetings as this could end up setting a precedent for other groups and also restrict the ability of being able to have full discussions. Michael Swift felt that more communication with the public about climate change is needed with specialist meetings being held and more education. He noted that the Council does not have the staff or money to sustain the ideal level of communications. Liz Swift reminded the forum of the public meetings that BEG had held previously, with speakers and on different subjects and that more of this is needed. Paul Webb raised concern that there is confusion over the roles that the Climate Change Forum and the Burwell Environment Group have. Jim Perry informed the group that recommendations are made by working groups and that these recommendations are taken to full council for approval. Members of the public are able to attend the full council meetings and are that they are able to speak on any matter on the agenda during the public forum.

Alima Adams asked how she could become involved in the communications for the forum, and it was suggested that it was a good idea to see how the Earth Café went first. Communication is an agenda item for the Strategy Day, although this is unlikely to focus on the Climate Change Forum.

4. Biodiversity and Pollution Plan and 5. Climate Change Forum – Possible change of name and constitution to include Environmental matters such as waterways

The Parish Council does not have a Biodiversity and Pollution Plan and in reviewing the Climate Change Action Plan having a separate plan had been suggested. Nicola Hallows offered on behalf of Wild Burwell to draft a plan. Clive Leach then moved on to explain that he felt that including biodiversity and pollution within the remit of the forum leads to the question of whether the forum name should be changed to the Climate Change and Environment Forum. He could see no reason why this would cause issues with the Asset and Environment Group. Both Paul Webb and Liz Swift stated that there is no need for a name change as Climate Change very much covers all environmental issues including biodiversity and pollution. Others felt that this was not the case. Lea Dodds stated that Council members are all very stretched all ready and it would be daunting to add further issues, but it was probably the right thing to do. Paul Webb raised concern that the Climate Change Forum has already lost the ability to focus on the issues it was set up to address. Geraldine Tate confirmed that she agreed with Paul Webb. Michael Swift reminded the forum that original issues that had been listed in the Climate Action Plan were looking at reducing the carbon footprint of our buildings, education etc. The Parish Council has limited powers on what can be done and funding to put improvements in place. All agencies such as the Environment Agency and Internal Drainage Boards, who are dealing with the boats on the Lode for example, have very limited funding. Doing more would mean increasing the precept substantially.

Clive Leach proposed, seconded by Paul Webb that Nicola Hallows on behalf of Wild Burwell should draw up a draft Biodiversity and Pollution Plan which can be considered by the Parish Council at a later date.

5. Development of Climate Change/Environment Web Site

Clive Leach thanked the Parish Council for supporting the first year of the BEG website and thanked Nicole Drath for offering her help. He felt that the website could be used as a tool by the Parish Council on climate change matters including the proposed village climate change survey. Liz Swift reminded Clive Leach that he must be mindful of his role of Chair of the Climate Change Forum and ensure that this does not conflict with his role as Chair of BEG and that there is a need for both the Council and BEG to remain separate, with their own identities and remits. Each other's websites be signposted. Lea Dodds is willing to carry out alterations to the Climate Change page on the Council's website.

6. Any Other Business

Lea Dodds highlighted the comment that the forum is losing focus and asked about Action Plan being included on future agendas. This was agreed. Lea Dodds reported that he had now obtained the information required to calculate the some of the carbon footprints and would now move on to the actual calculations.

Geraldine Tate informed the group that as a result of the 7 Repair Cafes held so far, we have prevented 882kg of waste going to landfill and 4,115 kg of CO2 emissions. This is the carbon equivalent of driving 10, 524 miles or charging 271, 659 smart phones.

Lea Dodds told the forum that he had recently attended a half-day forum for repair cafes which was attended by around 40 volunteers and repairers. They would like to encourage more use of repair cafes in the more disadvantaged areas. Some waste centres are now looking to split items brought along for disposal into those that can easily be repaired and those that cannot be repaired and do need to be disposed.

Martin O'Leary explained that when he asked for a change in the way the agenda was set out, he wished to allow for more time to be available for discussion on items which he felt were more important. He then added that he had attended a Restore Nature Now march in London and how campaigners came from numerous organisations and how they all interconnected.

Clive Leach informed those present that he had been down to the Weirs/Lode to look at the sinking boat and the potential pollution issues it is causing. Another unauthorised boat now appears to be situated on the river. People along the Weirs would like to improve the river. It is fundamentally the Environment Agency and Internal Drainage Boards who are responsible for dealing with the issue of the boats. Clive Leach expressed that the Parish Council needs to keep a very close eye on what is happening on the river, especially with effluent being released from the boats into the water. Liz Swift explained that the Council does not have the powers to deal with this but can lobby those organisations that are responsible for the waterways.

Nicola Hallows offered to assist with dealing with complaints about the grass cutting. The Clerk explained that the majority of complaints have been made by individuals coming into the office. Liz Swift said that more needs to be done to publicise what is trying to be achieved. Nicola Hallows to draft an article about allowing wildflowers to establish by not cutting the grass. It was suggested that like in some other parishes wildflower seeds are sown. Nicola Hallows explained that native wildflowers should be encouraged. Wild Burwell has offered to collect the arisings from Pound Hill this week.

7. Date of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 3rd September 2024, 7.30 pm at the Gardiner Memorial Hall.

The meeting closed at 8.26 pm