

MINUTES OF THE EMBLETON QUARRY WORKING GROUP

held on Tuesday 5 July 2022 at 7.00pm in the Creighton Hall

Present: Terry Howells (TJH) – Chair, Raymond Carss (RC), Kevin Redgrave (KR), Margaret Watchorn (MW), Clive Middlebrook (CM), Andy Davis (AD), Andrew Hindle (AH), Andrew Chillingsworth (AC)

1. Apologies: Ian Brown (IB), Gary Woodburn (GW), John Young (JY)

The Chair suggested that members who had not attended for several months be contacted to see if they wished to continue receiving minutes and agendas. MW agreed to do this and pointed out that the information is online for anyone interested through EPC's website

2. Declarations of Interest: None

3. Minutes of the last meeting held on 7th June were accepted as a true record by all; proposed CM, seconded AH and signed by the Chair.

4. Matters arising:

4.1 Dog waste: The Chair has spoken to the dog warden whose area covers the whole of Northumberland. Once GW can supply times when problems appear to occur, the dog warden will be invited to observe. KR and MW reported a dog swimming and pursuing ducklings that afternoon. The owner had agreed to keep the dog on a lead before entering the fenced area.

4.2 Tree planting: KR informed members that we have reached the final stage for consideration. No date has been given for hearing the result.

4.3 Accessibility feedback: MW has sent a letter to various agencies and groups in the area, requesting feedback on the accessibility of the quarry, but has received no response to date. She has also contacted our County Councillor, who has agreed to publish the request in her regular newsletter.

4.4 LOVE Northumberland awards: The Chair reported that we received a runner-up award in the Coast and Countryside category, winning £100 and a certificate. The Creighton Hall committee will be asked if this can be displayed in the Women's Room where our meetings usually take place.

4.5 ERIC NE Small Grants Scheme: MW reported that we have received a grant for £437.00, enabling us to buy five bat detectors, two of which will have software for members to download, enabling accurate analysis of recorded signals. KR added this will be of particular use in distinguishing between several species of bats. Detectors are to be used in and around the community once QWG members are familiar with them.

5. Ponies in field: To reinforce the fence in the south field, KR proposed installing 8 posts, 4 or more rails, and 2 square posts to replace unsteady ones. Cost would be approximately £50 using a volunteer working party. RC confirmed that EPC

KR

had originally had the fence erected. Members approved KR's suggestion. KR will order the necessary wood and organise a working party. The Chair reported that the stonemason's bill for the plinths will be paid, and that he is not VAT registered.

6. AONB bid match funding / 7. Quarry House: AC is willing to act as project manager; the Chair will arrange a meeting for all interested parties once GW and AC are both available. Members were encouraged to attend. The Chair explained that we need clarification of details of the project to stabilise Quarry House, an itemised list of tasks, clearer detail of where work is to be carried out and a copy of the contract. A copy of the AONB award of funding is also needed to ascertain the level of funding still to be raised. Concerns include the need for quotes for soil/stone removal; only one was received and this has been withdrawn as it is out of date. The contractor's quote for stabilisation is now also out of date. KR explained that the narrow window of work is because of nesting birds and the possibility of bat hibernation. KR has tried to contact a firm previously willing to remove stone/soil but has had no success to date. There appear to be three options for dealing with waste stone and soil: a) remove everything from site; b) use identified funding to remove some and re-grade remaining material; c) leave material in place if no funding is forthcoming and carry out minimal re-shaping for safety purposes. CM pointed out that it will be possible to access Quarry House for stabilisation work without moving surplus waste, but that the bank at the rear of the house is beginning to slip. It will require reshaping or remodelling. MW has investigated possible sources of funding and will contact them once we know exactly what we require. RC is meeting a possible funder for another village project and will enquire if the quarry might also benefit from funding. MW will forward to AC the structural report on Quarry house from June 2021 plus any relevant photographs of the building after clearing.

8. Events:

8.1 Bioblitz (17th/18th June): The Chair reported this had been a successful event. KR suggested a date later in the year would be useful for a future survey, particularly for evening events. MW is to receive a list of species identified from ERIC NE. The tarpaulin had been a great asset to the event.

8.2 Future events: Suggestions for future events included a further bat/moth evening and a repeat of last year's Open Day with haymaking. Representatives from the law firm that dealt with the land transfer had visited the quarry this week to meet with the Chair, KR and MW, and expressed interest in their firm attending a bat evening. AC commented on the previous successful Dark Skies event. It was suggested that we have a quarry-based event in the autumn, using the same speaker. AC also suggested using the amphitheatre area for concerts; this may attract people who otherwise would not visit the quarry. MW pointed out that acoustic concerts would have a limited range of sound, and that amplification would require electrical supplies and speakers. It was agreed that this would not be suitable for the nature reserve but that the idea of acoustic events could be pursued.

9. Projects:

9.1 Pond overflow: During the nesting season, KR continues to monitor water levels at a distance. The level is currently below the overflow and the new small scrapes and ponds have dried up. Access to the overflow will require clearing, and a better route will be planned.

KR/AH/CM

9.2 Outdoor classroom: This is complete, apart from one large stone to be placed to provide extra support/anchorage for one pole.

9.3 Dark Skies: The Chair reported that lights in Whinstone View have been modified and that shields are on order. RC commented that reducing the height of lights could narrow the spill of light cast on the ground and be detrimental to pedestrians and residents. It seems unlikely that any further changes will be made.

9.4 Species update: MW awaits the results of the Bioblitz (see item 8.1 above)

10. Working parties: KR has organised a working party for this week to clear paths and rides. He intends booking a whacker plate for levelling paths when sufficient people are available to help. The south field fence will also require a working party (see item 5 above). It was agreed that planning in advance so dates can be advertised through social media is key to keeping people informed and attracting possible new members. KR

11. AOB: None

12. Date of next meeting: Tuesday 2nd August at 7.00pm in the Creighton Hall.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm.