

MINUTES OF THE EMBLETON QUARRY WORKING GROUP

held on Tuesday 3 May 2022 at 7.00pm in the Creighton Hall

Present: Terry Howells (TJH) – Chair, Raymond Carss (RC), Ian Brown (IB), Margaret Watchorn (MW), John Young (JY), Clive Middlebrook (CM), Gary Woodburn (GW), Kevin Redgrave (KR), David Cooper (DC), Andrew Hindle (AH)

1. Apologies: None

2. Declarations of Interest: None

3. Minutes of the last meeting held on 5th April were accepted as a true record by all; proposed IB, seconded RC and signed by the Chair.

4. Matters arising:

4.1 Fund raising talk: TJH has contacted the speaker; the talk will be put on hold but may take place later in the year.

4.2 Tree planting: KR has applied for 80 more trees to bolster existing shrubs throughout the site. The application will be considered later this week.

4.3 Notices on kissing gates: KR has erected signs advising that dogs should be on leads because of nesting birds in the area.

5. AONB bid: GW reported that our application for Year 2 funding has been successful. Match funding of £5,000 is required to supplement work not covered by AONB money. GW suggested that Northumberland Natural History Society and Northumberland and Tyneside Bird Club may be willing to offer further support. DC may be able to pursue funding from SITA.

6. Quarry House: MW has circulated photos of the quarry and of Quarry House in 1986, taken from NCC Planning. These show the house fit for occupation and the site before scrub and bramble dominated. MW has contacted NCC for permission to use the photos. A file of documents has been received from a villager who researched the quarry and produced a short history of its development. Of particular interest are interviews with the company secretary and an annotated plan showing the depth of rubbish.

7. Events:

Firewalking event: The Chair noted that the event has been published in the Whinstone Times. JY is publicising it through social media and has had some contacts already; GW will add details to the quarry social media. It will be added to Northumberland Day's website of events. JY agreed to send a draft poster to GW and the Chair will organise printing of these.

Bioblitz (17th/18th June): MW reported that AONB is organising the event and will produce publicity; she agreed to send the Nature Reserve logo for inclusion on any publicity. AONB are currently drawing up a list of available experts who will identify species and hold some walks for the public. KR described a previous

Bioblitz. It was agreed that the tarpaulin will be offered to provide cover for experts. KR will ask if he can borrow a digital microscope from the National Trust and offered to hold a bat evening. IB offered coffee and toilet facilities for visiting experts.

8. Projects:

8.1 Pond overflow: KR reported that the overflow has been cleared once during the month after strong winds. There has been no contact from the adjacent landowner. KR also commented that planting of new hedging on neighbouring land has provided advantageous new corridors leading to and from the quarry.

8.2 Outdoor classroom, paths and plinths: CM reported that the final few fittings for the tarpaulin have been acquired. It will be erected, checked and approved. CM and AH agreed to complete this by the end of the month, ready for the Bioblitz.

KR reported that the outdoor classroom and Dark Skies area require final gravelling, dressing and rolling. It was agreed that as many people as possible would meet on Wednesday May 11; KR will circulate details of times and JY will bring a whacker plate to assist.

JY advised that plinths will be completed at the weekend, with signs affixed to paving slabs. The mason was congratulated on his excellent work using local whinstone.

8.3 Dark Skies: The Chair reported that concerns had been expressed by EPC regarding proposed changes to lighting. GW reassured the meeting that any changes will be beneficial to everyone. No existing lights will be removed, light will be maintained wherever needed and existing good practice (already employed at Kielder) will be followed. Warmer toned lights will be softer on the eyes and light units will prevent excess light spillage into the Dark Skies area. CM suggested it would be helpful for GW to produce a short information sheet giving reassurance to anyone concerned.

8.4 Management Plan: It was agreed to put the review on hold until later in the year.

9. Working parties: Next week's working party will focus on paths etc. (see item 8.2). KR offered to ask if Coast Care could help as a 'one-off' activity and GW will circulate details through social media. DC offered to see if he could be available as part of his work's 'Giving Something Back' project.

10. AOB:

a) Accessible footpaths: JY reported that Nextdoor Embleton has raised the issue of accessible paths in the area. Volunteers have offered to try out the quarry's accessible paths and will provide feedback. KR added that locations for additional seating/perches have already been identified. It was agreed not to place a perch on the jetty. JY advised that he and a visitor travelling the country will be doing a mental health walk in the quarry. The visitor will then promote the quarry.

b) Dogs off leads: GW reported that although the majority of dog owners respect the quarry, there is an ongoing issue with dog waste, and some dogs are regularly

off leads in the northern end of the site, despite signs being erected. Significant disturbance to ground nesting birds can be caused. Members have spoken to dog owners, with varying results. The Chair will contact the County Councillor about the matter and request the dog warden to visit; GW will provide further details.

TJH

c) Quarry House earthworks re-seeding: GW reminded the meeting that stabilisation work is on track for September and has supplied photos of Quarry House to the contractor. Re-seeding of earthworks around the house can be done using green hay after a late August/early September cut. KR questioned whether we need to import a bale from a local site. It was agreed to use our own green hay and that local provenance of wild seed is best. KR reported that due to illness of a contractor, there has been no response so far to removing unwanted material from the Quarry House site. He has contacted another provider but the cost will be significantly higher. JY reminded the meeting that red diesel cannot now be used and that higher prices will also impact on future costs.

d) Legal firm publicity article : The Chair reported that the legal firm who dealt with Quarry House and recent land transfer have produced a draft publicity article about their work with us. TJH and MW have reviewed the article. The Chair has invited partners of the firm to visit. It was suggested that perhaps the firm might offer further support of some kind.

11. Date of next meeting: Tuesday June 7th at 7.00pm in the Creighton Hall.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm.