

MINUTES OF THE EMBLETON QUARRY WORKING GROUP

held on Thursday 8th September 2022 at 7.00pm in the Creighton Hall

Present: Terry Howells (TJH) – Chair, Raymond Carss (RC), Kevin Redgrave (KR), Margaret Watchorn (MW), Andrew Hindle (AH), Andrew Chillingsworth (AC), Ian Brown (IB), John Young (JY), Andy Davis (AD),

1. Apologies: Clive Middlebrook (CM), Gary Woodburn (GW), Denise Metcalfe (DM)

2. Declarations of Interest: None

3. Minutes of the last meeting held on 2nd August were accepted as a true record by all; proposed KR, seconded AH and signed by the Chair.

4. Matters arising:

4.1 Dogs/waste in the quarry: An appointment from the dog warden will be made once times and dates can be clarified. KR highlighted specific problems with dog waste when strimming.

4.2 Tree planting: KR has made several phone calls to follow up this matter but no decisions on tree allocation for us have been made.

4.3 Quarry House possible additional costs: At the last meeting it was suggested that unforeseen urgent expenditure of up to £1,000 could be sanctioned if necessary by the Chair. A member of the public has pointed out that this is not in line with Parish Council Standing Orders. Although the QWG is a working group, not a sub-committee, and therefore technically is not subject to EPC's Standing Orders, it was agreed that two Parish Councillors from this group will be consulted by the Chair if there is a need to consider and approve any unforeseen expenditure up to £1,000 to be paid from quarry funds.

5. AONB bid match funding: The Chair reported that a new offer has been received from Northumberland Coast AONB, reflecting increased costs for Quarry House Phase 2. Money has to be spent before it is reclaimed from AONB and EPC will be used as the fund. In order that EPC funds are not depleted temporarily, it was agreed that payment would be reclaimed in two stages once each stage of work is complete, beginning with stabilisation work before continuing to landscaping. RC enquired if Northumberland Hub were providing any funding. The Chair and MW agreed to approach them with a view to requesting £2,500 matched funding for Quarry House Phase 2.

TJH/MW

6. Quarry House:

6.1 Update on project: AC confirmed that work due to start on September 5th has been delayed until the end of the month as the contractor's previous project is over-running. KR confirmed that this will still be within the safe window for wildlife. AC intends to meet the contractor again on site on the first morning of work.

6.2 Risk analysis and current status: KR and AC have discussed risk analysis and an onsite meeting with GW has been held. AC supplied a draft register showing risk, impact, mitigation and action (attached to minutes) The ponies' owner has been

contacted and has acknowledged and accepted details of risk management; the contractor has acknowledged all highlighted risks analysis factors. AC raised the question of the wooden steps and the need to 'disable' the staircase. It was recognised that the steps may prove an unsafe magnet to children in particular. Options considered were dismantling the staircase or placing a structure to disable them. MW suggested retaining the staircase as a historical part of the building as long as this can be done within financial constraints. JY asked if Heras or alternative fencing could be retained around the staircase to maintain the character of the building. KR suggested that the contractor may be qualified to assess; AC pointed out that this element of work was not included in the current scope of work for the contractor. He agreed to ask the contractor for scope and price. KR pointed out that insurance should be checked and confirmed that he has also completed a RIEX form to exchange with the contractor. This will be forwarded to AC and MW for reference.

AC

KR

The meeting agreed that if it is possible and not too expensive to retain the staircase by erecting fencing, this would be the best plan.

KR has contacted the ponies' owner and asked that they remain in the front field until work has been carried out.

6.3 Project register: AC circulated a proposed project register showing detailed and named numbers for items of work to be carried out as part of the Quarry House project. Items will be added when necessary. Members thanked AC and agreed that this will clarify proposed and actual expenditure for projects.

6.4 Proposed contract procedure: AC circulated a flowchart showing a project proposal process covering ideas, scope of work, executive proposal/authorisation and executive project raising/numbering. He explained that anyone can raise an idea and that the QWG can advise whether the project can go ahead. Final signing off on a project for approval rests with Parish Councillors. Members thanked AC for a clear and concise method which will be adopted.

7. Events: A bat and moth evening is to be held on Saturday 17th from 7.30 – 10.30. KR will lead a bat walk, and a local moth expert will bring moth traps and talk about moths. MW has produced a poster for the event and will circulate it to members. The Chair agreed to bring a bucket for donations.

MW

TJH

8. Projects:

8.1 Pond overflow: KR has checked the overflow: water level is now 4-5 inches below the overflow level, lower than ever noted before. KR has begun marking jetty posts to show height of water.

8.2 Outdoor classroom: Nothing to report.

8.3 Dark Skies: KR is preparing posts for the Dark Skies area. Carving will be done when GW returns.

8.4 Species updates: MW has circulated a list of red/amber species of concern. The number of birds of conservation concern has risen to 34 red-listed and 50 amber-listed. KR and MW have both recorded new sightings of plants and dragonflies during the current season. IB has a contact for identifying fungi and will forward details to MW.

IB

9. Working parties: KR intends to kickstart fortnightly Wednesday working parties to focus on clearing unwanted gorse and cotoneaster regrowth from the NE bank and exposing rock near Quarry House, as well as continuing seasonal work. He explained to some visitors that work adheres to a Management Plan that we are duty bound to follow. MW suggested an article in the Whinstone Times would keep people informed. It was agreed to hold an Open Evening in the Creighton Hall in late October or early November, possibly on a Friday evening. MW will check hall availability. KR and GW plus a representative from AONB would be invited to explain our work and aims: refreshments would be provided. AC suggested this might be an opportunity to launch a 'Friends of the Quarry' group. JY will ask if new drone footage can be made available. MW JY

10. Finance update: MW reported that funds raised by the fire-walk and quiz night has now been banked. A cheque for £100 from a local natural history group for quarry funds has been received; MW will acknowledge this. MW

11. AOB:

11.1 Bicycles in the quarry KR reported that newly compacted paths and areas have been damaged by tyre skid marks from bicycles. He has spoken to those concerned and the problem has not re-occurred. Remains of another fire has been found in the NE corner of the quarry and RC pointed out an issue with drugs being found in the quarry, which the police dealt with. RC suggested that the police be contacted regarding fire problems; the Chair agreed to raise the matter at a meeting with local police next week. TJH

11.2 Camera traps GW asked via email if it was possible to buy two camera traps at a cost of roughly £260 each to monitor wildlife. The Chair queried the security of the equipment. MW agreed to approach ERIC NE but felt that we may need to prove our use of bat detectors already supplied by them before applying for further funds. MW

12. Date of next meeting: Tuesday 4th October at 7.00pm in the Creighton Hall.

A minute's silence to commemorate the death of HM Queen Elizabeth was held.

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm.