

# Greener Staplehurst Group

## Meeting – 15 February 2021 (Zoom)

### Present:

David George (- Chair)  
Jose Castro  
David Charge  
Sue Forward  
Mina McPhee  
Martin Ralph  
Paddy Riordan  
Adele Sharp  
Richard Smith  
Peter Spearink

Guest: Deanne Cunningham, Team Leader, (Heritage, Landscape and Design – Maidstone Borough Council)

### 1. Apologies

Louise Pettifer  
Jacqui Veitch  
Natasha Thomas

### 2. Minutes of last meeting

Approved.

### 3. Tree Protection Orders – Discussion with Deanne Cunningham

The Tree Officer is currently on holiday, so Deanne Cunningham joined the meeting in his place to tell the group more about TPOs. The following is a brief summary of the points raised:

- Trees do not get automatic protection unless they are in a conservation area.
- Enforcement is difficult and penalties are dependant on the court where the action is tried. A fine of up to £20k can be imposed along with a requirement for replacement tree planting but lack of evidence is a major obstacle in any prosecution.
- As a general rule, for trees to get a TPO they need to
  - o be visible
  - o have amenity value
  - o be in good condition unless it is a veteran tree
  - o be expedient to protect.
- Trees can be protected individually, in groups or as an area of woodland or other defined area.
- Trees on land belonging to other landowners cannot be protected (there was some confusion about what this meant exactly).
- At present there is a huge backlog of tree protection applications as a result of the Local Plan Review and a shortage of staff. Trees that are under immediate threat are receiving priority.
- In view of the number of sites where GSG is asking for TPOs to be issued, Deanne indicated that an email to her with a schedule of the sites, details of the trees and what the threat is should be sufficient for TPOs to be considered for those areas.

The group thanked Deanne for attending the meeting.

**Action: MM and JV to draw up a list of the sites where TPOs are required, along with details of the trees and threats, ready to send to MBC.**

There was a wider discussion with PS indicating that the trees in Wimpey Fields were under a general site protection although some specific oaks had individual TPOs. If thinning out of trees is required there will not be an issue since is being managed by the Parish Council but there is a map with the TPO trees and there needs to be clarification about exactly what is protected on Wimpey Fields.

**Action: DG and PS to take this forward.**

#### **4. Herb Bed**

DC reported that Homeleigh had been helpful in donating cardboard and compost (with the promise of more if required) for the herb bed and the working group have now put down cardboard and compost on most of the area. It is now ready for sowing/planting. It is proposed that mostly perennial herbs be planted to aid low maintenance. While small plants can now be planted, larger ones will need to wait until the cardboard is further broken down. It was agreed that the group needs to plant a few things in the beds and then put out a request via FB for donations of other herbs.

**Action: The area to be planted with some herbs and DG to put out a call on FB for spare herb seedlings and plants.**

Local businesses can be approached for water – Spar have always been very helpful.

A question was raised about whether the library could help with providing access to water or whether the nearby toilets could be opened. These are both under KCC control. A suggestion was made that a water butt be affixed to the Library downpipes. This was accepted and PS has kindly offered a water butt.

**Action: DC to affix the water butt to the Library downpipe.**

The herb bed is already enclosed with a low timber barrier and at previous meetings there has been agreement that this should be a raised bed in order to keep dogs out. However, following further discussion, it was agreed that additional sleepers will not be required, since dogs are on leads in this area. The £350 put aside for this purpose can now be released for other things although the site will be monitored to make sure that dogs do not foul there.

#### **5. Wildflowers**

In advance of the meeting, NT sent round the details of the wildflower seeds and prices. Following a discussion, it was agreed that 1kg of the Native UK Mix (£39) and 50g of yellow rattle (£35) should be purchased.

There was a suggestion that if we are likely to need more yellow rattle, then we should ask LP to contact Michael at Great Dixter to look into the possibility of getting seed from there.

## 6. Allotments

There was a discussion about the suitable sites for allotments. In addition to Jubilee Fields (discussed at the last meeting) some fields close to Wimpey Fields could be suitable (if developers are not interested in those tracts of land). It was agreed that a site inspection needs to be undertaken of the potential land for the allotment to see exactly what land is available. This will happen after the restrictions lift unless people go in their separate cars, two at a time.

It was reiterated that there must be a management strategy for any allotments that the village puts into place. It was also agreed that any site agreed upon must have parking.

The land owned by Tesco on Goudhurst Road was mentioned again. PS indicated that Tesco hold a fair amount of land in the area. Since it is unlikely that this land will receive planning permission it seems likely that Tesco may hand over the land to the Parish Council. It was agreed that the entire Parish Council must be in agreement before the Clerk could be asked to approach Tesco.

**Action: PR to raise with the Parish Council.**

## 7. Funding/Litter Campaign

Following on from the last meeting PR followed up with Greggs, Blakemore and 5 other grant fund providers, including Ford UK. Currently Greggs are only funding Covid related applications, however, Blakemore (Spar) have kindly donated £200 towards the litter campaign. The other 5 have yet to respond.

This is the first donation specifically ring fenced for the litter campaign.

There was a discussion about how the campaign should be run. RS indicated that 'Keep Britain Tidy' (KBT) have many initiatives and free resources that GSG can tap into, including creating ambassadors for KBT, as well as generic signs and posters (where we only need to drop in the group logo). KBT also have an interesting schools' programme although it makes sense to delay progressing this until the new academic year.

Below is copy text from Richard Smith relating to update on litter (Email to Jose Castros 15/02/21):

*1. Contacted CEO KeepBritainTidy who updated on various actions and campaigns they can offer at Council, School and Volunteer level. Details also passed to David*

*2. A KBT Ambassador in Folkestone has been in contact to provide insight into what they have been doing. I have been sent links to their www and FB site which I have not yet had time to review yet. But they started getting their various initiatives really started about five years ago.*

*They are logging the litter collected as well as ensuring local businesses sponsor the waste bins particularly outside of shops/restaurants.*

*3. On collecting litter I have done one collection run when the road was closed Pagehurst Lane. I saw another lady collecting litter and she was aware of Greener Staplehurst but was doing this because it was near her property.*

#### *4. No action taken yet on contacting the local retailers/fast food etc*

**Action: RS will pull together a litter strategy document.**

MR suggested that since the Scouts are not active at present, it made sense to take advantage of all the young people (early teens) currently undertaking their Duke of Edinburgh award for which they needed to volunteer one hour per week. Perhaps they could sign up for litter picking and planting around the village.

There was a brief discussion about DBS checks – and there was agreement that only the parents of the young people should be supervising as 3<sup>rd</sup> party supervision required additional DBS checks by the Parish Council (possible but the proposed supervisor would need to put into place).

It was agreed that a check should be made of the insurance policy to ensure that any young people volunteering would be covered for accidents.

**Action: MR to check the PC insurance policy.**

#### **8. Football sponsorship**

NT to report at the next meeting.

#### **9. Any other business**

**New members** - Peter Spearink and Richard Smith were proposed, seconded and then approved unanimously, as new members of the Greener Staplehurst Group.

**Potential new member** – DC reported that a contact, Anna, would like to join the group. It was agreed that she should be invited to attend the next meeting.

Action: DC will issue the invitation.

#### **10. Date of next meeting**

29<sup>th</sup> March 2021

**Mina McPhee**

**18 February 2021**