

Skelsmergh and Scalthwaiterigg Parish Environment Group

Notes of meeting held on 29th September 2017

Present : Tony Cousins, Danny Seddon Roberts, Julie Waddington, John and Mary Chapman

Apologies: Hermann Moisl

Autumn Litter Clearance

Date for your diary: **Sunday 22nd October 10-12noon**. Meet at the Community Hall. Brunch at 12noon, coffee, tea, two soups and bacon butties. Mary and Liz to cook up soup, Cousin family bacon butties, Danny will buy some hearty bread. Estimated number attending 20. Please keep receipts for refreshments, PC provides a grant for this event.

SLDC equipment (NB no gloves), Community News and website publicity and Hall booking have been done. Mary will distribute posters for noticeboards. Please spread the word and encourage volunteers to join us. There have been two notices in the Westmorland Gazette.

Good idea: 5 pairs of gloves to keep in stock for volunteers who arrive without them.

Mary will ask Cenacolo, via Chris Darcy, to deal with Helme Lane and Scandale as usual.

Julie reported litter being left outside Ragtag at the Industrial Estate. She cleared it up and alerted owners. No further action unless there is a repeat.

Footpaths/ Public Rights of Way(PROWs)

John recommended the improved Highways system of reporting faults on line at Cumbria County Council Highways Hotline. Mary has reported 3 fingerposts missing or damaged and awaits action. Please report any broken or missing signs, footbridges and stiles to the hotline.

We agreed a new system for our local footpaths: report problems to Danny. He will report back to PC for action by Countryside Action Team or if small scale maintenance is required our group can deal with the problem. dannyseddonroberts@hotmail.com

Up in arms

Mary wrote to Mr Ladds at Benson Hall on behalf of our group to request his cooperation in preserving biodiversity in the highway verges. Helme Lane has not been sprayed this year, but elsewhere in the parish spraying damage has been noticed eg Betty Scott Lane. The result of the botanical survey in June was inconclusive, comparing sprayed and unsprayed sides of Helme lane. However the survey was late in the season. No noxious weeds were identified. Mary will write again to Mr Ladds with result of survey and to request that he continues to refrain from spraying parish verges. Continued monitoring of verges is needed.

Sand martin nesting on the River Mint has been disrupted by South Lakes Rivers Trust and Environment Agency sanctioned bank stabilisation. Individuals and the PC have expressed their opposition and concern about the work, which appears to have been halted at a midway stage. We need to monitor the site next breeding season to see the full effect of the changes to the riverbank.

Himalayan Balsam

Individuals and groups have spent hours again this year, pulling up HB along the Sprint and Mint. The Sprint is now well under control, after work on both sides of the river near Coldharbour.

The Mint and its tributaries the Flodder Beck and Lambrigg Beck are not yet under control. Vast swathes of HB remain along Lambrigg Beck. Until that is cleared we shall continue to have invasion right down the Mint. The Kendal team have been working on the problem this summer. Next year we need a coordinated approach starting early in the season in June. We can expect Grayrigg locals and PC, Grayrigg Young farmers, the Kendal team and the Environment agency to be involved. It should keep our group and other residents busy next year.

Winter Talk

John will approach Tom Atwood to arrange a talk in February on "Gardening for Wildlife". Julie's contact with Hedgehog Rescue could be a reserve. We shall request PC support for this project.

Mealbank Wild Patch

Tony volunteered to trim the area. John will assist with tree pruning. There are plans to set some paving slabs in the area. Julie will be organising the planting of wild flower plugs in the spring.

Next meeting **Wed 31st January 2018** at Oakbank House, please bring torches.