

Pontyclun Community Council

Environment Working Group

Minutes of the meeting of 18.10.21

Meeting was carried out virtually via Zoom

Attendance

Martin Ashford, Karan Lane, Helen Green

Apologies

Apologies had been received from Carole Willis, Neil Holley, Lisa Williams, Gwyn Jackson, Anne Jackson

Minutes of the meeting of 11th November 2020

MA noted that almost a year had passed since the last meeting of the EWG. Nevertheless, the minutes were agreed to be accurate.

Matters arising

The matter of the responsibility of the maintenance of land to the side of Brynsadler Mill had since moved forward. HG pointed out that PEG had held a meeting at the end of September, and she is now the new Secretary of PEG (Pontyclun Environment Group)

Request by Environment Trust to give up Lease on land at Brynsadler and replace with an agreement that they can help maintain the land

A letter was received from HG on 8th October on behalf of PEG.

It says that whilst that PEG members are still quite active and can attend to reasonable path clearance, litter picks, etc they cannot deal with mature trees, damaged fencing, etc. These items must be carried out by the Community Council. The group agreed that it is recommended to Council that we agree that the Environment group can vacate the lease to be replaced with an agreement to allow them to carry out environment activities such as path clearance and litter picking on the Council land. Agreement to be similar to that with Taf Ely rambblers who undertake occasional path maintenance on our footpaths and Clerk to draw this up.

Action – Council to consider recommendation to cancel lease and replace with an agreement

New convenor of the Environmental Working Group (EWG)

MA noted that Karan Lane had not stood for election to this role at the May Annual General Meeting of Pontyclun Community Council. He had been nominated and was elected in the role. MA thanked Karan for her hard work as Convenor over a period of nearly three years in which she had helped to strengthen links between the Community Council and other stakeholders such as the Pontyclun Environment Group and Pontyclun Community Garden.

COP 26 and Recognition of the extreme urgency of Climate Change. Should the Community Council declare an Environmental Emergency?

MA gave a resume of the forthcoming COP 26 International Conference in Glasgow including a brief description and history of COP and the broad aims and objectives of the Conference. Source material

included a paper published by Chatham House. MA followed this by a brief account of the urgency of the need to control the negative effects of accelerating global warming, principally, through the reduction of emissions of carbon dioxide. This has become almost universally recognised as one of the greatest long-term threats to life in all its forms on the Planet.

There followed a general discussion on how we, as individuals, can play our part and consideration of ways in which quite small bodies such as the Community Council can make a lasting contribution. MA said that when he had first sat down to consider the meeting Agenda, the first thing he had looked at was “should the Community Council declare a Climate Emergency?”. This sounds good and may look good in the media but has considerable implications from the point of view of resources, extensive scrutiny of everything the Council does and large budgetary implications. As an example, Pennard Community Council in Gower had adopted this approach and the ramifications were extremely extensive with entire teams of stakeholders labouring over the numerous points contained in the Council's plans. There was an interesting debate on this topic. The group agreed that the urgency of the climate emergency be noted by the Community Council. An outright declaration in itself is not recommended at this time, though consideration should be given to environmental actions when setting annual budget

Action – Council to note the urgency of the climate emergency and agree to consider environment actions during budget discussions

The potential impact of Climate Change on the Pontyclun area

MA pointed out that in his view, one of the most immediate effects of climate change will likely be an increase in the risk of flooding with potentially devastating consequences. The last few years have seen very serious and repeated flooding to towns in Rhondda and Pontypridd with extraordinary levels of flooding that has affected families, businesses and communities. Many more people have become more conscious of the negative aspects of climate change as result. Pontyclun is surrounded by rivers which can see water levels rise at surprisingly fast rates. MA noted that Ynysddu is built on a flood plain. Karan pointed out that parts of Maesyfelin are at risk. Should the worst happen how would elderly and vulnerable residents manage? It was suggested that perhaps we should be considering our local Resilience strategies to prepare for such an eventuality. Helen pointed out that locally, Climate Change will have an impact of wildlife and natural habitats. Flowers are continuing to bloom even in in mid-October. There will be a dislocation between natural Winter habits of wildlife and the availability of their food next Spring.

Carrying out a Green Audit – what links do we have? What links SHOULD we have? e.g., Wildlife Trust, Natural Resources Wales, Sustrans, etc

Another lively discussion. The Community Council already has established links with Pontyclun Environment Group, the Community Garden Project. The group agreed that we should be reaching out to other local organisations such as Groesfaen Gwyrdd, Coed Lleol (Small woods Wales), Shop Local, etc (HG has been doing this recently as part of her role with PEG). MA mentioned that Lisa Williams has been signposting to her work with Renew Wales and has provide a number of information slides. MA was unable to share these documents at the meeting so read one of them out. It is clear that the Council would probably benefit from further liaison with Renew Wales.

Maximising the use of our green spaces

Pontyclun benefits from being largely surrounded by areas of green open space. The Council also has particular responsibility for certain areas such as Ivor Woods and Pontyclun Park. The group agreed that it might be possible to enhance the amenity value of these spaces by careful installation of art projects, for example, in Ivor Woods there is a very large, felled tree, sawn into sections and leaning against an Earth bank. MA suggested that the prominent stump and fallen sections could be

transformed into a piece of sculpture similar to a something he had seen the previous weekend at Cosmeston Lakes (a tall stump covered in three dimensional representations of birds, otters, snakes, foxes, etc). Another discussion brought up several ideas for future consideration. HG suggested that a hydroelectric installation might be installed similar to something she has seen at a park in Treorchy. KL suggested that Brynsadler River walk might be extended past the current impasse at one end and similar walks could be envisaged along other stretches of the river.

Any other business

The Council has recently been approached and encouraged to apply for Together for Our Planet funding. Grants of between £1000 and £10000 are available from the Big Lottery to help fund projects in things such as food, waste and consumption, the natural environment, transport and energy. The short term until grant closes means that it may be impractical for us to apply this time (November 18th)