

LAND AROUND HERNE HILL WORKING PARTY TERMS OF REFERENCE

This working party was set up in order to explore the possibility of acquiring one or more of the parcels of land situated around Herne Hill, Ilminster with a view to developing additional wildlife havens, planted areas and leisure spaces for residents. This will be accomplished by working with neighbouring parish/town councils, chiefly Donyatt Parish Council.

WORKING PARTY FOR THE HERNE WOOD PROJECTMinutes of meeting: 7.30 pm 14 July, 2021

Held: Town Council Chamber, North Street, Ilminster

Present: Cllr Leanne Taylor, Cllr Philip Burton, Cllr Fran White, Cllr Matt James, Cllr Helen Lancaster
Mr Colin Hyde, Ms Sarah Hunt, Ms Elspeth Waldie, Jake Taylor (Groundsman, ITC)

Aims: To agree an approach to successfully acquire one or more parcels of land around Herne Hill.

Phil Burton gave an overview of the project to date, outlining the historical context of the land around Herne Hill (County Farms), the planning permission sought by Persimmon for land along Canal Way (this is linked to land parcels being made available), the County Council's Asset Disposal policy (ADP) and the aims of the town council in response to the green agenda it has adopted. Maps were circulated that detailed the land parcels being discussed. In 2017, Philp Burton and Leanne Taylor had an exploratory meeting with Mr Field, SCC Asset Disposal Agent and received some positive responses from Mr Field that suggested that some land may be made available to Ilminster Town Council (ITC) when the negotiations with Persimmon had been concluded.

Matt James raised the possibility of the parcels of land that the project wishes to use going to auction as part of the ADP, and as pointed out by Philp Burton, there will inevitably be legal costs involved in attaining any of the land parcels and this needs to be factored into plans.

Colin Hyde and Elspeth Waldie outlined the plans drawn up by Tree Planting Project for a woodland to be established in close proximity to Herne Hill and Britain's Field. The Tree Planting Group had provided a written plan and some basic costings and had spoken to the Woodland Trust and about sourcing suitable trees. Jake confirmed that the land was suitable for tree planting. They expressed a desire to begin establishing the woodland during the next planting season so that it was well under way for the Queen's Millennium next year. This is a tight timescale given the challenges.

The meeting accepted that the plans for the wood were ambitious and should be supported. Philip Burton and Leanne Taylor said that the town council were supportive of the idea of attaining and parcels around Herne Hill and for at least one of these to be used for a woodland and wildflower area.

Obstacles identified during discussion included:

1. the fact that the main parcel of land, I1 on the map, was currently believed to have been leased to a farmer in Peasmarsch and it was under crop. It is likely that this lease will be for a number of years, and this would make acquiring the land tricky.
2. It was not at all certain that ITC could attain any of the land parcels without cost, though setting up a trust may prove to be an attractive option to SCC.

ACTION

- Philp Burton to assume role of Chairman
- Fran White to assume role of Vice Chairman.
- Leanne Taylor and Philp Burton to draft a letter for the office team to send to SCC outlining the meeting's wishes to acquire I1. I2 has been identified as a suitable alternative parcel. The approach taken will emphasise the climate emergency declaration recently declared by SCC (and ITC in its turn) and the possible role to be played by a woodland in I1 in supporting this declaration.
- In addition, mention will be made of the need for space to plant Jubilee trees that will be claimed by a variety of community groups and individuals in the town.
- Donyatt Parish Council will be contacted about future attempts to attain land around Herne Hill.
- Fran White will summarise the progress of the new working group at the meeting of the full ITC on Tuesday 22 July.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 7.30 pm, Wed 11 August, Town Council Chamber, North Street, Ilminster.

WORKING PARTY FOR HERNE HILL WOOD PROJECT

Minutes of meeting: 7.30 pm 11 August, 2021

Held: Town Council Chamber

Present: Cllr Leanne Taylor, Cllr Philip Burton, Elspeth Waldie, Cllr Fran White, Sarah Hunt,
Cllr Helen Lancaster

Apologies: Colin Hyde, Jake Taylor

1. Minutes of last meeting were circulated and agreed.
2. The meeting considered the letter sent by the working party to Charlie Fields, SCC together with his response (email). Members expressed their disappointment at the tone of the response but agreed that this had been anticipated.
3. The meeting agreed the following next steps:
 - LT and PB to consider going to see Charlie Fields to discuss the matter and to obtain further details regarding the rental of the land parcels (i.e. duration of rental). Cllr Linda Vjeh to be invited to join the meeting.
 - Ilminster Tree Planting Group to accelerate efforts to find alternative parcels of land in and around the town that are suitable for tree planting.
 - Sarah Hunt to draft a letter to Dillington Estate to ask if they can donate any parcels of land for this project. ITC to champion this approach.
4. The working group will seek support from District Council, in respect of purchasing land.
Note: we have two District Councillors for the Ilminster Ward, Cllr Brian Hamilton and Cllr Val Keitch.
5. Elspeth Waldie outlined the events planned for the Big Green Week, 18 Sept – 26 Sept 2021.
6. Date of next meeting: Wed 15 Sept, 7.30 pm, Town Council Chamber.