

Notes of Informal Meeting of Climate Emergency Committee 26 October 2020

Present: Cllr R Coleman-Taylor (Chair and Mayor) Cllr M Taylor, Cllr J Williams and Cllr T Roberts

Apologies Received: The Revd G Kent

Absent: Cllr P Ripley

Other Members Present: None

Guests: Mr Mike Potter: Ryedale Council, Mr Finn Jensen: Blackshaw Environmental Action Trust and Dr Nick Green and Ms Diana Tremaine: Todmorden Learning Hub

Support Staff: Susan Miles (facilitator and minutes)

1. Presentation by Cllr Mike Potter of Ryedale Council

Mr Potter started by saying that he is not an expert and does not have any flood management qualifications. However, he does have 14 years of practical experience. He went on to say that it is not possible to stop all floods and unfortunately, man-made climate change is making them more frequent and intense. Conversely, this creates more droughts too. The top priority is to stop making climate change worse and then hope to limit the damage from smaller flood events.

Mr Potter said that water flow (flooding) is increased by:

- Reducing hydraulic roughness (such as removal of hedges).
- Dredging from source to sea – this speeds the flow to the next town, village etc.
- Deforestation and removing hedges.
- Bare ground (INNS and crop types such as rapeseed oil and balsam).
- Soil compaction caused by over-grazing and heavy machinery.
- Drainage channels and scour
- Dodgy ploughing.
- Increase in impermeable surfaces such as roads and buildings made from paving, tarmac and concrete.

However, there could still be effective drainage but the water flow could be slowed with Natural Flood Management (NFM) by:

- Leaky dams (WDD and bunds WWNP) – for example, the road from Cornholme has no attenuation and so the flow of water rushes to the centre of Todmorden.
- Reforestation and hedge planting.
- Moorland drain blocking.
- Peat restoration (sphagnum moss).
- Attenuation ponds (for example using redundant sites such as Gorpley Clough/reservoir).

- SuDS (urban and rural) – such as small-scale ponds/attenuation features.
- Catchment sensitive farming such as having buffer strips between planting to prevent sediment washing away.
- Buffer strips.
- Tussocky grass and shrubs.
- River re-meandering and braiding so rivers are not straight.
- Addressing sediment supply.
- Stop ‘cleaning’ rivers (of sediment) and keep sediment on the land where it belongs.

Mr Potter said that the essential thing was to have the right measures in the right places, which requires taking a whole catchment approach such as:

- Upland management (STF).
- Upland storage (STF) – Pickering has a bund which stores excess water and releases it slowly.
- Floodplain management (STF). The floodplain is part of the river and when it is built on it will flood.
- River maintenance (SpeedTF).
- Hard defences and channel management (SpeedTF).

Action: Mr Potter agreed to share the slides he had shown and said that he had a more comprehensive pack, if required.

Mr Potter (following the meeting) provided the slide pack and went on to say that at Ryedale Council they have made achievements through:

- Sound knowledge
- Effective communications
- Building relationships and trust
- Having a ‘can do’ attitude
- Focusing on delivery

Cllr T Roberts said that the work of Slow the Flow (STF) locally was valued. Mr Potter said that he had helped STF to set up.

Mr Potter said that key aspects in this work is seeking funding and building relationships (for example, with landowners). He said that they had worked with senior Oxbridge academics to secure action with the Environment Agency. At Ryedale they worked with a large group of stakeholders such as the Forestry Commission, catchment partnerships such as the Environment Agency, local town and parish councils and Natural England. All had funding available (to varying degrees). He said that convincing landowners of the benefits of natural flood management was a challenge but ultimately, natural flood management is ecologically sound. By taking small steps to install small dams and attenuation ponds, the cumulative effect was great and this can be added to over time.

Mr Potter said that they had influenced different stakeholders in different ways. Where cost is the main consideration, they would structure the argument around the cost/benefit analysis and increasing resilience rather than the more altruistic approach. He stressed the importance of focusing on the impact of flooding on the community as everyone is either effected directly or they know others who have been affected by flooding many times (with the mental impact this has). He also stressed the benefits of networking with farmers and the people they respect (those who would talk and listen) as by doing this it would be possible to influence them. He said that sometimes approaching them in the wrong way is counterproductive. He suggested that influencing 'the low-hanging fruit' first rather than starting with the more intractable.

Mr Potter suggested that TTC work closely with nearby local councils in the Calder Valley to develop a valley-wide approach.

Cllr R Coleman Taylor thanked Mr M Potter for his very informative presentation and said that TTC would likely approach him again for support. Mr M Potter said that he would be happy to help.

2. Presentation by Mr Finn Jensen of Blackshaw Environmental Action Trust (BEAT)

Mr F Jensen started by saying that BEAT was set up in 1998, initially as a campaign against commercial motorbike racing on the moors. The request for planning permission for commercial motorbike racing was rejected but BEAT continued to protect the natural environment. They started doing village clean-ups on an annual then six-monthly basis and continued working against unsuitable local planning applications.

The group then extended their interests into the broader issues of sustainability such as the local production of food and energy.

Their activities have included:

- helping with the insulation of the local chapel which is a community venue as well as being a religious centre.
- Setting up a website, Facebook page and newsletter.
- Working with Colden primary school to educate young people by setting up bird boxes.
- Installing bird and bat boxes in the local woods.
- Holding monthly public meetings with presentations.
- Holding information events in the local pub with stall holders.
- Holding a 'green day' at a local school.
- They have set up a community orchard using land provided by a local landowner and have planted fruit trees and soft fruit bushes with volunteer support.
- Set up a Community Benefit Society in 2012 to be able to issue shares to pay for renewable energy. Pennine Community Power (PCP) was set up and a community owned wind power turbine was installed in 2012. 65 residents invested up to £1k

each and created a fund for local initiatives. Solar PV panels were fitted on a local school.

Also, BEAT and PCP have gained increasing credibility and:

- Have helped Calderdale with its climate emergency work and is on its Climate Emergency Panel.
- Has given several presentations, helped other communities and won an award.
- PCP is a member of Community Energy England.
- BEAT is a member of Locality and the Conservation Volunteers.
- PCP has offered to help Todmorden Community College install solar PV solar panels once it has move into their ownership.

Mr Jensen said that the lessons they have learned are:

- Get the right people and skills in the core group.
- Start with small projects with broad community support. Build up success stories as funders like such successes. Ensure community consultation.
- Learn how to do financial modelling of projects and only undertake the feasible ones.
- Learn from experienced people about things such as how to get planning permission, how to connect to the grid and get written agreements with landowners and building owner early in the process.

Mr Jensen said that they had planned to set up working groups but this had been halted by Covid19. However, they were now hoping to encourage individual proposals.

Mr Jensen suggested liaising with Incredible Edible, schools and the Calderdale Green New Deal as well as communicating (especially with younger people) through social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Cllr R Coleman-Taylor thanked Mr Jensen for his helpful presentation and said that the TTC website could be used to provide information about BEAT.

3. Presentation by Dr Nick Green and Ms Diana Tremaine of Todmorden Learning Centre

Dr Green said that five years ago a project was set up in the college (by Incredible Edible and the School for National Building, to investigate how the Community College could be used for the benefit of Todmorden and its people. He said that it seemed that that the concept of sustainable skills and careers was viewed as a marginal/hippy approach. Then unusually, a year ago, the option of lottery funds became available for climate change projects. They submitted an 'expression of interest' for the establishment of a Climate Change College. This was to include recycling and traditional skills as well as to develop mainstream career pathways which would lead to real job opportunities ranging from self-employment to

working for existing and new businesses. Calderdale MBC also submitted proposals for the same funding opportunities. Following feedback, the Climate Change College proposal and the Calderdale proposal were combined and restructured. This bid failed. However, the team were asked to submit another bid which was successful and secured a funding grant of £330,000. The vision is that the college will be a national centre of expertise in sustainable building and farming. Dr Green said that this will enhance the reputation and standing of Todmorden.

Ms Tremaine has been working on the community side of the project. She said that a space was needed for encouraging working across the generations. One example of this is to create a 'maker space' where technology and craft skills can be developed. Another suggestion is for a 'repair café' where practical repairs can take place and skills developed, for example, with furniture and upholstery. She said that they had made links with Todmorden High School and there is much positivity about there been another space for out-of-school activities. Ms Tremaine said that they several other groups had become involved to raise awareness and increase social justice. She said that they hoped to create a recycling hub and encourage residents to make small changes to help with climate change. She said that encouraging people to make small changes to their behaviour could have a big impact.

Dr Green said that Incredible Edible and the Incredible Farm were separate organisations. He is primarily involved with the Incredible Farm although he was part of Incredible Edible for the first few years.

Dr Green said that he expected that the asset transfer would take place shortly and that this had been delayed because of misunderstandings with Calderdale about the initial budget they required and then the Covid19 pandemic. Ms Tremaine said that asset transfers usually are very time consuming as there are so many elements involved. She said that their policies are evolving to take account of social distancing as many of the skills training around furniture etc. would normally be face-to-face.

4. Update on Presentation on Moorlands by Mr Robin Gray

Cllr R Coleman-Taylor said that Robin Gray has confirmed that he will present about moorland preservation at the next formal Climate Emergency Committee meeting on 11 November 2020.

5. AOB

None

6. Date of Next Meetings

The date of the next informal meeting is Monday 2 November 2020 at 2pm. This meeting will be used to review the presentations we have had so far and to identify our priorities for further action.

The date of the next formal meeting is Wednesday 11 November 2020 at 7.30pm.

Another informal consultation meeting has been set for Monday 7 December 2020 and it is hoped that Extinction Rebellion and Treesresponsibility will be presenting.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next informal meeting is scheduled for Monday 26 October 2020 at 2pm

The date of the next meeting of the Climate Emergency Committee is Wednesday 11 November at 7.30pm