



## Lake Open Meeting Minutes – DRAFT

held on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at 7pm, in the Club Room, Village Centre.

Present: Cllr Bridget Culley (Chair) (BC), Cllr Jeanette Davies (JD), Caroline Hoyes (CH), Alex Martin (AM), Cllr Dave Peart (DP).

In attendance: Maxine Owen (Clerk) (MO) Members of the Parish: 22

Meeting start: 19:00

- 1. Introduction led by the chair:** General Welcome. Cllr Culley clarified that any future plans for the Lake and Surround are intended to include and be for the benefit of all stakeholders ie Lake Residents, all residents of the parish, the Fishing Syndicate, Ecology, and visitors.
- 2.** No formal time allowance for Public Speaking at this meeting, as the Chair planned the meeting to be an update for the audience and then discussion on each topic will all interested parties, with a plan to open up once the updates had been done to anyone who wished to speak.
- 3.** Apologies for absence: Maggie Shelton from Watercress & Winterbournes
- 4.** Declarations of interest: None

### 5. Topic 1: Update from Cllr Jeanette Davies

#### 5.1 Summary of Discussion:

Cllr Davies requested that everyone try and look forward rather than what had happened in the past. The aim of the Lake Working Group was to put together a plan for the area which would include an overall idea of what the lake surround should look like over time, and the steps required to get there.

Cllr Davies advised that a Tree Survey has been commissioned and will be done by Wessex Woodland Management in mid-October with the aim being for the PC to have the written report by the end of October. This should then create a prioritised list of the tree work required in the area – and budget allocated appropriately. Ultimately the idea would be to open up the vistas for everyone to enjoy, but NOT open up the lake surround to the public.

Cllr Davies advised that she had already started to plant bulbs in certain areas of the Lake surround to ensure we did not miss another season, and they would flower next year.

Cllr Davies suggested a regular cutting regime needs to be developed, and that the current arrangement/contract with Scofell might not be the best way to manage the area.

Alex Martin stated that he thought that the work this year from Scofell had been a disaster. At this point Max Owen(MO) clarified that there had only been 3 cuts out of the 5 so far this year, and the most recent had been on the previous Friday, MO asked the residents to confirm this cut had gone ahead as scheduled. It was confirmed it had, but there was an expression of dissatisfaction from members of the Fishing Syndicate that the machine they were using was in fact churning up the ground as it went, making a mess. This was acknowledged and follow-up will be done with Scofell. MO advised that the next cut would be 17<sup>th</sup> October 2023, but Scofell would be bringing in the machine with a forestry head to deal with the piles of debris at the Derrydown End of the Lake Surround. This was planned for the 13<sup>th</sup> October, but would happen before if Scofell could schedule it in. The debris is years of accumulated brash, logs,

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branches, etc that had been piled at one end of the surround.

Cllr Davies advised that the PC were looking to use other labour to deal with some of the work in the lake on an ongoing basis. A request for a handyman had been posted on Facebook, and a couple of people had responded. There is a growing list of things need attention all over the parish, and parts of this list are things for the Lake surround.

During the meeting MO advised that the Grounds Maintenance Contract was due for renewal 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, and that a specification for this needs to be put together so the contract can be put out to tender. This will probably be in two parts – 1 The Lake & Surround & 2 The rest of the maintenance work in the Parish. It is key to get this specification as comprehensive and correct as possible to be fair to contractors submitting applications. Cllr Peart pointed out that Scofell had been operating with a ‘moving target’ for a while now as plans around what to do in the lake surround had been constantly changing in recent years. With a clear plan for the area this should not happen. Scofell have only ever done what they have understood the PC to have asked.

A member of the public (MOP) suggested that a place to start with the plan is to define what the aim/goal of any plan is and then the steps required to achieve this become clear, and logically fall into place. The MOP offered to help putting this together. With the formal document complete, it can be shared with the parish and referred back to continually. There has been work done on this in previous years, so that information will be investigated by MO.

**ACTION:** Speak to Scofell about the Flailbot churning up the ground – Clerk

**ACTION:** Find detail of previous attempts to make the plan – Clerk

**ACTION:** Small working group for development of Plan – Clerk, Cllr Davies, MOP

**OUTCOME:** In summary it was agreed by everyone that communication is key, there was a lot to do, but everyone was fairly positive that things could be sorted out moving forward and many members of the audience were willing to be involved.

## 6. Topic 2: Update from Caroline Hoyes (Sustainable Bourne Valley)

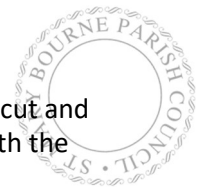
### 6.1 Summary of discussion:

Caroline Hoyes (CH) advised that her position in the group was co-opted, and her main focus was from an ecology perspective from her involvement in Sustainable Bourne Valley (SBV). Her ethos was to try to protect flora and fauna that were already in the lake area and improve things for the future. CH advised that she would like to see some of the older shrubs kept, and more small shrubs planted in certain areas, anything being planted would be always be native, and where appropriate flowering and fruiting plants. There had been planting of reeds and irises in certain areas – deliberately away from likely fishing areas and SBV have made some dead-wood piles at given points as a way to encourage wildlife, as well as providing a place for disposal of green waste. These piles have been positioned so not to interfere with fishing, and have been made square to make the mowing around them easier.

SBV has been working to try and remove some of the nettles by digging the roots up and disposing of carefully, but they are now very well established, so this is no easy task. CH will continue with this work when she can.

CH stressed that it is important to have a cutting plan for the area with clear timings, and visually shared a document that is an attempt to suggest how to maximise the safety and increased welfare of all wildlife at the lake and aimed to show the timings for each maintenance activity undertaken. This balanced with the wishes of the fishing syndicate and public. CH had coloured the areas to show when each activity is safe – the point was to show that there are clear times that fall in line for all concerned. CH suggested that mowing started in the early part of the season, possibly second half of April. CH advised that SBV have plenty of personal experience of adult toad movement from the toad patrol and the vast majority have left by mid-April, and have only once seen the babies emerge on August 25<sup>th</sup>, much later than the internet states, but ours is a spring fed, so cold lake.

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An MOP then advised that the best mowing regime to deal with the nettles is to cut and remove rather than leave to rot, as you are then actually encouraging growth with the nutrients this adds if left.

CH advised that it is important to keep the cut/strimmed areas the same all year so they are not suddenly cut when wildlife has moved in.

There was then general discussion again about the Flailbot in the lake area, and that it is probably not the correct machine for the area, it is clearly too vigorous. An MOP advised that it also sometimes goes too close to the edge and causes dirt to enter the lake, or river, and is damaging the bank. MO will report this back to Scofell.

It was agreed that a schedule of cutting should be part of the plan and shared, along with the outcomes from the tree survey.

**OUTCOME:** CH & SBV to continue their work planting and removing nettles. The ecology/conservation element to be included in the plan. The areas of proactive conservation do not need to conflict with fishing, it was agreed that there is plenty of room for both.

**ACTION:** Report problems with Flailbot back to Scofell - **Clerk**

**ACTION:** Share plan as it develops - **Clerk**

## 7 Topic 3: Update from Cllr Peart on Spraying Plans

### 7.1 Summary of Discussion:

Cllr Peart advised that the PC had accepted a quote from Scofell for them to spray certain test areas of the most well-established nettles in early spring next year. Scofell are fully licensed to carry out this work and will use sprays that are deemed safe in an aquatic environment. The test areas are all about 5 metres away from the water's edge but need to be the correct type all the same.

Cllr Peart then mentioned that the first cut of the lake surround has historically been in mid-May after the ground nesting birds have fledged their young. CH advised that Ground-nesting birds should be undisturbed from March until end of July, so this should be factored in to any strimming regime. Most nesting in the lake will be in undergrowth and on the island.

A member of the public advised the meeting that she was employed by Test Valley Council, and was a manager in their countryside department, lives in SMB, and thought she might be able to answer some of our questions about the best time to cut. The officer advised that amphibians make it harder to manage the cutting, but there is no reason why certain routes in the lake surround couldn't be cut earlier. She advised that the number of geese residing on the Lake was probably at a level where they need to be managed and this should be part of any plan that is put together. Pricking or Oiling the eggs is one method of controlling numbers.

**ACTION:** Link Up with MOP for expert advice for the PC – **Clerk & JD**

**ACTION:** Understand how Geese numbers can be managed - **All**

**ACTION:** Liaise with Scofell for spraying timetable & due diligence on compliance - **Clerk**

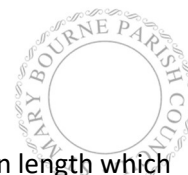
## 8 Topic 4: Update from Alex Martin on behalf of the Fishing Syndicate

### 8.1 Summary of discussion:

Alex Martin (AM) stated that the fishing syndicate were extremely unhappy about the state the Lake is currently in, and that it was becoming harder and harder to fish.

There is crack willow that should be treated as weed, and if not dealt with when fallen will grow. The Countryside Officer advised that some fallen wood can provide refuge for wildlife and provide shade. She said that it is important that the water remains cool, and trees help with that. It shouldn't be too much of an issue at SMB Lake as it is surrounded by large trees

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creating shade all year to some degree.

AM identified that there is a Crack Willow one end of the lake about 40-60 feet in length which without maintenance is likely to break soon and could cause an accident. Who will be liable if someone gets hurt? One of the MOPs residents around the lake is very concerned that no work on the trees has been done for a long time. It was reiterated that this will be commencing very soon, but the PC needs professional advice on what should be priority, as the budget will need to be carefully managed. A member of the Fishing Syndicate stated there should be a plan around exactly what is being done when. Which everyone agrees with.

A further issue brought up by a member of the Fishing Syndicate was around the weed growing in the lake, and that it now extends quite far in. This makes fishing difficult, particularly the landing of the fish once caught. Is this something that can easily be dealt with? A question for follow-up with the Fishing Syndicate.

There was discussion that having specific casting points defined does not suit Fly-Fishing, and the trees are making the opportunity for casting more limited. Crown lifting the trees was agreed would make more casting areas available, as well as bringing more light to the floor. MO advised that we need permission for this (which we may well have already), but we are unable to apply for any further permissions on tree work until we have the new tree report – BDBC say our current report is out of date having been done in 2018. The trees in the lake are all protected because they fall within the already defined conservation area and BDBC could apply fines for work done without correct permission. MO clarified that work to remove deadwood from trees is permitted, and cutting ivy in trees is permitted, and should be planned for by the PC as part of routine maintenance in the lake area. Ivy can be a haven for wildlife, so correct methods of removal must be followed.

Discussion followed from all attending about where and how the grass could be brought back into the area, should areas be re-sown or would regular cutting allow the grass to re-establish? The method of dragging a chain over the ground to remove plants such as Cow Parsley which quickly establishes itself if given the chance was discussed, and AM advised that there was already a chain stored in the surround that could be used. Further investigation is required and should be included in the lake plan.

Clarification is needed after JD asked whether fishermen were bringing children with them into the area. It appeared that most people at the meeting thought that only children over 12 were allowed to accompany the fishermen – no other children should be there at all, certainly not unsupervised. MO will investigate this, but it doesn't currently seem to be on an agreement anywhere, why 12 years? Any children accessing the lake surround should be supervised whatever age, and a decision needs to be made whether there should be an age cut off at all. It was agreed that no dogs are permitted in the area well behaved or not. **PLEASE NOTE:** After the meeting the Covenant was checked by Cllr Peart and it does say that 'Any dogs brought on to the property shall be kept under proper control at all times'. There did seem to be a consensus at the meeting that dogs should not be allowed, perhaps time for a rule change? For further discussion.

- ACTION:** Share current permissions for trees – **CLERK**
- ACTION:** Obtain permission from PC for weed in the water to be removed – **CLERK**
- ACTION:** Organise removal of weed by Fishing Syndicate volunteer when agreed – **CLERK & AM**
- ACTION:** Ask Tree Surveyor to physically identify tree for immediate action – **CLERK**
- ACTION:** Add 'Dogs' to next meeting's Agenda - **CLERK**

**9 General Discussion (throughout the meeting)**

- 9.1 An MOP asked for Committee vs Working Group to be clarified referring to the Lake Covenant. MO confirmed that her understanding of the covenant (It is on the PC website for all to see) that the covenant stipulates that there should be a Lake Committee rather than only a Working

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Group. MO stated that she believed that both could exist, and that at a minimum of twice a year the Lake Committee would meet in a forum open to the public and be made up of members as per the instructions in the covenant (Complying with the covenant). A Working Group would meet as and when required to move specific things forward and would be made up from the people needed to do this. Details from all meetings would be published for all to see and anyone should be allowed to volunteer to be included.

An MOP advised that the main gate to the Lake (next to the shop) needed maintenance/adjusting as the hinges have dropped making it difficult to open.

It was agreed that a formal plan for the whole area needs to be put together as a priority. There should be a Statement of Purpose declaring clear objectives for the area, for fishing, for ecology, for lake residents, and for all residents and visitors. The full document should include comprehensive plans/steps and should be used for reference ongoing. An MOP has offered to help with this, as she has excellent experience in this type of thing. Some documentation has already been started in the last few years and should be reviewed and included as appropriate.

Unfortunately, Maggie Shelton, the Watercress & Winterbournes Community Catchments Officer from the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, was unable to attend the meeting as planned. The idea was for her to share information with everyone and discuss the correct methods and timescales for managing the weed growing in the rivulet. An MOP specifically requested that we continue to communicate with Maggie and invite her again to discuss the same subject. The Committee agreed that we would organise another meeting with Maggie and would invite all Riparian Owners along so everyone is given that same information/guidance.

Overall, the audience seemed keen to help progress things, and volunteer working groups were something that members of the audience were keen to see and be involved in. There was an opportunity for people to share their contact details, which many people did, and Cllr Culley advised that the PC would organise working parties to do some maintenance work over the winter months, a comprehensive plan would be put together, and a priority list and budget made for the tree work. Communication would be as open as possible with updates regularly in the Hill & Valley for those not using social media or able to access the PC website.

**ACTION:** Update Lake section of website with Committee details - **CLERK**

**ACTION:** Add gate issue to Jobs List & organise repair - **CLERK**

**ACTION:** Small working group for development of plan – **Clerk, JD, MOP**

**ACTION:** Contact Maggie Shelton and organise new meeting – **CLERK**

**ACTION:** Plan date for first Lake working party - **ALL**

**Date of next meeting: TBA**

Meeting end: 20:30

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