

NAILSWORTH TOWN COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
 FINAL Minutes of a meeting held on 7th March 2017

Present	Cllr Sue Reed (Chair) Cllr Jonathan Duckworth Cllr Angela Norman *Cllr Robert Maitland Cllr Sally Millett Justine Hopkins (Deputy Clerk) **Cherril Pope (Visitor)
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	Action
<p>Apologies There were no apologies</p> <p>Declarations of Interest & Applications for Dispensations There were no declarations of interest or applications for dispensations</p> <p>To consider proposals on a policy for Badger protection <i>**This item was moved forward to allow for our visitor</i> We were joined by Cherril Pope, a representative from 'Gloucestershire Against Badger Shooting', who gave us an insight into the recent cull on badgers and the effect on social and community cohesion (please see attached report provided after the meeting by Cherril). Cllr Sue Reed thanked Cherril. All councillors were very supportive of the proposal to not allow badger culls on NTC owned land. Cllr Robert Maitland said it would be helpful to find out what other councils/groups do to make the ban effective and workable. It was agreed that further research would be done to see how we can enforce this. The following organisations will be contacted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GAPTC-Deputy Clerk To contact • Gloucester Wildlife Trust-Cllr Angela Norman to contact • National Trust-Cllr Sally Millett to contact • FERA Project at Woodchester Park-Cllr Sue Reed to contact <p>The committee has recommended that this proposal is added to NTC's Open Spaces Policy which is currently being drafted.</p> <p>Archives Update <i>*This item was moved forward as Cllr Robert Maitland had to leave the meeting early.</i> Cllr Robert Maitland, archives volunteer Joyce Affleck and the Clerk visited Gloucester Archives who received HLF funding for a project called 'For The Record'. They have given us an Archive and Cataloguing template, which is an excel spreadsheet, and have offered a half day training working for up to 12 volunteers at a cost of £149. It is hoped in the future the Archives may be moved to a more central position and there is scope to develop this project into a funding bid to HLF. The Deputy Clerk read out a progress report from Joyce Affleck including the work she has started on the recording of items and details of a course on 'know your place' software. There is an urgent need for the following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade of donated laptop with Microsoft Office installed • Microsoft office to be installed on the computer in the Archive room • Additional adhesive labels • USB Sticks • New Files 	<p>Deputy Clerk/AN SM/SR</p>

Councillors agreed unanimously that the above items are purchased as soon as possible. Cllr Sue Reed and Cllr Angela Norman also expressed an interest in doing the training on offer from Gloucester Archives. This will come from the 2017/18 budget.

To Consider approach by resident on disposal of land near 1 Yew Tree Cottage

The Clerk has been approached by the resident of 1 Yew Tree Cottage, Rockness to ask if they can buy a piece of NTC owned land for parking. Concern was raised regarding walkers as this is adjacent to a public footpath. The report was discussed and it was decided to ask the resident for a full design to show the environmental impact and design involved in cutting away the bank in this area.

** Cllr Robert Maitland left the meeting*

This request has now been withdrawn by the resident on 13th March

To consider proposals for new town gateway

The towns 'gateway' signs need updating. The Clerk has been looking at ways to combine the displays into a neater display and the report included a new design and the quote received. Cllr Sally Millett reported that we are not yet ready to be able to put 'dementia friendly town' on our signs. It was agreed to accept the suggested design shown and spend the existing budget of £2000 plus £1000 from the tourism promotion budget.

To receive an update on a rough sleeper in Bunting Hill open space

Cllr Sue Reed reported that this is with our legal team and it is a lengthy process. Our position is as the landowner and we are waiting for the Sheriff's office and court order before he can be evicted. Cllr Sue Reed will update Mr Podmore. In the future we must bear in mind that if this is reported within 28 days it can be actioned much quicker. We are also addressing the potential issue of the individual returning to NTC owned land in the future.

Update on Norton Wood/Plan of action for 2017

The five year management plan for Norton Wood is coming to an end (1st April 2018). Work has been concentrated on tree management and there is still work to be completed. NTC recently decided to join SDC's tree management framework agreement and in the future will use 'Tree Maintenance' for surveys and 'Midland Forestry' for tree surgery. Cllrs would like to meet with the new contractors.

Cllr Sue Reed is going to organise a Sunday afternoon picnic in the summer to give residents the chance to discuss their ideas and perceptions for the wood. We will include this as part of our display at the town meeting and also what we have done in the last year and what will be completed in this year

The report was discussed and it was agreed to adopt options 1 & 2:

- 1) To commission a new management plan for Norton Wood before Autumn 2017 to include access and public consultation
- 2) Clerk to inform Charlton Abbotts of a change in NTC's tree contractor

Also to invite residents to a summer picnic.

To discuss report on the Bee Friendly Town Project

Cllr Sue Reed reported on how we want to build up a picture of our bio-diversity with another 600 certificates this year. It was agreed to go ahead with printing costs of £348.00. Cllr Sue Reed has submitted a funding application to The Naturesave Trust to help with costs. The certificates will be awarded from June to August. We will

Deputy Clerk

Request Withdrawn

Clerk

Clerk

SRe

promote this at the town meeting and it was agreed to go ahead and print photos for this event.

SRe

To discuss CCTV provision in the town

The report was discussed regarding current provision from SDC and it was agreed to look at again in the Autumn.

To discuss a plan for Telephone Box Spring Clean

NTC now own the two kiosks in Shortwood and Watledge and are in the process of consulting with the public regarding future community use. The project will begin with a 'Spring Clean' event on 1st April at 2pm. Cllr Sue Reed will run the one at Watledge and Cllr Angela Norman at Shortwood. This will need to be advertised on NTC website nearer the event.

SRe & AN

To discuss a paper on the Forest Green Graveyard footpath

The temporary closure of the gate and footpath from the Forest Green Graveyard into Norton Wood was discussed. Cllr Sue Reed and The Clerk visited the owners who explained the path has become dangerous underfoot and they have been advised to close the path until the grass has regrown and the path re-establishes itself. It was agreed that Cllr Reed and the clerk will visit again when it is re-opened. A discussion regarding dogs on leads was held and we may consider introducing a byelaw in the future (to be discussed when more time allows).

To discuss how to mark National Meadows Day Event (1st July)

This can be linked in with the Bee Friendly Project and we will promote at the Town Meeting (no time to be discussed).

Update on action on residents overgrown hedges

Report received but no time to discuss.

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Chair

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Date

Councillor Sue Reed
Chair of the Environment Committee
Nailsworth Town Council

8 March 2017

Dear Councillor Reed,

OPEN SPACES POLICY – BADGER PROTECTION

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak with the Environment Committee on Tuesday 8 March. I was pleased to attend and to support your proposal to include a ban on badger culling on publicly owned land within the Council boundaries.

I must stress that I am not an 'expert'. My interest has grown following the introduction of culling in Gloucestershire in 2013. I joined others who were similarly outraged at the thought of their local badgers being killed. Badger culling is an extremely distressing

operation. In the North Cotswolds area in 2016, for example, on average 37 badgers were killed every night for 50 nights, giving a total of 1,858.

I would commend the proposal and congratulate you on your foresight in giving this early consideration. If the proposal is approved and becomes policy, the Council would be making a decision which

1. is **Science led and evidence based** and is supported by the Government's own Independent Expert Panel (IEP) Report following the first year of culling which concluded that the killing of badgers was 'inhumane, in effective and costly'. It is worth noting that the cost of the operation is estimated to be £26m between 2013 and 15.
2. **Supports community cohesion** given that there is evidence of the fracturing of communities where culling takes place. Polling shows that the majority of the public are opposed to badger culling as a means of reducing bTB in cattle. This sets some residents against farmers who have opted into the culling programme.
3. **Supports community safety** given that public land is by its nature 'open'. The use of powerful guns in public spaces is a risk factor.
4. Maintains **support for local farmers** who may suffer the devastation which results from a herd breakdown of bTB. There is clear scientific evidence which indicates from earlier trials that killing badgers 'makes no meaningful contribution to the reduction of bTB in cattle'.
5. **Protects an iconic wild animal** which is a protected species enshrined in the Badger Act 1992.

Detailed points are as follows:

1 **Scientific Research**

The evidence suggests that badgers are responsible for only 6% of bTB breakdowns in cattle herds. Only a tiny percentage of badgers ever become infectious with bTB.

There is no conclusive evidence that culls carried out to date have resulted in significant disease control benefits. Indeed scientific opinion suggests that it will not be possible to obtain such evidence¹. There is a wide range of strategies being implemented at the same time that it would be impossible to attribute any improvement to culling alone.

The Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) periodically announces that the cull to date has been successful. It is his view that the 'success' is based on the fact that it is possible to shoot badgers by 'free shooting'. His intention is to kill 70% of the total population. However, this is difficult given that no-one knows how many badgers there are in each area and numerical targets are modified as the cull progresses. The vast majority are healthy badgers and culled badgers are not subjected to a post mortem to establish whether they are carrying the disease.

Badgers are encouraged to take bait which is laid for several days beforehand and gunmen then shoot them from a distance. This practice is not supported by the British Veterinary Association. Their preference is for cage trapping where a similar baiting procedure takes place and then the badgers are shot at close range.

It is a surprise to many that some, by no means all, vets support even cage trapping when the evidence shows that killing these animals has no meaningful effect and is inhumane.

Recently published scientific evidence casts doubt over the role of badgers as a significant source of bovine TB in cattle and the likelihood of direct or indirect transmission of bovine TB from badgers to cattle.^{iiiiiv}

2 Supporting Community Cohesion

Given the extent to which members of the public are opposed to badger culling there is an extensive structure in place to maintain sound community relations. Gloucestershire Police have a high profile multi-agency group made up of representatives of the National Farmers' Union (NFU), Local Parish Councillors in areas where the cull takes place, Victim Support, Village Agents and a range of police officers. In addition, there is a sophisticated policing structure in place to maintain stability throughout the cull.

From my own experience of joining groups of lawful badger protectors whose aim is to rescue any of the 18% of badgers who do not 'drop to the shot', the character of those neighbourhoods is changed and destabilised by a practice of which many disapprove. These people cannot speak out for fear of creating bad feeling in the community and others are intimidated by an increase in activity.

There have been instances, particularly in Devon, where tourist organisations have become aware that people are less likely to choose to visit areas when the cull is taking place and have reported an adverse impact on tourism. Morality and safety have been cited in such instances.

3 Supporting Community Safety

The culling arrangements are carried out as an under-cover operation. Some farmers opt in to the cull and others do not. Defra, Natural England and the NFU work as a closed operation and information relating to which farms are in and which are out is a closely guarded secret. For this reason, the use of high velocity weapons in public spaces is inevitably a risk. In ruling out Council owned land, this is contributing to public safety and also eliminating a risk for which the Council might be culpable if any injury were to take place on public land.

4 Relationships with Farmers

Banning any culling on public land is not inconsistent with support for farmers who fear an outbreak of bTB. Farmers retain their right to be part of the cull on their own land. However, all the scientific evidence indicates that a major contributory factor to the spread of bTB in cattle arises from the use of a poor quality test which is unreliable. This presents a complication best described by a scientist, but suffice it to say that many infected cattle can be missed and remain in the herd to re-infect the remainder. This is very common where breakdowns occur when there has been no cattle movement. Their first line of attack is generally the badger. The disease is largely spread from cattle to cattle.

In West Somerset and West Gloucestershire where four years of culling has been completed in licensed zones, the incidence for the 12 months to the end of

October 2016 was higher than for 2014 in Somerset, and for 2015 in Gloucestershire.^v

In Wales, since 2008 to October 2016 New Herd Incidence has fallen approximately 42% without any badger being killed.^{vi} Improvements in the accuracy of testing, cattle movements controls and bio-security on farms together with good animal husbandry makes a significant difference in reducing the prevalence of bTB in cattle.

6 Protecting an iconic wild animal.

One of the attractions of an area such as Nailsworth is our co-existence with the animals with which we share our land. We need to do all we can to protect habitats of a wide range of species in order that we continue to experience the full range of our natural world and take our share of protecting it for the future.

Badgers have a long history of persecution. Such persecution is now a criminal activity. They remain under threat from badger baiters; from hunts which block their setts on a weekly basis; from people who continue to snare wild animals, and of course, from road traffic accidents. as evidenced from the carnage often seen on the A46 in particular.

It is now a criminal activity to disturb or interfere with the lives of these animals outside the period of the suspension of the Badger Act 1992 and only in licensed areas. Placing a ban on culling in Nailsworth District Council land would ensure that public land would fall outside the licensing arrangements and killing on public land would be a breach of the licence. This would amount to a criminal act on the part of the cullers.

Support for the policy of a ban on public land would send out a powerful message and is backed up by at least those points which I mentioned earlier. There will be professional organisations which can amplify these points and support them. We mentioned the National Trust and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, both of which vaccinate and refuse to allow culling on their land.

I mentioned too, the usefulness of contacting the FERA project which functions in Woodchester Park and is a national centre for badger research. It is likely that their sphere of influence borders Nailsworth's public spaces.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak at the meeting. I hope this represents a useful summary of the points which I raised.

Yours sincerely

Cherril Pope
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ⁱ Kao, R. 2015. Determining the impact of badger culling on the incidence of TB in cattle. *Veterinary Record* 177: 415-216. doi: 10.1136/vr.h5493

ⁱⁱ Moustakas, A, & Evans, M. 2016. A big-data spatial, temporal and network analysis of bovine tuberculosis between wildlife (badgers) and cattle. *Stoch Environ Res Risk Assess* DOI 10.1007/s00477-016-1311-x

ⁱⁱⁱ Drew, J, et al. 2013. Patterns of direct and indirect contact between cattle and badgers naturally infected with tuberculosis. *Epidemiol. Infect.* 141, 1467 – 1475. doi:10.1017/S0950268813000691

^{iv}

^v <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/incidence-of-tuberculosis-tb-in-cattle-in-great-britain>

^{vi} <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/incidence-of-tuberculosis-tb-in-cattle-in-great-britain>