



Minutes

Name of Meeting		Environment and Sustainability Forum	
Date and Time		30 th September 2021, 17:00-18:30	
Venue		Microsoft Teams	
Attendees		Name	Role/Organisation
		Dr. Richard Unsworth	Swansea University / HIWWT Solent seagrass project
		Tom Murphy	
		Tony Gillingham	IWC, Tree Officer
		Matthew Woodcock MBE	Forestry Commission
		Natasha Dix	IWC Strategic Manager Contracts Waste Env
		Colin Rowland	IWC Director of Neighbourhoods
		Holly Jones	IWC Climate Change Project Officer
		Jonathan Bacon	IWC Cabinet Member - Environment
		David Adams	
		Ali Day Logan	
		Robert Packham	
		Claire Critchison	
		David Thornton	
		Luke Everitt	
		Jennine Gardiner	IWC, Rights Of Way Assistant
		Emily Gordon	Environment Agency
		Helen Butler	
		Helena Hewston	
		Ian Boyd	
		John Hobart	Parish Cllr, Chillerton and Gatcombe Parish Council
		Marianne Sullivan	Councillor, Bembridge
		Michael Murwill	
		David Newton	IWC Strategic Manager Transport and Regen
		Nora Aridi	
		Richard Steele	
		Sarah Innes	
		Sarah Talbot	
		Sharon	
		Susan Betts	Councillor, Sandown Town Council
Venetia Verey			
Lester Slade			
Rob Brooker	IWC, Waste & Recycling Contract Manager		
Daisy Brasington			
17:00	ND	Welcome Apologies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alexander Lawson • Cindy Betley • Colin Palmer • Suzie Ellis 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andrew Garratt • Geoff Brodie • Lee Matthews • Nikki Wood • Stuart George • Ian Ward <p>MS Teams and housekeeping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No amendments to last month's minutes
17:05	RU	<p>Seagrass in the Solent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 380 tCO2e per hectare of seagrass sequestered – but this varies by location • Huge decline in seagrass – they like to live in sheltered areas, but humans have developed large populations in the same areas • Years of research aiming to restore seagrass – Chesapeake Bay have restored thousands of hectares already, but most projects to date are focused outside the UK. • In the UK about 10 years have been spent researching restoration to date • Dale, South Wales – pilot seagrass planting project since 2014 • Increasing ambition about what we can do in other areas – Carlsberg are sponsoring a Solent project • Need to do your homework: many schemes have failed because of lack of preparation or lack of knowledge of the environment/ecology • Currently considering where on the IOW/nearby mainland we can restore seagrass – biological and social perspectives must be considered • Modelling took place initially – now looking at local conditions on site and assessing whether trials are likely to be successful • Sharing information with various other organisations to support projects • Early stages – lots of data to work through, moving into decision-making and stakeholder engagement phase
17:25		Q&A
	ND	How is sponsorship and funding looking so far?
	RU	£200k secured to carry out work but this will not cover all costs of the project – it is not a cheap project to run. We are aiming to bring down costs to become more efficient at restoring seagrass. Some major costs e.g. mechanising of seed
	HJ	How did Carlsberg become involved in sponsorship?
	RU	Collaboration with WWF – they approached Carlsberg who want to create a more sustainable organisation. Need to avoid Risk of Greenwashing
	SI	I live in NW Ryde and walk along beach a lot. Was told by locals we've got eelgrass and seahorses but very strong tidal streams east-west. Will eelgrass there be on tidal part or main shipping channels? Would be very keen to support anything in this area
	RU	Seagrasses are surprisingly healthy in this area but have declined in footprint of hovercraft. Under the pier is extensive seagrass – we have surveyed health in different areas and are still analysing data. Seagrass here is in reasonable state but there are some issues with wash – inhibiting factor on recovery in this area. Seagrasses don't deal with wave pressure but are good with fast currents – Severn Estuary is a huge tidal range but seagrass is present here despite tide rips. Seahorse linkage may be overplayed – they are adaptable to different environments but more easily seen in seagrass.
	SI	Along NW Ryde beach when tide goes out what I think is seagrass is visible. Birds eat this. Sometimes there is little, other seasons a lot – is this eelgrass?
	RU	Ulva (seaweed) looks similar and grows here – easily confused. Seagrass looks like a terrestrial grass with leaves – you may be able to see the difference if you

		can get closer. Birds do graze it in winter months, but seagrasses naturally come and go in cycles. Could be natural change.
	VV	Does NOx pollution affect seagrass?
	RU	Yes – NOx is absorbed into shallow waters. Mississippi NOx levels are so high it is affecting the water. Less of a problem here with decline of coal power but it can be problematic in some areas.
	SB	What is the major polluting factor and where do we get seeds?
	RU	Major factor around the Solent is input of nutrients from various industries and felling of trees along rivers and overuse of fertiliser in gardens/farms. We are working with natural England to get greater acceptance for idea of seagrass restoration – currently slow. Development of restoration projects has taken regulators by surprise so can be difficult to get permission. In Scotland community groups have been given help to set up solo projects – could possibly happen locally. Looking at where restoration could be done tidally and sub-tidally – could be opportunity to involve people here. In West Wales over 1000 people got involved. Have to process seeds – like underwater gardening. Need a lot of hands.
	SB	We have noticed seagrass in various areas in the South of the island, including Bembridge which is known for short snouted seahorses. Will you be looking in these areas as well?
	RU	Considering these areas – met Annie (?) from Bembridge who is supportive of idea. There is hesitation from harbour authorities to link with projects so need to carry out further stakeholder engagement.
	EG	IWC are looking at this for its carbon storage benefits, but are we likely to see developers also looking to enter local partnerships to help them achieve biodiversity net gains requirements?
	RU	The whole idea of net gain in marine environment is not happening currently. Discussions are taking place with windfarm operators who are likely to need to meet net gain in marine environment.
	VV	Re. the water quality degradation (nitrates etc.) will the project be measuring these as a base line say in 2021. The IW records office hold lichen records which are 50 years old
	RU	Baseline assessments taking place – water quality can be measured through nutrients in seagrass as it absorbs them over time.
	SB	How can we be more involved in the planting?
	RU	If planting large areas, you need a lot of seeds. We typically do this with divers but also snorkellers or waders. Once sites are decided we will reach out to seek volunteers. Need to ensure planting is carried out during correct tides – may not even need volunteers to go into water. Method of planting is TBC and this may affect how things can be done. Over 12 months we will set up website/Facebook page to engage volunteers.
17:40	TM	Hedgerows
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slides attached • Tom has looked after hedgerows on the Island for approx. 20 years • 3 x Isle of Wight hedge laying competition winner • Many benefits of hedgerows • 50% of UK hedges lost since WW2 • Managing hedgerows – big topic, lots of different opinions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Flailing is sometimes necessary but sometimes controversial • Hedgerows are protected but this can be difficult to enforce

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we enhance/manage existing hedges and establish new hedgerows? Various funding available <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ HJ to add details of funding into next version of grants document • AONB – get in touch if interested. Lots of resources available for new projects and further information.
18:00		Q&A
	MS	Bembridge PC has hundreds of little tree whips arriving so could they be added to hedges to fill gaps and thicken the hedge?
	TM	*Covered during slides* - it is good to add trees into hedgerows, but they can be difficult to maintain, particularly with smaller trees if flailing takes place
	MM	Can you build hedges for residential homes?
	TM	Probably not using this funding – these are aimed at landowners/rural schemes
	ST	Are there any sustainable tree guards available?
	TM	Problem is getting something that protects hedge and doesn't degrade quickly. Some attempts using carboard, but most items don't last long enough. We've sourced some biodegradable plastic spiral guards and used these for first time last year, so they are under trial – manufactured by Green Tech / Hedge Bio. Next Gen: tree guards made of sheep's wool, developed by same company but seem to be working well.
	DB	I feel like there's a lot of potential with these wool products and tree planting - I'm interested in mulch mats that might be feasible too
	TM	Natural mulch mats are available using sheep's wool and other materials, but voles can use them as a habitat which can do a lot of damage so need to ensure you are using the right tree guard.
	ND	How can we get out information about how to best manage hedgerows, particularly within farming community?
	TM	AONB are probably best placed for this but it is tricky. Alternatively, there are NFU/ Young Farmers groups and workshops. May be a generational lack of knowledge as farmers have been focused on production and not trees/hedges in the last few decades. Trees/hedges may be viewed as alibility rather than a benefit in many cases.
18:15	TG	Tree planting project
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs can be high – up to £100 per tree in recent planting project • Need to water consistently through first 2-3 growing seasons – added challenge as this requires a lot of resources • Trees often die off if not planted properly or cared for correctly • Need a 'right tree right place' approach for sustainable tree stock in urban areas • Lack of places to plant – has been covered in previous forums but this is biggest challenge locally and something we've found very challenging in the last year • Conflicts between humans and trees but also there is a need for open green space • HJ currently working on this with our support but it will take time to identify suitable land • A lot of issues are caused by wrong tree being planted – can be susceptible to decay, difficult to prune, or too large for surroundings, e.g. street trees conflicting with infrastructure • Need to plan carefully to avoid any issues with newly planted trees especially in urban areas

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If replacing trees need to take same approach – not just always replace like for like • Vandalism is another issue so often have to plant more trees than expected • Community involvement is often lacking which can again lead to failed projects • Last winter we experimented with planting trees alongside volunteers/ community groups – bottom-up approach to avoid project failure by ensuring communities are more closely involved. Would like to expand this approach in the future • Worked with Planet Aware. Sarah Marshall got in touch to collaborate and project grew from there on the basis of tackling climate change through tree planting – big thanks to Sarah • PA contacted community groups to apply for free trees • Planted in parks which was challenging as above – people are often unhappy with locations of new trees so need to ensure locals are involved early to avoid issues • We supported application process, planting, and aftercare – also carried out some education projects with volunteers • Planted whips to try and ensure survival and decrease aftercare costs • Right tree right place approach – this was experimental, and we have learned a lot by carrying out this project • Volunteers massively reduced costs which is great – also was an opportunity to meet locals and share knowledge • 3 sites – couldn't plant during ideal time of year because of Covid so whips arrived late, and we planted at start of April. Not best practice but less of an issue for whips. Likely to cause more issues with bigger trees which should be planted in winter ideally. • 3 sites: • Bigmead: circular hedge with openings. Dogwood, hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel • Pluckpool: line of trees of crab-apple, wild cherry, and rowan with East Cowes Scout group – very successful project. Trees planted close together as we are expecting a large failure rate. However, they are looking good so far so we may need to transplant some trees • Appley park: planted with Ryde youth group. Standard forestry planting: close together for high failure rate, in 2x2 meter square rows. Oak, wild cherry, field maple, birch, rowan. Whips used again to improve survival rate <p>Lessons learned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning is 100% the key – site surveys, right tree right place, collaborating with community groups to foster relationships, finding appropriate places to plant is biggest challenge. • Hope to collaborate with T&PCs in the future to find spaces to plant. Need to get word out and get stakeholder feedback. • Aftercare is important to produce sustainable/healthy tree stock and reduce conflicts in future. Cost of aftercare can potentially be reduced through collaboration – upcoming project this winter at Park Road Rec have already organised tree wardens to care for new planted trees. • Lots of local support for projects so we hope to build up more planting soon.
17:55		Q&A
	ALD	We need to ensure that mycelium is added to the roots, plus gorse bushes as a companion are excellent as natural tree nursery protection

TG	Bit sceptical about this – some recent studies show it may do more harm than good. Relationships are very specific and only certain fungi are associated with certain trees. We don't know enough about those relationships to fully understand the benefits/disadvantages of these products. Adding the wrong type could be detrimental rather than beneficial
DB	Cambridge is using gator bags
TG	Don't know about these bags – we are using watering tubes and on next batch of planting will experiment with biochar
MS	Bembridge urgently needs a water bowser on a trolley to go round the village with the Lengthsmen, do you have any recommendations, or not too expensive equipment please?
	<p>Tony has sent some recommendations as a follow-up: https://www.tanks-direct.co.uk/110-litre-water-natural-bowser-carrier/p6000?gclid=EAlaIqobChMIssu21NS18wIVxe3tCh2LXgr8EAQYASABEgIOdPD_BwE</p> <p>https://www.interiorlandscapingproducts.co.uk/store/H2O-SLS-Mobile-Waterer-lead-time-5-7-working-days-p130097407</p> <p>Alternatively, you can get ones for camping that are 30ltrs and barrelled, which roll. They would be cheaper. Another option is to buy a cheaper 1tonne water ballast and long hose. This would only work if it was non-portable, and you would probably need to build a small shed around with padlock in case of theft/vandalism.</p> <p>If they want one that fits on a tow hitch, then there are loads out there. We have in the past put a 1 tonne ballast tank on the back of a small trailer and bought a hose. Motor may be required if pumping up hill.</p>
MS	We have a dreadful Honey Fungus problem, any advice please. We've already lost many trees, especially Cemetery trees.
TG	If trees are in ill health, they are likely to succumb to honey fungus. It may kill the tree eventually but won't be what starts the process. Need to care for trees more sustainably especially rooting – avoid poor cutting regime
MS	Should we feed the trees?
TG	<p>I would not fertilize trees when planting or afterwards because getting the nutrient balance correct is the job of the tree and its associated fungi. We cannot be sure whether we are adding the correct things in the correct amounts. Nutrient loading through fertilizers in parks leads to a reduced diversity of mycorrhizal fungi and therefore reduced tree health.</p> <p>Mulch around the bottom of new or older trees is a useful way of the letting the trees feed themselves. The mulch should ideally be composted for at least 6 months beforehand. Or you can use woodchip but make sure it's from the same park/garden, so you are not spreading pathogens around the island/country. Woodchip can cause nitrogen depletion in the very top layer of soil, but this is generally only a problem in herbaceous flowerbeds with shallow root systems. A layer of mulch or chip should be not deeper than 10cm. This is to maintain oxygen supply to the tree roots, the majority of which are in the top 60cm of soil.</p> <p>I don't think the Mycorrhizal granules are doing any harm, but the question is whether they are doing any good. Because we don't know what species are in them and therefore don't know if they are appropriate for the trees planted.</p>

		We use water retention granules when planting. They are inert plant-based granules, and you can buy them from most garden centres.
	JH	Copse Road could do with trees – don't know what type though. Los Altos trees have been coppiced but have green dots are they to be felled?
	TG	Dots are from before tree work was done so not to come out Wildflowers also present here – need to work to accommodate these
18:25	MW	<p>Forestry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships and expertise manager for forestry commission for south east England – have dealt with area for 20+ years • Encouragement and options • What is forestry? People talk about it a lot. Today it is about how trees deliver functions in the landscapes – people, environment, economy. • Island has 13.5% woodland cover – bit higher than national average. • Only 1118 hectares directly managed by forestry commission • Care for trees, provide advice, administer grants • On IOW: High woodland cover, no deer population, red squirrels present (no greys). Lots of positives. For island trees • Facilitated 'jigsaw' programme about 10years ago – linking existing island to improve red squirrel habitats, helped with right tree right place approach for this outcome • Threats in last 50 years: Dutch elm disease (40/50 years ago); ash dieback is a current issue • Climate change: increasing appreciation of how trees can help in multiple ways. Carbon sequestration is only one way. • CCC report on land use policies for net zero UK (add link) • 30000 hectares per year planting target across UK on an ongoing basis to 2050 • Budget available for targets – Nature for Climate fund £560 million (trees, peatland, various other projects) • England Tree Action Plan published in past few months • Slide on screen: where can trees fit on your farm? • Outlines how trees can work for farms – integrated landscape approach (Matthew to share – send with minutes) • Right tree in right place: Forestry Commission role as regulator is to ensure this • Afforestation or deforestation are subject to environmental regulation rules – avoid habitat damage • Nitrate hitting Solent concerns: development delayed unless can be demonstrated as nitrate-neutral • DEFRA and environment agency working together to support landowners to plant trees to balance out nitrate from development • Funding for carbon sequestration – how to stack with current grants • England Tree Woodland Offer – best grant for tree planting in Matthew's career -great incentive to plant • Farming on IOW has added burden of transport to mainland – many farmers are investigating different options to fit trees onto parts of farms that are less productive but needs to fit wider constraints • Forestry commission also supports tree planting: urban tree challenge fund and local authority treescape fund launched this year. LATF designed to help recovery from ash dieback • Carbon sequestration: volume of carbon stored in soil/roots/stumps is more than that in trunks and leaves. Trees absorb a lot of carbon as they grow.

		<p>Cutting down trees can put carbon back in atmosphere. Careful management e.g. coppicing (growing trees at same rate of removal) helps avoid this</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodland carbon guarantee: pays for carbon sequestered as new woodland grows. Can provide income streams. Guarantees income for 10–25-year-old woodland. Also provides capital grant to plant woodland, as well as ‘add-ons’ e.g. for public access, location for water quality etc. • Key thing to consider: resilient treescape. Variety of trees, variety of ages, variety of management regimes. Can help avoid new diseases. • Corporate sponsorship: AEGIS • Community engagement is key – vital to involve communities and great to include schoolchildren. Reduces opportunities for vandalism as there is more connection. • Don’t always plant large trees – small trees are just as important.
18:50		Q&A
	VV	How is the Forestry Commission monitoring Air pollution?
	MW	FC has 3 arms. Forest Research – monitor research, disease, water quality, air pollution. Trees can be used under countryside stewardship as they manage ammonia pollution and ‘filter out’ dust
	JH	Because of climate change – if climate is changing and weather goes more Mediterranean should we plant palm trees on beaches?
	MW	Should consider implications but not necessarily palm trees Ecological Site Classification – identifies what trees would work best in warmer climate depending on how warm. Looks at getting seeds for native trees from warmer locations. Trees grow to fit climate – beech is very robust and grows in locations such as mountaintops. Diversity of trees is most important factor.
	ADL	Have you considered putting forward programmes to farmers re agroforestry? Feels like we are palming off areas for rewilding whereas agroforestry could allow for more productive use / improve biodiversity
	MW	EWCO: want to include agroforestry options including alley cropping, silver poultry. Didn’t have time to look at detail for first launch but we are working on this at the minute. Workshops taking place over next month. Land use for next zero UK document (CCC) refers to agroforestry.
	AL	Need to educate farms about Alley cropping and agroforestry, which enables trees to become part of the food, economic and ecology solution.
	MW	Way we manage land – need to help farmers explore options. They need to want to plant trees/participate – how do we get people involved? Farmers clusters, countryside stewardship facilitation fund – capital support to form clusters. Not sure about support for this on the island
	TG	FC came over to look at ash on island recently – first said it wasn’t as bad as mainland but was told we may not be eligible for woodland health grant. Can you suggest another solution?
	MW	Various issues/challenges with ash dieback. On thin chalk soils it can be very badly affected because of spores from leaf litter. On clay, there is less of a problem. Some areas have ash dieback officers examining implications but at the moment we only have the grant to help replant ash woodland where it’s been cleared. We are looking at a trial for further tree health grants, but this is limited at the minute. Biomass is being taken up more widely – one development on island is fully heated by woodchip burning but unsure how well this is going. Need to look at island as an integrated landscape to support trees and woodlands in perpetuity
19:10		Pre-submitted questions

		None submitted
19:10		AOB
		None raised
Date of next Environment & Sustainability Forum: 27th October 2021, 17:00-18:30		
Topic: climate strategy engagement		