



# Tiverton Town Council

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## Minutes of the Climate Change Committee Meeting held on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020 via zoom.

**Present:** Cllr's A Hendy (Chairman), Cllr S Bush, Cllr P Hill, Cllr B Holdman, Cllr A Perris, Mrs S Chapman, Mrs V Pelaou, Ms C Pearson, Mr P Turnbull, Mr A Walker.

**In attendance:** Mr J Vanderwolfe (Town Clerk), Assistant to the Town Clerk (Mrs J Hubbard) & one member of public.

<b>31</b>	<b>Apologies</b> Apologies received from Cllr A Mulligan (working).
<b>32</b>	<b>Minutes</b> The minutes of the meeting held on the 28 <sup>th</sup> September 2020, having been previously circulated, were agreed as a true record.
<b>33</b>	<b>Matters Arising</b> There were no matters arising.
<b>34</b>	<b>Democratic Period</b> .One member of public addressed the committee to say thank you for the proposed Archimedes Scheme and to say how pleased she was with all the efforts of the Tree Team planting. Cllr P Hill informed the members that the proposed Hydro power scheme for the river Exe weir was not a done deal as it had received 100 objections, including one from the Environment Agency who had requested more information on the scheme.
<b>35</b>	<b>Presentation by Mr P Turnbull of the West Country Rivers Trust (regarding Bickleigh weir)</b> Mr Turnbull began by introducing himself as the fisheries Technical officer for West Country Rivers Trust and a project officer of the partnership trust for the Strategic Exe Weir programme, comprising of the West Country Rivers Trust and the River Exe Contributory Association. Whose primary aim was to improve fish migration throughout the river Exe system. They would look at three key issues, upstream migration, downstream migration and free movement of all fish species. He explained to the committee the importance of the Atlantic salmon species as a key species in resident rivers that benefited a wide range of species. He likened them to "canaries in the mine" in terms of an indicator for ecological health of the river. They are of high socio-economic value species and seen as a culturally important and iconic. They are a major link

between the river and the sea and are a protected species.  
Mr Turnbull provided details for the life cycle of the fish and informed the committee that numbers of salmon were declining at an ever faster rate with a 50-70% loss in the last few decades. It was recognised how important freshwater was to their survival. One of the reasons for the decline were smaller smolts entering the sea, coupled with climate change and timing and quality of marine food. The Environment Agency had assessed salmon numbers on a national level and the river Exe was now acknowledged as at risk with salmon numbers no longer sustainable.

Now the aim was to focus on why the fish have declined. **Missing Salmon Alliance web page for more information.**

Mr Turnbull explained that in England and Wales there was now a salmon 5 point approach.

- Improve marine survival
- Reduce exploitation
- Remove barriers
- Safeguard sufficient flow
- Maximise spawning success by improving water quality

Mr Turnbull said that his role was to look into point 3.Remove Barriers this is being nationally led by the Rivers movement.

The reason for this was because of a study carried out in the 1990s specifically looking at migration in the river Exe. Its conclusions were that the weirs were causing unnatural delays for migratory fish. Since then some modifications have been made but were relatively small scale and not having much of an impact.

A further study was carried out in 2017 looking at fish passages which then led to the current programme (Strategic Rive Exe Weir Programme) being formed in 2019.

Mr Turnbull offered statistics on various studies on reviews of the fish passage at the river Exe to illustrate how the barriers impeded upon the survival of the fish.

If a weir was long and sloping such as the Bickleigh weir this posed real issues for larger fish as they would not have such a covering of water as smaller fish and this would result in fatigue due to them trying to jump or leap to negotiate the slope quicker. Mr Turnbull pointed out that a jumping salmon is not a happy salmon. Equally unnaturally slower and deeper weirs caused different issues in that the lack of flow could cause fish to gather in pooled areas and succumb to predators or disease from potential pollution caused by stagnation.

There were 25 barriers on the river Exe and some were already being looked at in terms of their severity and locations with a view to how they could be adapted and or improved. Bickleigh weir was a long sloping weir with shallow water and a design tender plan was being worked on to best adapt or change the structure without impacting on its visual impact or on its ability to protect the ancient bridge that spans it at that point. Mr Turnbull said that there were similar plans being worked on for the river Teign with Devon County Council and a further plan for Bolham too.

Cllr A Perris said he did not understand how the weirs on the river Exe

	<p>could be responsible for the decline in salmon as many of the weirs had been in place since the 13<sup>th</sup> century, have they put in extra weirs in the last 30 years? He asked what changed in the 1980's as salmon were negotiating badly designed weirs and thriving before then. He referenced works done by the Environment Agency in 2008 where they had cut back vegetation in the Exe and asked if this could have contributed to the decline.</p> <p>Mr Turnbull said that there would have been higher numbers of salmon before and therefore it would have been less noticeable a decline for a period of time, but he conceded that many other factors had impacted upon the numbers too. Mr Turnbull said there were many other works going on to improve conditions for salmon, such as working with South West Water to look at the sediment in the river.</p> <p>Cllr Perris suggested clarifying that weirs are not the only cause of the problem. Mr Turnbull accepted the point.</p> <p>Cllr B Holdman pointed out that Bickleigh itself was prone to flooding and asked whether there had been any studies carried out on the impacts.</p> <p>Mr Turnbull replied to say that all projects were flood risk compliant.</p> <p>Cllr S Bush agreed with Cllr Perris on weirs. He asked if the proposed hydro-power scheme for the river exe with its Archimedes screw would help facilitate fish pass.</p> <p>Mr Turnbull explained that in his opinion hydro-power schemes with Archimedes screws offered both positives and negatives. He recognised the need for greener energy but questioned the schemes impact if it created a detrimental impact on the further decline of salmon. His thoughts were that 1 or 2 installations would be negligible but more than this and it could be detrimental. He said that each site should be individually assessed to determine this.</p> <p>Cllr A Hendy pointed out that there had been a history of flooding problems at Bickleigh bridge.</p> <p>Cllr S Bush asked if putting a stop to the fishing of salmon could halt their decline.</p> <p>Mr Turnbull said that as an angler himself and a conservation officer he recognised the natural capital of the river and pointed out that salmon angling had reduced.</p> <p>He concluded his presentation by saying that he would be happy to discuss the project or issues further with members after the meeting.</p> <p>Cllr A Hendy thanked Mr Turnbull for his in depth presentation.</p>
36	<p><b>Tree Team Update (written report)</b></p> <p>No written report was received and Ms F Armstrong was not present for the meeting. Ms S Chapman provided a brief overview of the tree team. She said that a planned tree planting project for Tiverton High School had been postponed but was due to take place next weekend. The team had run a campaign to encourage children to gather tree seeds such as acorns and</p>

	<p>beech nuts with a view to growing trees.  The tree team now needed funding to continue with their work.  The Town Clerk said that the Mayor Cllr C Slade had agreed to donate £500 to the team to help them to continue their work.  Ms Chapman said that she thought an application for funding had been turned down by the town council but the Town Clerk confirmed that no application had been received from the tree team.  Cllr A Perris asked how much the team had asked for from the council.  Ms Chapman understood it to be £1500.  The Town Clerk said he had been aware of a plan to apply but that no formal application had ever been made. He went on to say that grants for future projects would be very limited due to the covid-19 crisis and its economic impact. A decision had been agreed at a recent Finance and General Purpose meeting not to award grants for 2020/2021.  Cllr Perris responded to ask if as a committee they could discuss this.  The Town Clerk replied to say that the budget for 2020/2021 had already been drafted up.  Cllr Perris said that the committee could decide to make this important and to assist with funding for next year. He asked Ms Chapman when the main tree planting season was. She confirmed that it was between November to March.  Cllr B Holdman proposed to look at a small budget for things like tree planting.  The Town Clerk replied that anything was possible but that they would need to wait for the Finance &amp; General Purpose meeting to try and ensure that the budget could be kept the same as any funding could raise the precept and in turn impact upon the community. He suggested that they wait until he did the budget presentation at this meeting.  Ms Chapman confirmed that the tree team had no funding for next year. She offered to send the account information if required.</p>
37	<p><b>Mid Devon District Council Climate Change Committee Update</b>  Cllr B Holdman read out his report of which a brief overview is bullet pointed below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cllr Holdman said that a new handbook setting out the Climate Strategy and Action Plan had been produced, that set out the UK regulations and legislation, the national indicators and the reporting criteria for greenhouse gas emissions. The book contained links to the Corporate Plan and Local Plan.</li> <li>• He said that there was now a drive to improve homes to make them more energy efficient. He explained that the Council had been at the forefront of carbon reduction in implementing solar power on its council houses and leisure centres.</li> <li>• Tree planting opportunities were being looked at within the District.</li> <li>• Protective equipment to be used by the District Officers for Waste and Recycling and the possible use of body cams; a report would be going to the Community PDG with regard to the Corporate CCTV Policy following this further work would take place.</li> <li>• More cycling options were being discussed.</li> <li>• The budget for 2020/21 had been agreed.</li> </ul>

<p><b>38</b></p>	<p><b>Climate change during Covid-19</b></p> <p>Cllr S Bush began by saying that the first national lockdown had been positive in mitigating climate change in the short term, but asked what happens next and what is the new normal? He hoped it would not be a return of the same old same old. He asked how to reduce climate change going forwards. Councils have declared a climate emergency and it was important not to forget.</p> <p>Cllr Hendy said that a cut in travel and zoom meetings were positive but asked where we go forwards?</p> <p>Do we continue to allow people to meet via zoom more often or offer a mixture of the two (hybrid meetings). She said that nature had made a resurgence with bird song and clearer air during the lockdown and offered a window of what life could be like. Climate change is important and worth investing in.</p> <p>The Town Clerk said that zoom meetings had saved money as it has cut out travel costs. He said that attendance levels for meetings had been higher on Zoom than with face to face meetings. The Town Clerk pointed out that the current regulations for council hybrid meetings only extended to May 2021.</p> <p>Cllr A Hendy asked if it would be worth writing to the M.P. Neil Parish.</p> <p>Cllr B Holdman said that M.P. Neil Parish was already campaigning for hybrid or digital meetings.</p> <p>Cllr A Hendy proposed to write to M.P. Neil Parish, this was seconded by Cllr A Perris.</p> <p>The Town Clerk agreed to write to the M.P. Neil Parish.</p> <p>The Town Clerk said that there may be a need to incorporate more technology for the Town Hall for the purpose of hybrid meetings.</p> <p>The Town Clerk said he felt there was a need for a less formal environment for Full Council meetings to encourage more members of public to attend.</p> <p>He said that for Planning meetings and Climate Change meetings Zoom worked very well.</p> <p>The Town Clerk said he would look at the town council budget for 2020/21 with a view to trying to allocate a small amount to the Climate Change Committee. The suggested amount was for £1,000.</p> <p>Cllr Hendy thanked Ms C Pearson for her attendance and asked if she could give her update on plastics at the next meeting. This was agreed.</p> <p>The meeting concluded.</p>
<p><b>39</b></p>	<p><b>Next Meeting</b> TBC</p>