

## Minutes of meeting with Lorne Thomson from Yeovil River's Community Trust (YRCT)

16th February 2023 at Ninesprings Cafe, Yeovil.

Present: Kim Creswell, Laura Palmer, Emma Etherington, Lorne Thomson.

1) The meeting begun with Kim bringing us all up to speed with some changes she has made to the group name and structure to hopefully help with the application to the Charities Commission in setting up the group as a charity. This included:

- **The Name:** To avoid the problems with using the word "Queen", the group will now be officially called "Nature Watch Group", with "QT" being used to specify location, rather than as the name.
- **Stated Aims:** This has been simplified "To promote the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment by promoting biodiversity."
- **Area:** Straddles Dorset and Somerset, so we can widen our research and study area without running into problems.

2) We moved on to asking Lorne about ways he and the YRCT could be of help to us in our application to the Charities Commission:

- Lorne, as an 'expert', agreed to write a supporting letter for the charity application, showing how the 'Nature Watch Group' will benefit the geographical area by striving to enhance and protect the natural environment and promote biodiversity; this being of particular importance as in the area we will be working are the source of streams that feed the River Yeo. This will be done through the monitoring of streams for aquatic life and signs of pollution, and also the monitoring of wildlife in the Queen Thorne parish areas, which includes the conservation area, the 'Trent Hills' and some SSI's.
- YRT will pen a letter indicating how our group will benefit the community, both individuals and businesses, through organised water monitoring training and events, research and data collection and dispersal, and a central hub which raises awareness and encourages engagement with nature for all, which will aid our application with the Charities Commission.
- YRT are happy to provide a funding channel to our group as long as there is an audit trail.
- Insurance: NWG could potentially tag on to the YRCT's insurance for certain events.
- YRT may be able to assist with water testing if NWG is short of equipment.

Lorne stated that YRT are keen to provide support and advice to NWG.

3) Lorne outlined ways and places we may be able to get help , whether that be with information, or finances. These included:

- **Spark Somerset:** A charity that helps charities.
- **The DEFRA "Magic" website:** This shows all the SSSI's, AONB's, Nature Reserves etc, and may help us in our charity application if we can show if any of these fall within our research area.
- **Landfill Tax:** Landfill tax has to go to the communities that are within 10 miles of a landfill site. Look at the Viridor website for location of local landfill sites.
- **National Lottery Fund.**
- **Wessex Water Funds.**

- **Outfall Safari:** Working with Wessex Water. There is a training package (CSI orientated) and may be a source of funding and income.

#### 4) Lorne highlighted other things that may help in our charity application:

- Using the evidence we have of phosphate pollution, as one component of our application.
- Include climate mitigation through the promotion of biodiversity, and its crucial part in building a resilient environment.
- Talk of our link to the wider river ecosystem. We are part of the source of the River Yeo. The YRCT is working with landowners on river sites from source to confluence and has put in an application of interest to the Climate Action Fund. If successful, this is something we could get involved in.

#### 5) Banking:

- Emma outlined some obstacles in setting up a bank account for the group, specifically, the general need to have a bank account to start a charity application, and vice versa. NWG plans to have submitted a CIO application and a bank account application by March 2023. YRT are willing to help us with getting funding stream going with a distinct audit trail.
- The Unity Trust Bank, who we are aiming to bank with, is part of the Financial Conduct Authorities and has ethos in alignment with NWG.
- Lorne asked about cosignatories. He advised us to have as many people as possible, so all four of us should be cosignatories. As Kim and Rowan are related they will not be able to co-sign together.

#### 6) Membership :

- Laura then asked Lorne what works best for the YRCT in advertising, fundraising, events happening, etc, He said :
  - Social media (Facebook etc);
  - Website;
  - Education and outreach projects, eg. with schools;
  - Guided walks, especially themed ones eg. ornithology;
  - Events particularly set up for health and wellbeing, social prescribing, social help.

#### 7) Training and testing:

- Asking about any training the YRCT offers, Lorne said there are events published on the social media pages and website. This includes the following:
  - In the summer there is due to be a joint rivers event in Ninesprings that would be welcome to join.
  - Natural Flood Management project: natural climate solutions, natural flood management, nature based solutions.
  - Water Vole project: surveys etc.
  - River surveys
  - Brimpton Project: pond restoration, wildflowers, soil testing for organic carbon.
- With regard to kick-testing, Lorne commented that it is a good place to start, and when we have more experience we may wish to broaden parameters. He said the Dorset Wildlife Trust 'Water Guardians', and West Country Rivers CST are useful schemes to contribute to.

Trustees of NWG thank Lorne of YRT for his invaluable assistance.

