

Community Meeting Event Public Meeting Report
Primrose Nature Reserve
29th March 2023
St James CoE Primary School

Attendees: 27 plus 8 from presenters, trustees and volunteer assistants

Meeting Objective:

A conversation about how we can look after the nature reserve together as a vibrant community and what next for its future

1. Agenda

- Introduction - Richard Stephenson (Trustee Chair)
- The Journey: From inception, Phase 1 and Phase 2 - Jack Spees RRT
- Audience and Panel Discussion - Panel
- Habitat and Management Plan - Lorraine Ritchen-Stones
- Volunteering Opportunities Table Top Exercise - PCNT Trustees
- The Future - Richard Stephenson & Anthony Capstick
- Group Discussion & Close - All

2. Introduction

RS gave a brief background to Primrose Community Nature Trust and set out the plan for the meeting.

Launched in January 2019 to convert the former Primrose Mill. Lodge into a public open space within the heart of Clitheroe, with the aims of improving the habitats, providing public access, and connecting the river habitat. It is unique in

its placement within urban surroundings. In March 2019 Primrose Community Nature Trust was incorporated and subsequently, it was awarded charitable status.

RS explained the key charitable purposes of the Trust

The Objects for which the Charity is established are: -

- (1) To conserve and protect the biodiversity of the Reserve
- (2) To advance the education of the public in the understanding of biodiversity, conservation and the joy of nature through observing and participating in the activities of the Reserve, particularly schools
- (3) To provide a special green place for the community to enjoy for the benefit of both the physical and mental well-being of the community.

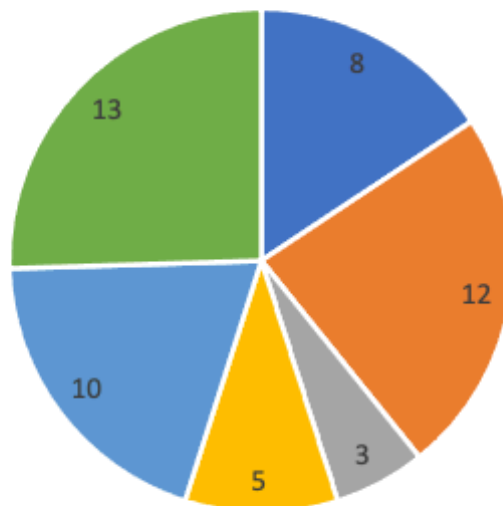
During COVID the first consultation took place via Zoom which was naturally restrictive. This community meeting was arranged to hold a conversation about how we can look after the nature reserve together as a vibrant community and what is next for its future.

The Attendees were asked to complete a questionnaire card to answer 3 questions when they arrived

Why do you visit the nature reserve?	What do you enjoy most?	How does the reserve support your well-being?
--------------------------------------	-------------------------	-----------------------------------------------

The summary response is shown in the pie chart below

Response



3 Jack Spees took the attendees through the journey that created the Nature Reserve.

“The Journey: From inception, Phase 1 and Phase 2 - Jack Spees RRT”

Jack Spees RRT presented on "The Journey" which included the project's inception, Phase 1 and Phase 2. He shared that the project's true beginning was in 1990 with the Local Plan, followed by feasibility studies in 2009, 2011, and 2018, with the latter two studies showing funding opportunities from Housing Development Contribution funds. While there was initially an insufficient budget for the project, RRT identified an opportunity to apply for European Regional Development Funds (RDF) before the tight deadline. The inclusion of a fish pass was a key factor in securing the grant, as it delivered benefits beyond the Reserve and included the Merely Book catchment area. The grant was awarded in September 2018 but there was a need to overcome various complications, including the need to form the PCNT to buy and own the land required for the project. Jack also discussed and demonstrated with a slide show the challenges of the construction and that posed by COVID leading up to the project's opening in Spring 2021.

Subsequently, RRT was given the opportunity to improve the water quality by installing a reed bed in the drainage channel and constructing a more accessible path and bridge.

Question and Answer session:

Q1. Do you talk to Becks? Do we have any influence over them?

Answer: Yes, we can have an open discussion with Becks and have raised issues and concerns during the construction of the houses to which they have responded constructively.

Q2. What is happening with Becks' other pieces of land?

Answer: The options are currently being considered by Becks as far as we are aware they have not reached a decision.

Q3 Is it likely to be built on?

Answer: The site is problematic and therefore more costly to develop. The decision is for Becks to reapply for planning.

Q4 What about the Japanese Knott weed?

Answer: The adjacent site has an extensive infestation of Japanese Knotweed and this would need to be dealt with in plan the developer proposed.

Q5 Are there any other difficulties on the site?

Answer: This is a matter for Beck Development but as far as we are aware the stability of the soil is poor and this will need to be addressed if the site is developed. Flood risk would need to be taken into account.

Q6 A lot of concern about traffic on Woone Lane, are there going to be any traffic calming measures?

Answer: Jack confirmed had been raised with Lancashire County Council and they provided detailed advice that stated that this was not necessary. The entrance was moved to its current position at their behest on safety grounds.

Chair summarised three key themes from the postcard exercise:

- Health and well-being benefits either physical or mental health
- Enjoyment and promotion of wildlife
- Enjoy walking away from traffic, noise and pollution

4. Introducing Habitat Management Plan & Volunteering

Lorraine explained the public safety challenges of the Reserve and the considerations the volunteers need to bear in mind. Namely:

Task duration

Levels of agility

Work intensity

Outdoor clothing and footwear needed

Infection control risks e.g. COVID, Waterborne illnesses, Bird Flu.

Lorraine explained the Trustee obligations that covered legal, governance, the compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Management of H&S at Work Regulations 1999.

Lorraine then explained the 5 Health and Safety Zones of the Reserve



Zones: Health & Safety

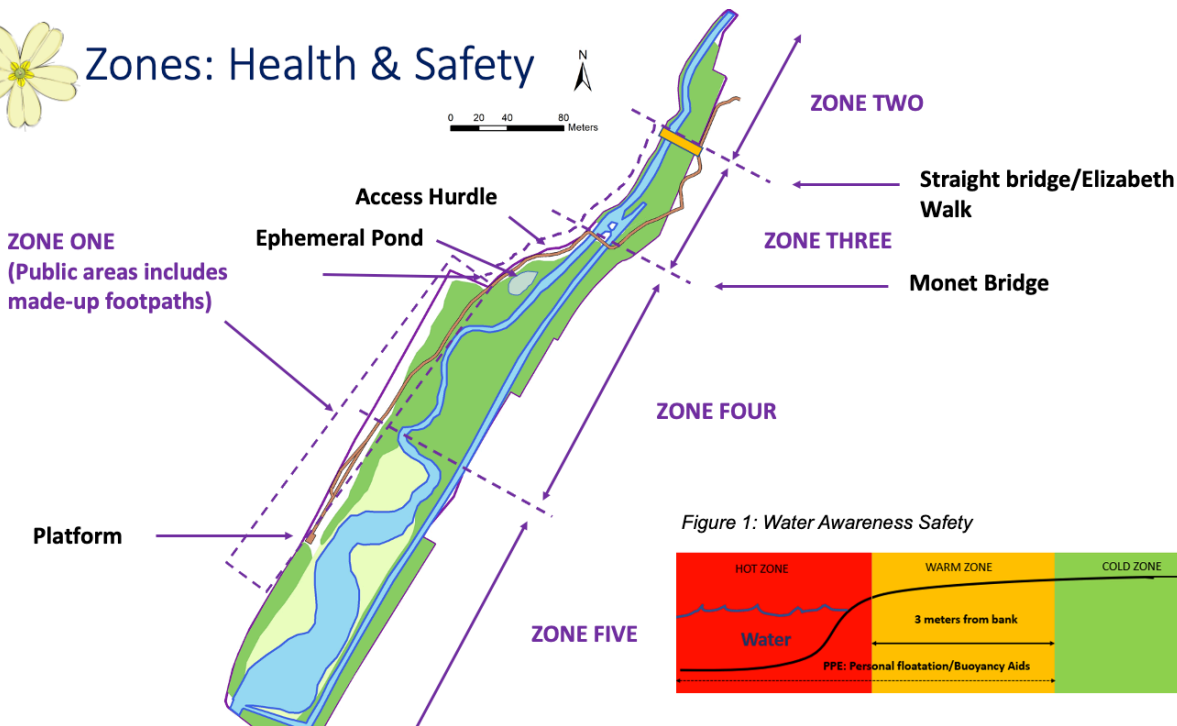
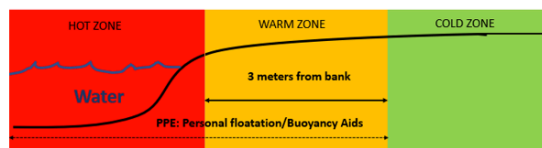


Figure 1: Water Awareness Safety



6.1
The

Volunteering help from the Community: Lorraine set out areas where help will be needed.

People skilled and interested in:

- Social media e.g. Twitter/Facebook/newsletters for event promotion
- Organising/administration
- Fundraising - online event booking/email correspondence
- First aiders/maintaining first aid kit
- Reviewing and maintaining risk assessments (Objective: online accessible system)

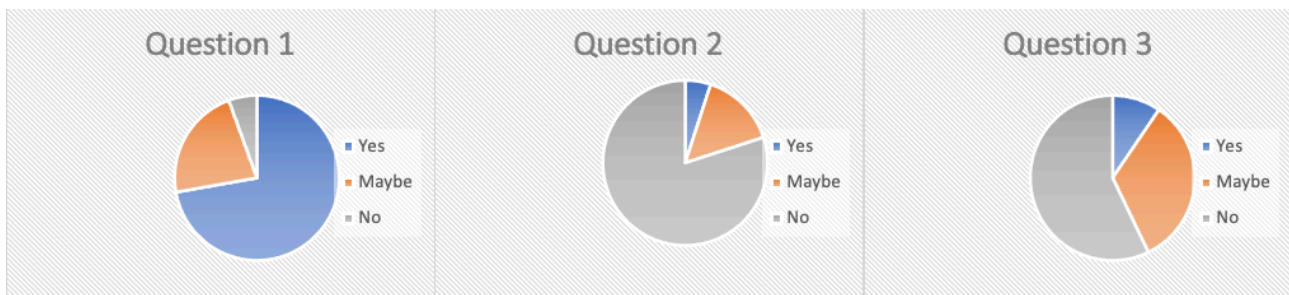
Willing to:

- Undertake training and sign-up to facilitate a number of activities
- Maintain equipment

A Habitat Management plan was posted on the walls and breakout tables for the attendees to consider and involved the completion of a questionnaire card.

Card Results:

Card Questions	Q1. Can you commit to volunteering, and if so, what are your preferred activities or interests?	Q2. Would you be interested in becoming a volunteer co-ordinator for either Zone 1 or 2?	Q3. Would you be interested in being trained for carrying out certain tasks in Zone 3 & 4?
Result Summary	13 Yes, 4 Maybe, 1 no	1 Yes 3 Maybe 16 No	2 Yes 7 Maybe 12 No



5. The Future of Primrose Nature Reserve & discussion

The best ideas from the last presentation were presented and debated with new ideas added to frame the discussion

- Circular Walk
- Schools Engagement
- Benches
- Fish Pass cam & other streaming live cams
- Bat and Owl Boxes
- Covered Space
- Monitoring of water quality and Plastics

Heritage renovation

Community - Guided health walks, wildlife watch and surveys

RS explained that in this consultation the no 1 request was for the construction of a circular walk. The dam area has a fabulous view back to the Castle and there could be a covered observation deck that would double as an open classroom. A bridge has been designed by Stanton Andrews Architects to cross the open water and connect with wheelchair accessibility to an extended path from the existing observation deck.

RS raised the possibility of connecting to Greenacre Street (opposite Holme's Mill) via a route that would follow the boundary for St James' School. This would allow walking into the town avoiding the main roads.

Thoughts and discussion on the future interactive session

Q1. Why are water sluice gates closed preventing flow? (near Monet Bridge)

Answer: The sluice gates are not operational and this is a project to be undertaken. They are not effective in preventing flow.

Q2. Are they going to be restored?

Answer: That is the plan and there will be fundraising activity for these gates with an emphasis on education and industrial heritage.

Q3. Asking the reason why the flow has been reduced.

Answer: StoreTec, a local Clitheroe Engineering company, provided a value at cost so we can improve the control of water for the fish pass and levels in the lodge.

Q4. A further question about drainage ditch and fencing if the woodland walk is created - what will be the impact on nature, and the movement of animals?

Answer: A fence on this boundary is required to make the Reserve safe and to comply with our risk management protocols and care will be taken to ensure that small mammals can pass. However, a woodland walk would not be a bitmac construction as there would be too many trees that would need to be felled and this would run contrary to the Trust's objectives. More study and consideration is required about the impact of a woodland walk on wildlife.

Q5. What are the options for funding future projects?

Answer: Range of opportunities from bite-size funding opportunities for small-scale projects to larger lottery funding bids for bigger partnership funding bids.

Q6. Should we allow dogs off the lead, seems to be a concern for people.

RS responded that the rules are that dogs should be under control. The Trustees will keep this under review but have no plans to change these rules.

Q7. Back of Park Avenue – Proposals for a circular walk (woodland stretch) – Have there been any soundings with the residents?

A resident from Park Avenue expressed the view that the walk close to the houses will create noise and potential disturbance and would be against the walk. This opened a wider debate over the potential encroachment on the wildlife and how it could be protected, particularly from the risk of dogs entering the Reserve. One member spoke of the need to balance the needs of the community and wildlife and the importance that the wildlife could be enjoyed by people to improve their well-being and impart better education and therefore felt the circular walk was beneficial. RS responded that this was a tricky balancing act and we should recognise the unique position of this Reserve within the heart of the town. Others raised their concern that the circular walk would disturb wildlife too much. RS explained that no decisions had yet been taken and further work would be required on this and other options. There was a healthy difference of opinions in the room and the Chair asked for a show of hands. 19 in favour of the walk, 11 against. NOTE: This was useful but will not bind any decision and future development would be required to submit for planning permission in the usual way.

Q8. Is there a hybrid solution to still keep a platform?

RS Responded that the Dam platform could be reached from the other side via a new bridge. This is a much more expensive option but it would not be a circular walk. It would deal with any wildlife disturbance.

Comment from the floor: It should be recognised that the nature reserve provides important educational value, especially for children and this is confirmed in Trust objects. This opened a discussion about citizen science and opportunities for this, and whether a baseline biodiversity assessment had been undertaken at the start of the project. It was confirmed one had, but further ongoing survey work was needed to capture changes in the nature/wildlife population.

One attendee was noting wildlife observations and the Trustees urged her to continue and update our records.

Q9. The question posed to the community was whether there were any other projects that could be considered. The idea that garnered the most strength of

opinion was whether a mini-hydro project should be explored that would have limited adverse impact on nature.

RS explained that the site had been previously assessed for a larger scheme but a small project might be deliverable. Trustees to research the options and explore learning from Cumbria community mini hydro schemes.

Q10. The questioner appreciated the Habitat Management Plan presented, but will there be a more detailed habitat improvement plan? This opened a debate about brambles choking, new tree planting, and brambles behaving like an invasive species. This opened debate on the floor about these being nectar-rich plants and therefore valuable. The general consensus there needs to be a balance. It was confirmed is the next piece of work is the habitat improvement plan document, time constraints prevented this from being completed before the meeting. Brambles were considered a problem by many to be in a similar bracket to Balsam.

Q11. How much do we know about people using the nature reserve? Quantitative information isn't available, but the first postcard activity is the start of helping us to understand why people use the reserve. It was explained such information is helpful for lottery partnership bids which tend to be as focused on people and education as well as conservation and net zero.

A discussion took place about the priorities for the nature reserve. Conservation of nature is the first consideration followed by community and education.

6 Fundraising and finances.

It was explained that the Trust need to maintain reserves to deal with future major projects such as further de-silting and Dam maintenance.

The management of the Trust is entirely run through unpaid Trustees and volunteers. The Ribble Valley Borough Council contributes £5,000 per year for 15 years for annual maintenance but the costs are closer to £11,000. Therefore the gap will need to be filled with fundraising or a subscription.

The Just Giving site is now live and there was a debate about whether PCNT should set up a plan for monthly subscriptions. Some members in the room would be happy to subscribe. The Trustees will now consider this option.

In addition to major works, there are a series of smaller projects such as the renovation of the industrial sluice gates and this could be project-funded and possibly sponsored by local companies, the Town Council or those charities supporting the Industrial Heritage of Lancashire.

More details of funding would be circulated when it is available.

7 Thank you and Close

The meeting ended at 20.00 and the room expressed their gratitude to St James' School for lending PCNT the hall and the equipment.

There was a request for more frequent follow-on meetings with the suggestion of 6-month intervals.

Thanks to our funders of PCNT:

Ribble Valley Borough Council, Beck Homes, Lancashire Environment Fund, ERDF, The Environment Agency and Ribble Rivers Trust

For further information please contact:

Richard Stephenson (Trustee Chair)
Primrose Community Nature Trust
Primrose Studios, Primrose Road, Clitheroe, BB7 1DR