

**MINUTES OF PARISH COUNCIL OPEN MEETING ABOUT THE EROSION AT CALEY GREEN
HELD AT NAYLAND VILLAGE HALL on 2ND NOVEMBER 2021**

PRESENT: Eight Parish Councillors including Chairman Mary George. James Carr, Biodiversity Officer for Environment Agency (EA), Paula Booth Dedham Vale and Stour Valley AONB OFFICER, 21 Residents. 4 residents attended via zoom.

APOLOGIES: SCC Cllr. James Finch, BDC Cllr Melanie Barrett, both prior commitments. Mike Hunter, Lucy Carpenter, Parish Clerk Debbie Hattrell.

Chairman read statement from SCC Cllr Finch. *“May I say how sorry I am not to be with you this evening to hear the views of those attending the meeting this evening about how the County Council and Parish Council should protect and care for Caley Green in the future. I am very aware that there are some strong views on how this should be done which sometimes appear to be contradictory.*

However, I am sure that all will agree that everyone wants to protect the landscape at Caley Green as well as cater for the future recreational needs of all.

I hope that everyone will listen to each other’s views tonight which will enable the Parish Council to take away the basis of a proposal which is a consensus of the meeting and the majority of Nayland parish residents. May I thank everyone for expressing their views and in particular thank Mary George and Patricia Wilkie for working so hard to create a solution that will protect the river and Caley Green for many years to come.”

The Chairman welcomed officers from Environment Agency and DSVV AONB Project team who have been giving advice for the past year, welcomed residents attending in person and via zoom, introduced parish councillors. Unfortunately, there are technical difficulties with zoom and sound system. Those attending via zoom were asked to use the Chat system to ask questions during Q & A sections of the meeting. The full Powerpoint presentation will be available to them onscreen as shared documents during the meeting. The format of the meeting and presentation was outlined. There would be opportunities for questions and comments from members of the public after each section of the presentation. The full presentation and minutes of the meeting would be published as soon as possible on the Parish Council webpage so that the whole community can read and make any additional comments direct to the Parish Council.

The Chairman explained the Background and Rationale* (see presentation document Slide 3). The aims and objectives of Suffolk County Council (landowner) and Nayland with Wissington Parish Council (licensee) have always been that any remedial action for the recent rapid erosion of Caley Green and the replacement of the revetment should be sustainable, beneficial to wildlife and river habitat, provide access for licensed craft and that any remedy, either vegetation or structural, should not block the view of the river from Bear Street. The roles and responsibilities of the various official authorities were explained. The involvement of volunteers (Friends of Caley Green) was noted.

Patricia Wilkie explained the analysis of responses to Parish Council’s request in Community Times for comments and suggestions from the whole community. The responses to a separate unofficial distribution of pre-worded postcards and a Facebook petition had been included in that analysis. Where the same people had made representations by using all methods, these were counted as one response. The statistics had been published on the Parish Council webpage the week before the meeting and are included in the Powerpoint presentation. (see presentation document Slide 6).

A small percentage of all replies wanted no action. This is not a viable option. The highest percentage group, 11%, recognised that erosion had taken place but wanted the authorities to

consider alternative options. As a percentage of the adult population, the number of responses was small as 83% did not express an opinion. Patricia Wilkie explained an element of the totals where residents asked for clarification as they found it confusing, confirming that without the above In favour column, the final no response percentage was 83% rather than 84%.

Q A resident asked what conclusion had been reached and what decision had been made.

A. The various authorities had revisited the options and drawn up a list of alternatives. No final decision had been made. These options together with pros and cons would be explained in the next section of the presentation.

A resident wished to raise objections about the need or urgency to remedy current erosion at all and asked to read a letter from a resident who is an expert in this field. She was asked to wait until the appropriate section of the presentation when she could express her views and read the letter.

Patricia Wilkie outlined the options with pros and cons and outlined a proposal drawn up as a result of ongoing consultation with appropriate authorities and the views of residents. (See presentation document Slide 14).

One option included a small jetty as an addition to the existing length of revetment. Another included two sections of revetment divided by low vegetation. It was not clear how much support a jetty would have from residents. The safety aspect of a jetty needed to be explored further. The Environment Agency had expressed concern that this would increase visitor numbers in a location where there are no visitor facilities. Aqualogs are sometimes used in areas of high turbulence. EA would expect to see low vegetation included in such a hard barrier to soften the surface and to protect river users from harm. Biodegradable coir rolls would hold back the bank while planting established. There is a legal obligation for impact on biodiversity to be taken into account when EA is considering any application for a permit to carry out work on riverbank, along with conservation of environment and access to water-based activities. EA had given advice in 2020, and confirmed since then, that a full length revetment would not be acceptable.

Q. Some residents queried the length of the proposed revetment with or without the jetty. Would this be enough space for craft? Would there be several craft waiting to enter the water? Are they expected to queue politely? It was suggested that 5 metres length is not long enough.

A. James Carr had surveyed the size of EA portage platforms along the Stour. Most were only 2 or 3 metres in length. The EA felt that the proposed revetment length would be adequate. Chairman confirmed that various navigation bodies such as the Environment Agency Navigation Team, the River Stour Trust and Stour Boating had visited the Green and been satisfied that this should meet the needs of craft users. At times she had witnessed 15 or 16 kayakers and paddle boarders patiently waiting below the weir to access the portage.

Q Two residents made complaints that the long reed beds further along the river were no longer maintained. This was a promise made in 1960s. One resident said that Suffolk County Council had acquired the land when the bypass was built in 1960s, had granted fishing rights on Caley Green to local residents, but there were few places now available for fishing and the view of the river at that point had been lost because of very tall reeds.

A Patricia Wilkie said that this was a separate issue to the erosion and revetment replacement at the Bear Street end of the Green. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss erosion.

Chairman said that this has been noted and needs to be raised again with SCC and EA as an additional item for action.

Q Resident asked about the existing island of tall reeds next to the ditch and spreading into ditch. Another resident said that the reeds within the ditch had not been cleared by SCC and caused it to be blocked.

A Chairman explained that the island of reeds was part of neighbour's land, so did not fall within the proposal or Caley Green. Parish Council would take up the clearance of the ditch itself. with SCC.

Patricia Wilkie moved on to the Planting section of the presentation with illustrations of suggested planting with heights. (see Presentation document Slides 19-23 *nb the site diagrams are not to scale*). She confirmed that there has never been any plan to reintroduce tall reeds, only low growing vegetation. There needs to be a group of taller plants at the corner of the ditch to stabilise the corner of the Green, but these will not block the view of the river. The planted area would need to be given the chance to establish so would be fenced off with a notice explaining why.

Q James Carr was asked by Patricia Wilkie how many species he would recommend.

A He would recommend all of them to provide diversity and to see which ones did best in that location. They could be provided from a local source. The full height of some species would only be reached during short flowering period. Narrow flowering spikes. For most of year they would remain very low.

Q Resident asked what was meant by 'fencing'.

A Patricia Wilkie and Chairman confirmed that this did not mean a structure. Possibly a low stake and string construction to prevent damage until plants established. There would still be access to river in unplanted sections.

Q Resident asked how far coir rolls would go into bay.

A James Carr responded not far. Perhaps only one coir roll width.

Q Resident asked how long that would take.

A James Carr gave an example of a scheme in Essex where planting in March had become well-established by July.

Q A councillor asked about potential spread of roots of, were they invasive?

A James Carr advised that two years' growth would identify anything invasive in local soil conditions, but it would not be rapid. Some plants spread by seed. Gentle control should be enough for maintenance.

Q Resident questioned maintenance regime and appropriate contractors. In her experience at her property, some of the plants on the list can be difficult to control.

A Chairman confirmed that a maintenance plan would be drawn up once permission had been granted by EA and Parish and County Councils knew what planting had been approved.

Another resident commented that some of the plants had appeared naturally at the site. She suggested that there would be volunteers who could help with the maintenance.

Q Resident asked whether it would be safe to walk on planted area once established? Groups of schoolchildren look at the river every day when waiting for bus.

Q From resident via zoom. Why are we persisting with planting option? It will block the view of the river.

A James Carr: There will still be a view of the river. This is low, mixed vegetation. There are no tall reeds. He repeated the legal requirement that any application for a permit for work on river banks must benefit ecology. The planting will provide habitat for insects such as mayflies and colourful flower during the Summer. There will be more to look at, more interesting things for children to see. It will be safe.

Q A resident questioned the need for a jetty and thought it was a bad idea. Many complaints from riverside residents over past year about loss of privacy. Suggested the area between Bear Street and riverbank should be turned into a wild flower meadow, with oak revetment. Also complained about current lack of maintenance of the long reeds, trees left lying in river.

A Patricia Wilkie and Chairman repeated that the long reeds beds blocking of river is a separate issue to refer to Suffolk County Council and Environment Agency and has been noted.

Q Resident asked what measures would be taken to regrade and minimise the edge of the green where it had been eroded to a high point?

A Patricia Wilkie said that the scheme included a section of infilling to create a slope but this could be the best point for a jetty if it is agreed for that to be included.

Q Resident complained that Environment Agency took months to clear fallen willows from river. It had created a hazard for craft users.

A Chairman said that fallen trees were the responsibility of landowner. Parish Council had reported to Suffolk County Council at the time and SCC had removed the trees from the river.

A James Carr said that Environment Agency serves notices on landowners if necessary. Cuts in Central Government funding in past ten years had prevented EA from doing 'extra' work such as tree removal, revetment repairs and reed cutting, biodiversity principles and policies have evolved. He repeated legal requirements. The combined length of revetment being considered for *this* site will be acceptable for this project only if it is combined with biodiversity enhancement.

Environment Agency is keen to encourage and facilitate fishing. Where trees had fallen and were not replaced, or don't prosper, there is no shade. Reeds more likely to take hold. There needs to be balanced shade to provide habitat for new fish stocks.

Q Parish Councillor asked James Carr to confirm her summary that the reason for not allowing a full revetment of a solid block barrier is that there would be no biodiversity enhancement. An application would need to prove enhancement to be successful.

A This was confirmed.

Q The resident who had already stated that she did not agree erosion is a problem asked why there couldn't be an open recreational area here, when the rest of the river has a diverse habitat? She found it strange that a small space has to be defined in an application when it is part of the whole river complex. Chairman asked the resident to read the letter that she had brought to the meeting, but she declined.

A James Carr talked about cumulative effect of applications, for example several applications for decking reaching the point where it had a negative impact on the area, in the same way as cumulative planning applications for individual houses in the Countryside. Patricia Wilkie pointed out that the small space defined is the area which needs attention to resolve erosion issue, and the application will only refer to this area

The resident did not agree with this analogy.

Q Parish Councillors asked whether waterfowl would still be able to access the green easily.

A James Carr said that wildlife would continue to access the Green at convenient places as before.

Chairman continued the presentation with an item on funding (see presentation documents p. X). Parish Council is holding £760 towards the replacement revetment, granted subject to a successful application to Environment Agency, deadline for spending extended to end of 2022 plus. £500 from SCC towards the cost of a permanent information board. A new round of grants for sustainable projects in AONB is available.

Paula Booth outlined these briefly. Project aims must support and conserve environment, visitor information. Other sources of income would need to be investigated, but the permit would need to be granted first (cost of application £170) then quotations sought to apply for grants.

Chairman had a list of questions that had been sent by email in advance of the meeting by residents who could not attend. These were answered at the meeting by the Chairman and James Carr. (see separate list of Q & A at end of this document).

Patricia Wilkie described the timeline for further decisions and action (see presentation document)

Q Resident asked when work was expected to take place.

A Patricia Wilkie replied that the Parish Council would aim to do the planting in the Spring time, so application process and securing of funding will need to be prior to this; the timescale is therefore quite short.

Chairman and Patricia Wilkie thanked James Carr and Paula Booth for their contribution to the meeting, thanked residents for sharing their views and comments. All questions and answers would be included in the minutes of the meeting on Parish Council webpage and uploaded with the Powerpoint presentation on the Parish Council page of the Community website.

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm.

**QUESTIONS ASKED VIA EMAIL BEFORE THE MEETING ON 2ND NOVEMBER
AND ANSWERED BY PARISH COUNCIL AND ENVIRONMENT AGENCY
AT THAT MEETING**

1 *Has it already been decided what form of bank reinforcement will be applied?*

No, final decision has not been made. Various options have been considered although there is one option that is most likely to produce a successful application for permission from Environment Agency. See Powerpoint presentation for details.

2 *What provision has been made for safe/convenient access and egress to/from the river and bank by river users e.g. kayakers, SUPs, swimmers, school-children, pensioners and have these stakeholder groups been consulted?*

There will still be safe access. Any revetment will be the same height, ground level, as before.

All residents were asked via Community Times and Parish Council webpage to send their views to Parish Council. The matter was discussed at the Annual Parish Assembly attended by members of the public in April 2021. There was also a Parish Council/Suffolk County Council meeting with ecologists from SCC and EA by video conferencing, attended by members of the public. The various local boating organisations such as River Stour Trust, Stour Boating, Navigation officers from EA have been involved for past year.

3 *How and by whom would the efficiency of any adopted solution be monitored, recorded and reported?*

By the Environment Agency, Suffolk County Council (landowner) Nayland with Wissington Parish Council (licensee). The area is regularly monitored by these authorities, reported at Parish Council minutes.

4 *What provision has been made for ongoing maintenance of the river bank?*

Provision for maintenance will be agreed with relevant authorities when scheme has been decided and permission granted by Environment Agency. Riverbanks are the responsibility of landowners.

5. *Has the impact on the other areas of the green been considered once the bank has been reinforced i.e. a narrow river access gap could cause localised wear on the green?*

This has been considered. The maintenance regime of Caley Green is reviewed annually.

6 *Is the current build up of silt going to be removed as part of the works?*

This is not within the remit of the Parish Council. It is a matter for the Environment Agency. James Carr was asked the question at the meeting on 2nd November. He explained the current philosophy on river bed management.:

The river is currently self-cleaning and is far cleaner than in the past. In the past, the Stour was widened to facilitate navigation. The width at Nayland is not natural. Rivers find their own natural width via vegetation and silt deposits. If dredged, silt will eventually return to its natural level in the self-cleaning cycle. Dredging and clearing changes the speed of the river and prevents biodiversity, reduces fish stocks. No plan to remove silt at Nayland.

7. *Has an impact assessment of the reinforcing options been carried out for local wildlife. Has any consideration been given to actively manage the repaired riverbank area to enhance and encourage wildlife e.g. introduction of bird nesting sites/boxes, bat boxes and fish spawning areas?*

Impact assessments are part of the application process. It is a statutory requirement for work on riverbanks to enhance and encourage wildlife. Artificial nesting such as bird boxes and bat boxes have not been considered as part of the scheme.

At the meeting on 2nd November, the Chairman asked James Carr whether he thought whether there was adequate natural habitat provision at Caley Green to eliminate the need to create artificial nesting sites? He thought that this could be looked at as a separate issue. The proposals already being discussed would enhance current fish spawning and diverse insects.

8. *Has consideration been given to rescue of anyone falling in the river i.e. would any proposed bank reinforcement be likely to significantly impede, say a small child being pulled out of the water?*

The proposals for reinforcement should make no difference to the need to rescue anyone in the water as the height will be level with the Green. Emergency Services had expressed concerns about the obvious lack of experience of some river users since the increase in visitors. The nearest river rescue Fire Services team was at Bury St Edmunds. The Nayland Fire Chief now has equipment at the Fire Station in Bear Street and the team has been trained. There is a Parish Council notice on the Green advising rivers users to observe basic river safety and to ring 999 in the event of emergency. There is a public defibrillator at the Fire Station and a lifebelt station at the weir.

Footnote

N.B. There have been numerous questions from residents since Spring 2020 about overcrowding on the river, loss of privacy, reduction in wildlife, damage to riverbanks in mill lade and Caley Green, irresponsible parking, craft licensing arrangements, anti-social behaviour, jetties. These have been answered at previous meetings or via email. Some concerns have already been addressed in a variety of ways during the past 18 months and reported in Parish Council Minutes.

See also: Powerpoint presentation uploaded with documents on Parish Council webpage