

## **Notes of a virtual meeting held between Redrow, Kent Wildlife Trust and Tenterden Town Council on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2021.**

### **PRESENT:**

Cllr. Jean Curteis  
Cllr. Callum Knowles  
Neil Coombs - Kent Wildlife Trust Consultancy  
Harminder Rai – Redrow  
Clair Thackray – Kent Wildlife Trust Consultancy  
Phil Burgess – Town Clerk  
Lesley Owers – Administrative Assistant – taking notes.

**APOLOGIES:** Phil Cook, Tree Officer – Ashford Borough Council

### **Translocation of Reptiles**

Harminder reported that Corylus had responded to the comments from Kent Wildlife Trust on the translocation of reptiles and passed them on to the Town Council.

Clair Thackray from KWT commented that after the last look at the report they had thought this through as carefully as they could and thought that Corylus's process was pretty well planned and they were going to assess at every stage to see whether the translocation was feasible or not based on the surveys of Kiln Field itself. Clair recommended that they made sure that the surveys were undertaken in the peak time April/June which was what they had agreed to and that would inform them how many reptiles they could move into Kiln Field. Given the habitats in there, there was definitely a potential to improve it. In reference to the recommendations they had given in terms of increasing the structural diversity of the grasses, she had looked at KWT's management plan for last year and the grasslands that Corylus were proposing and they were the same but they had added some rotation in there so you would get some diversity in terms of the structure that was appropriate for the reptiles they were proposing to move. They could look into the management that we recommended around pond as well and the woodland edge and that would be of benefit too so she thought they could widen their proposals that they were recommending there. Clair commented that Corylus would have to wait until they had done the survey to see what was already in Kiln Field but it was always a good thing that reptiles were kept locally and that way it was beneficial to keep the population in the vicinity. As long as it was done in the way they proposed and was as well controlled as they could, they would look at the survey results and would decide from there on the numbers they could put in.

Clair reported that we would not know if the capacity was there until the survey had been done. As long as Corylus were doing things in the way they were proposing and as well controlled as they could, they would look at the survey results and then decide from there the numbers that they could put in. Until they had their survey results that they would not know in terms of the numbers they could put in. They had it in their report that if they did find that Kiln Field

did not have the capacity even taking into account the recommendations, then they would go back to Kent County Council.

Jean commented that KWT were the experts and they knew what quantity of reptiles they could take on Kiln Field without overcrowding it in anyway so we would go with what KWT advise us.

Callum agreed that the best way forward was to take what was there and the suitability.

Clair asked Harminder if we would see the survey results. Harminder could see no reason why not as they wanted to keep everything open and keep everyone updated. He said Redrow are not trying to hide anything and would abide by what Corylus had set out.

Neil Coombs asked Clair for her comments on the grass and management regime in the Corylus Report. Clair had just looked at it with reference to what they had in their management plan and at the moment it looked like the timings were slightly out to what we had recommended as they had from May to September as the period for cutting and we had October to March so that would need adjusting. It was quite a small area to have 3 different areas on rotation but Clair could see why they were doing it in terms of getting a more structured diversity in there. Neil very much agreed with the overall principles and the structure of diversity and he thought that we needed some fine tuning on the timing of the cuttings, and possibly on the heights and to go back to Corylus with just a little bit more information about the existing grassland structure. Neil commented that the Town Council were trying to achieve quite a lot there and he thought that both could be achieved but a bit more fine tuning might be needed on that if that is acceptable.

Harminder commented that he had no issue with that at all. He said that if everyone was happy to agree the Corylus report in principle then that could be set out in the same email with these couple of comments that we were looking at but over all they were happy and to just move on from there. Redrow would keep us informed of where they were with the translocation. Corylus would have to do the surveys within Redrow's land and Kiln Field first and then keep us updated on the milestones.

The Town Clerk queried if there were any aspects of the management that KWT would like improved, that they would inform us as Clair had mentioned some issues around the pond itself. Harminder asked that everything was detailed in an email and he was sure that they could do something.

Neil commented that there is one principle that may be an issue that Redrow may be able to address and it may not conflict with reptile management and that is the fact that he noticed that it is not a cut and collect and the arisings are left on site. He thought it would probably be very important and beneficial to everybody's objectives if we could work out a way of how the cuttings could be collected in the grassland regime that would not impinge on the reptiles. Clair wondered if that might be more feasible given that it was going to be on rotation within areas by cutting that total area down into thirds. There would be a much smaller area for people to collect it and it was probably more feasible if it was

collected by hand and then created compost piles. Neil agreed that would be an ideal objective and would definitely help the grassland diversity which would be a good objective to reach. Harminder could see no problem with that. The Town Clerk commented that it was usually the fact that mowers with collecting boxes attached were much smaller so it was a more time consuming exercise. Split into thirds it should be more achievable. Harminder agreed that he was happy with that and asked if we could detail all the additional comments that we had and as long as we were happy with them to get going now as March was around the corner and if the weather got as warm as it was now, to try to start surveying as soon as they could. It is obviously weather dependent but if there was a cold snap things would obviously be pushed back. Clair commented that they are going to space it out over 4 weeks anyway so that will go into April. Harminder commented that that was the reason why ideally they would like to get it going asap but they understand that it is all constrained by the weather.

Clair asked what the management situation was at moment at Kiln Field and whether Redrow were going to be involved in that? The Town Clerk replied that we deal with the management on site.

Callum reported that part of the rental agreement between the Town Council and Ashford Borough Council, was that Ashford had insisted that the Town Council presented them with a management plan for this so the Town Council instructed KWT to assist them with that because the previous one that came out of the 106 agreement historically many years ago needed revisiting. Clair commented that using their KWT one as a basis they would ask that the mitigation also covered some more of what is in the management plan, just to broaden out the habitats that were available to the reptiles, as for example the pond had obviously been silted out and had become unsuitable for GCN's (Great Crested Newts). The common lizard would use areas adjacent to ponds so it would be beneficial for them to act on some of the proposals in the management plan for the pond area and the other example is the woodland edge for slow worms. They would include some of that within the email and then that would be covered.

Harminder asked if everybody agreed in principle to move forward given the small additional extras that Clair had put forward. Everybody was in agreement. Clair would send an email to Jenny and would copy Harminder in.

### **Oak Tree - T36**

On the issue of the oak tree T36, the Town Clerk commented that there seemed to be some disagreement between Corylus and KWT and the Tree Officer is uncommitted. Callum Knowles commented that he liked to think that over the years Redrow, the Town Council and the Borough Council had been building quite a nice relationship and the development was coming on quite nicely and it would be good for us all to come to an amicable agreement about saving this tree. Callum would like to think that there was a way to save the tree and to do the foundations and get the garage built without having to remove the tree. Callum reported that on social media there was a lot of public feeling about it and it would be beneficial for Redrow and ourselves to come to a good agreement to save it. As ward councillor Callum had just given a substantial amount of money to some wildlife improvements towards the area and he thought a good solution would go a long way with people.

Harminder said that it was difficult for him to comment any more until they receive the report from their arboriculturist on this which would then go back to Phil Cook and that is where the decision would be made. In terms of wanting to save or retain the tree as much as possible, Harminder had had this discussion with Vincent Ganley at KWT and had said that they were not in the business to just remove trees for the fun of it. If they could keep it to the same extent then they were happy to do that.

Harminder reported that the property had to be piled because of the close proximity to the trees which would assist with root preservation. There are 2 or 3 individual garages that would have to be piled in that area because of the close proximity to trees. Harminder commented that it was difficult to add any more until they got the report back from Aspect. In his opinion he would be happy to keep the tree if they could or maintain it in some sort of way if that was possible.

Neil commented that it seemed to him that the issue was understanding where the actual roots of that particular tree went and to make an assessment as to whether it would take some limited crown from intervention pollarding and to bring it back. Neil said that discussions of whether it is an ancient or veteran tree could go on for years. We all needed to move on to the next stage to say how we would keep that tree with what Redrow are proposing rather than drawing which seemed to him to be the arbitrary circle around the protection zone. We needed to find out what the roots are doing, what it would actually take to build and maintain that root system and would that tree take some intervention possibly to reduce its crown stage, effectively re-pollarding, re-coppicing and whether to discuss if it is a pollard or a coppice. Neil suggested that Redrow might move on beyond the discussions of what it is, to how we can actually save it in terms of the development right next to it. Harminder replied that he believed those sort of options were being explored.

The Town Clerk commented that if KWT received this report and were happy with it then the Town Council would follow their advice. Neil commented that the principle would be to discuss how to retain that tree and how to make best endeavours to retain that particular tree.

The Town Clerk queried that with coppicing or pollarding whether that would be in order to allow that scaffolding around that particular garage there. Neil said practically it's got quite a vigorous crown so whether Redrow's arboriculturist would propose a limited re-pollarding or a crown reduction and if the tree had enough vigour to support that, then that would be one approach we could take.

Neil reported that at some stage over the next decade that tree would need intervention and now might be the appropriate time to actually do it. The general principles with ancient and veteran trees is that you don't re-pollard or re-coppice unless it is necessary to maintain the integrity of the tree so we would have to look closely at that as the option but he hoped that could be a route that we could explore. Harminder commented that we will have to get in contact again once Aspect have issued their report.

Jean Curteis reiterated what Callum Knowles said that there will be a lot of bad feeling if there is no compromise to save that tree and it will spoil the edge of Kiln Field. The Town Clerk agreed that it was in Redrow's interest to find a compromise.

Harminder commented that Redrow had got a reputation to keep and that it would only be done if necessary and he had had this conversation with Vincent Ganley last week. They would be very happy to keep it if they could but the issue was how close it was to the road on one side and the ditch for flooding on the other side. Harminder said he was happy to explore looking into it and getting it done but construction wise there was going to be an issue because of how close it was to the tree. They would wait to see what Aspect came back with.

The Town Clerk reminded KWT that they are yet to invoice us.

Clair reported that she would get the translocation of reptiles comments to Redrow on Monday.