

Amenities & Leisure Committee Meeting – 22nd May 2024

Agenda Item 7.1 – Earley Environmental Group

As Councillors will be aware, following the success of the Carols at the Lake event in December 2023 which ETC and EEG held as a joint event, the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk have been keen to develop the working relationship between ETC and EEG, with a view to having more joint events and projects.

By working together, this provides an opportunity to hold a wider variety of events and enables ETC to access more expertise to enhance such events. Such collaboration also widens our access to volunteers who can work with ETC to help deliver the events, especially those that cannot always be covered by ETC staff alone.

Following two meetings with Bob Collis and Charlotte Allchin from EEG about forthcoming EEG events, discussions have been had about possible EEG and ETC joint events, with the view of holding them at various ETC sites, not just at Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve.

One event discussed is a Bat Walk/Talk to hopefully be held in North Earley in September. This could be based at either the Culver Lane allotments or at Bulmershe Park. ETC officers and EEG are currently exploring options in this regard.

Please find below details of EEG's own events and some joint events being held at ETC sites: -

DATE	EVENT	COMMENT
Saturday 8 th June	Tree & Wildlife Walk around Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve	EEG event which ETC will promote
Monday 15 th July	Talk by Martyn Mills on Maiden Erlegh Lake's fish and fishing to be held at MPCC	EEG event which ETC will promote
Fri 26 th July	Broodbank Bug Hunt at MELNR	ETC & EEG joint event
Sunday 1 st September	Bat Walk at Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve	EEG event which ETC will promote
Date to be confirmed	Possible Bat Walk/Talk in North Earley	ETC & EEG joint event
Sunday 27 th October	Phot Walk around Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve	EEG event which ETC will promote
Date to be confirmed	Carols at the Lake at MENR	ETC & EEG joint event

Details on EEG own events and how to book are available on EEG's website at: - <http://www.earleyenvironmentalgroup.co.uk/>

Other Projects

EEG are also keen to provide volunteers to work on Council projects that are not based at Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve, work that ETC may be planning for other council owned/managed sites. EEG would look to provide additional 'pairs of hands', expertise and support.

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Agenda Item 7.2 – GREEN FAIR UPDATE

General Information

This year's Green Fair will be held on Saturday 3rd August 2024, at the usual time of 10am – 3pm.

Posters advertising for stallholders have gone up on noticeboards and a post has gone out on social media, so far 30 stallholders have already booked.

Staff and Councillors will be contacted asking for volunteers on the day to help set up, pack away etc.

Officers are also looking into ways to improve the fair and offer more variety.

Stalls

First Class Falconry, the birds of prey display, has confirmed they will be attending.

The Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk have met with ME Rotary Club who are happy to provide refreshments. Unfortunately, due to the weather last year, they were unable to gauge how successful their provision was. Other food providers have also been contacted, in the hope that a hot food provider may be secured for the day.

ETC officers have also contacted new stallholders, some of which they have seen when attending other local fairs, with the aim of extending the range of stalls that are offered at the Green Fair but that still meet the green/environment ethos.

ETC officers will have their usual stall which will offer advice on Helpshop services and promote the Council.

Councillors will also be contacted to find out if they plan to have a stall this year.

Emma Carroll, Deputy Town Clerk
14th May 2024

Report to the Amenities & Leisure Committee Meeting of 22nd May 2024

9.1.1 Repair Café for Earley

Establishing an Earley Repair Café

What is a Repair Café?

- Repair Cafés are free meeting places focused on repairing items together.
- Repair Cafés try to repair any household item that may otherwise be destined for landfill e.g. domestic appliances, bikes, clothes, tools, laptops, TVs, clocks, garden equipment, suitcases and bags, toys, lamps etc.
- The ethos is very much to reduce landfill whilst also passing on valuable practical and repair skills to the public.
- There are currently Repair Cafés operating in Reading, Woodley, Wokingham and Spencers Wood.

How do Repair Cafés work?

- Individual Repair Cafés are run by their own management committee and have a pool of volunteers, helping with reception/registration, running the café and carrying out the repairs.
- Volunteer repairers do not need specific qualifications. Each volunteer tends to have their own skills based on their careers, hobbies and interests, so they work together to utilise each other's strengths and learn from one another about different types of repairs. They are also happy to share their skills with attendees so that they too can learn to fix their items.
- Each volunteer brings along their own tools and equipment.
- There is no charge for repair services, however donations are welcomed. Donations go towards running costs. such as insurance, websites, advertising, volunteer training and café supplies, as well as purchasing specialist equipment, e.g. PAT testers. They may also be used for assisting with local initiatives to reduce waste and engage young people.
- Repair Café's run on a no liability basis with visitors signing a form to acknowledge this prior to any repair taking place. If an item is of significant financial or sentimental value, then the visitor would likely be advised to take the item to a specialist.

The Repair Café at Lambs Lane Primary School, Spencers Wood

- Having reached out to ETC regarding our bird box decorating workshop, the Town Clerk and Senior Operations Support Officer (SOSO), met with the management committee of The Repair Café at Lambs Lane Primary School, Spencers Wood. The meeting covered opportunities for working collaboratively as well as exploring options to open an Earley Repair Café.
- The management committee agreed to then meet the Town Clerk and SOSO at Centrepoint Community Centre to discuss the suitability of the site for such a venture and the realities of opening a Repair Café. Billie Bachra (organiser) agreed that she would like to assist ETC in establishing an Earley Repair Café and is happy to share her knowledge and experience to make this happen.
- The Town Clerk and SOSO invited Billie to attend a feasibility meeting with Councillors A Bradley, S Matthews and A Neal to further discuss the specifics of opening an Earley Repair Café and what needs to be considered and organised.

NB these specific councillors were approached due to their previous interest in either establishing an Earley Repair Café or in assisting with reopening the bike workshop.

Proposal for an Earley Repair Café

Location & Time

- The Repair Café will run one weekend morning/afternoon per month at Centrepoint Community Centre – dates to be agreed so as to not compete with other Repair Cafés operating locally.
- Although the Main Hall at Centrepoint is slightly smaller than some other Repair Café venues, its location is in a high footfall area and there is ample parking. Additionally, the bike workshop, which would be open at the same time, will by then be installed in the Andrew Bird Room.
- If, as the Repair Café establishes, it is found that the Main Hall is not big enough to host a full Repair Café, the idea is to run themed/seasonal sessions focussing on particular items.

Establishing the Earley Repair Café

- Local Repair Cafés are usually established by a team of enthusiastic volunteers who form the management committee, recruit volunteers and oversee the set-up of the Repair Café. In Earley's instance, as the establishment of the Repair Café is being initiated by the Town Council, the set up will need to be slightly different.
- The proposal is for the Town Council (Town Clerk, SOSO, Councillors ABr, AN and SM) to lead on the initial set up, with the support of Billie. However, as enthusiastic volunteers are recruited, Officers and Councillors will step back, appointing suitable volunteers to the management committee. The Repair Café would become self-sufficient with the Town Council having a "sponsorship" role in supporting the running of the Repair Café.
- As part of the set-up process, we will clearly define the roles and responsibilities of both ETC and the Earley Repair Café so the position is clear to all. We will also put in place a reporting process to ensure that ETC are updated periodically about the success of the repair café.
- In line with other Repair Cafés, the Earley RC will be established as an unincorporated association and will require its own bank account to handle donations – this is another reason for Officers and Councillors stepping back.
- As part of the sponsorship role, the Town Council would:
 - provide the venue free of charge
 - assist with marketing and promotion
 - add a Repair Café page to ETC's existing website
 - consider additional funding to assist with set up costs e.g. first 12 months insurance, purchase of a spare parts box, funding of first aid training etc
- Although the proposal is that ETC lead on establishing the Earley Repair Café, it is important to acknowledge that this will be a community asset, not an ETC asset, and that the project should remain apolitical.

Request to the Amenities & Leisure Committee

- **To support** the establishment of an Earley Repair Café, including the provision of Centrepoint Community Centre one morning/afternoon per month free of charge.
- **To permit** Jess Friend (SOSO), Councillor A Bradley, Councillor S Matthews and Councillor A Neal to lead the establishment of the Earley Repair Café, with the support of Billie Bachra.

NB as detailed above, Officers and Councillors will stand down as suitable volunteers are recruited and appointed to the management committee.

EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL
AMENITIES & LEISURE COMMITTEE MEETING 22nd MAY 2024

10. BUS SHELTERS

Earley Town Council currently has 53 bus shelters dotted around Earley. There are a combination of styles and ages as some have been replaced and new ones installed over the years. The shelters are inspected annually in October/November when they are safety checked by ETC staff and an inspection report is produced noting any maintenance that needs to be carried out.

During the last inspection in November 2023 the oldest style of bus shelters were earmarked as a priority as we had replaced the shelters considered high risk in 22-23. Although the old-style shelters were still structurally sound, the original intention was to replace them as part of a rolling programme. This would take a few years to complete so in the meantime they were rubbed down and recoated with rust resistant paint which made a remarkable difference.

In February 2024 we trialled a bus shelter cleaning service (Core Clean) and, using some of the remaining maintenance budget, we selected 10 shelters (including one of the old shelters) as a test to see what difference it made. We were impressed by how good they looked following the clean, the company had even managed to get all the green algae from the fibreglass panels of the old-style shelters. The more recently installed shelters looked almost brand new. We had some funds left in the 23-24 budget, so we booked a further 5 to be cleaned.



Old style shelter before renovation.



Old style shelter after renovation.

Conclusion

Together with the renovations and the professional clean carried out on the old shelters that were scheduled for replacement, we are of the opinion that, whilst they are not perfect, we have bought a few more years before these will need replacing. We are therefore not planning to replace any of these shelters in the near future.

We are still missing two bus shelters due to vehicle collisions but given that they are on the same section of road and there is a history of road furniture being damaged at this location we are looking into what's causing the problem before we replace them.

All major repairs and renovations are now complete, and our focus is on having the remaining 31 shelters professionally cleaned in stages and by order of priority.

Max Brown- Operations Manager

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13. WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – SCHOOL STREETS INITIATIVE

A comment made by a Town Councillor alerted ETC officers to Wokingham Borough Council's plans to use Radstock Primary School as a pilot for its School Streets Scheme.

A quote from the School Streets.org website:

"A School Street is a road outside a school with a temporary restriction on motorised traffic at school drop-off and pick-up times. The restriction applies to school traffic and through traffic School Street schemes offer a proactive solution for school communities to tackle air pollution, poor health and road danger reduction."

ETC officers were unable to find out which WBC officer(s) were dealing with this initiative and therefore contacted WBC Councillor Paul Fishwick, Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways, to raise initial concerns about the how this scheme could impact the operations of Earley Town Council's offices, Radstock Community Centre and the Town Council's Helpshop. We asked Cllr Fishwick which WBC officers were dealing with this initiative in order that we could discuss the concerns directly with them.

Councillor Fishwick's response, dated 27th March 2024:

Following the council obtaining powers under Moving Traffic Offences, officers have investigated a number of locations across the borough where a School Street could be delivered, and Radstock school has been identified as the location for a pilot.

It is planned to consult with residents and local ward members before any form of School Street is implemented and we anticipate this consultation to occur during early summer before school holidays and officers at Wokingham Borough Council are due to start the design of the scheme shortly.

The intention would be to introduce a School Street scheme at the beginning of the next school year (September 2024). The traffic order would enable the enforcement of the School Street with CCTV using ANPR (automatic number plate recognition) mounted at the closure point and would allow for legitimate access for residents and other registered vehicles from the Town Council

Once introduced the council will be monitoring the pilot and if successful will look to roll out School Streets to other locations.

The points that you have raised I have passed onto the officer team who will be in contact with you in the near future.

At the time of writing this report (15/5/24), no further communication has been received from anyone at WBC and we still don't know who is working on this scheme.

ETC Officers' initial concerns about a School Street Scheme in Radstock Lane include:

- Any vehicle without a registered exemption certificate will automatically be issued with a fine if it enters Radstock Lane during prescribed times considered to be 'school drop-off or pick-up times'.
- Attendees at Radstock Community Centre Main Hall, David Fuller Room or the Elizabeth Room during these periods do not drive 'registered vehicles from the Town Council' and would therefore be fined.
- Is WBC aware that ETC operate a busy community centre (leased from WBC) on the site of the school and that there is no alternative access to it?
- It would be impractical to ask all hirers and attendees to register their vehicle for exemption before attending the community centre and, as many services are drop-in, ie Dementia care, Project Salama etc, it wouldn't actually be possible.
- The prospect of receiving fines would seriously deter hirers from using Radstock Community Centre either at the start of the day or during the afternoon – this would have a significant effect on not only services provided for the community but also on the Town Council's income and its ability to run such a community centre.
- The Town Council's offices are in Radstock Lane and there is no alternative access to them. This is a place of work not a remote hub. Any contractor, visitor or even staff member arriving in a different vehicle, would be liable to be fined.
- The Town Council's Helpshop is meant to be open to the general public. The operating hours would need to be severely curtailed to avoid residents being fined when they come to pick up waste bags or dog poo bags etc.
- What would happen to attendees at the drop-in events we run at the Council Offices? The McMillan coffee mornings, bric-a-brac sales, clothes swaps, food bank collection point etc? Would members of the public be fined for attending?

We do not know if WBC officers working on this pilot scheme are actually aware of the Town Council's operations within this cul-de-sac, have they factored this into their decision to choose Radstock Primary School as the pilot school for this project? ETC officers are very concerned about the possible impacts of this scheme on Earley Town Council, these impacts could be significant.

Cllr Fishwick suggests there is going to be a consultation (with the scheme being introduced in September 2024) but we don't know when or how the dates of such a consultation will fit into ETC's meeting schedule and therefore into ETC's discussions around this issue. The little information we have has therefore been included in Amenities & Leisure Committee agenda to provide town councillors with an opportunity to start thinking about any repercussions WBC's proposals may have on the business of Earley Town Council.