

Minutes of the Annual Village Meeting (Annual Parish Meeting) held on Tuesday 11th March 2025 at 7.00pm at Marton Primary School.

Present: Cllr. John Rylands (Chairman), Cllr. David McGowan, Cllr. Sue Webborn, Cllr. Phil Cheetham, Cllr. Barrie Nolan, Cllr. Alistair Goodwin, Cllr. Lucy Nixon

Elizabeth Worrall, Clerk to the Parish Council

26 members of the public

1. Welcome and Introduction

Cllr. John Rylands introduced the evening and the Parish Councillors to attendees. He thanked everyone for their attendance. The Parish Council has had a busy year, and thanks were extended to Councillors and the Clerk for their hard work.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the last meeting – 12th March 2024.

The works completed were touched on briefly and included maintaining the planters at the front of the school, liaising with Cheshire East and residents on Highways matters, working with Ward Councillor Lesley Smetham to arrange siding out on the A34 (which will commence shortly) and liaising with organisations within the Village on planning matters. The Council hope to complete some more work on the Village Green in the next 12 months.

2. Council Environmental Plan (John Purcival)

The Council does have an Environmental Plan in place. John Purcival shared an update on the last 12 months work.

Thanks were extended to everyone within the Village who has donated trees. There are noted changes to the trees being planted due to climate change, with trees being selected that are more drought hardy.

Hedges are being planted wherever possible within the village and are mainly mixed English hedging.

Two orchard strips have been installed, with plans for a third to be installed on land near to the boundary with Somerford Booths.

The wildflower planting project is still in process. John shared some of the challenges that he has experienced – he said that the meadow may not always “look pretty” but is bringing great benefit to the village.

John shared his plans to bring trout back to the brook within the Village. This is in the early stages – John is trying to liaise with the Environment Agency.

John noted that, while the day of the Village Pond is over, many residents still maintain ponds, which has led to an increase of insects and an improvement to the village ecosystem.

Thanks were extended by John Purcival to Cllr. Nixon for her work arranging litter picks throughout the last 12 months.

3. The importance of nature (Melusine Velde, Cheshire Wildlife Trust)

Melusine shared some of the important habitats that the Wildlife Trust are aiming to maintain and encourage within the Parish – this includes peat, ancient woodlands, orchards and hedgerows, to create quality habitats. She commented that it was fantastic to hear about the work already being completed in Marton.

Some background was shared on some changes to legislation including the Local Nature Recovering Strategy and the increase in Biodiversity Net Gain being included in more planning applications.

Melusine advised residents that they can should research and comment on planning applications, be aware of any relevant consultations, liaise with the Parish Council to encourage them to complete more works and speak to Cheshire Wildlife Trust for their support on larger developments. It is important to be an advocate for nature wherever you can to help important habitats to become bigger, better and more joined up within the Parish. Everyone can help with volunteering with local wildlife groups, campaigning on environmental matters and making space for nature on their own land.

4. Beekeeping (Eddie Rush)

Eddie has been keeping bees for around 35 years. Beekeeping requires a wide range of skill sets covering biology, etymology, joinery, health and safety, meteorology and orienteering.

Bees have been on Planet Earth for 13 million years, as bees have been found in amber and fossils and then dated. Bees have been on the planet since long before humans. Humans are a hindrance on nature in many ways and the bees were thriving before we began to keep them.

The honeybee originated in Africa but have, over time, become more accustomed to the European climate.

The worker bee hatches into a grub after several days and develops into a grub within a small cell. After around three weeks developing from a grub, the bee emerges from within the cell. The workers will clean the cell once they have left, allowing the Queen to lay an egg and for the cell to be re-used; this can happen as quickly as a few hours. For the first three weeks, the workers are nurse bees – they clean cells, look after young bees and look after the Queen. When they are three weeks old, the bee will begin completing guard duty, taking short flights away from the hive and following the other bees' signals to find nectar and pollen. In summer, the worker will only complete guard duty for around three weeks before they die from exhaustion, living for only 41 – 46

days in total. Worker bees can live for 80 – 100 days in winter, when they don't need to work so far.

The Queen is laid in a separate cell, which is much larger than a standard cell. After hatching into a grub, the bee is fed Royal Jelly to accelerate quickly. After two weeks, the Queen hatches fully matured. The Queen is fed, and after three days, the Queen will complete her maiden flight to allow her to mate. The males will chase her and only the strongest male bees will be able to catch her. The Queen will mate with multiple male bees – she only makes one maiden/mating flight in her life. The mating process is fatal to the male bees. Once she returns to the hive, the Queen can lay thousands of eggs a day. The Queen can live in the hive for up to three years – after this, her ability to lay eggs and the strength of her pheromones starts to wane. When the hive produces two Queens, one Queen will swarm, taking some of the bees with her – any bees away from the hive will join the swarm. The swarm will aim to find somewhere else to live. A Queen can live for up to five years, but in commercial settings, they are usually replaced after three years once they have used up most of their egg-laying potential.

The drone is the only male bee. Drone eggs are only laid in Spring, and they are also laid in special cells which are slightly bigger. The Queen measures the size of the cell prior to laying so she can choose which type of egg (Drone or Worker) to lay. The drones hatch after 24 days, so take longer to mature. Once hatched, they are looked after by the workers. The drones have the sole purpose of mating with a Queen, which ends their life. If any drones survive the summer, they are no longer fed by the workers and are evicted from the hive to die.

Bee hives are specifically designed to allow the bees to thrive. In summer, the colony will need more space to store the honey that they are making and for them to increase their numbers in the warmer weather. A full hive can hold 66 frames for the bees to fill. A frame can hold around 6lbs of honey.

There are other types of solitary bees that do not live in a colony. Mining bees usually live in south facing brickwork, or sand or clay banks. These lay around 10 eggs at a time.

5. Closing Remarks

Cllr. Rylands thanked all the speakers and attendees for coming. Cllr. Rylands reminded attendees of various village projects that require support.

The Church are often in need of volunteers. Marton Wakes runs every July and relies heavily on support from the Village.

There have been issues in getting a volunteer group together for speed watch, so any new volunteers are welcomed.

Cllrs. Cheetham and Nolan run regular working parties to complete maintenance of the Village Green and would welcome support.

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Signed

Dated

Cllr. Nixon runs regular litter picks, with the next one tentatively planned to happen in April.

The Clerk sends out regular mailers, so all Villagers were encouraged to share their e-mail address. There is also a Village WhatsApp, which Cllr. Rylands can arrange for Villagers to be added to. The Parish Council also run regular Coffee Mornings over the winter

The meeting formally closed at 8.20pm, and refreshments were served.

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