

KINGSLAND PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE JOINT EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF KINGSLAND PARISH COUNCIL HELD WITH LUSTON GROUP PARISH COUNCIL AT 7.00PM ON THURSDAY 11 JANUARY 2024 AT CAWLEY HALL

PRESENT – Kingsland PC: P Saunders (Vice Chairman), R Harris, S Hicks, S Morgan and B Watkins.

PRESENT – Luston Group PC: I Stevens (Chairman), C Pearson (Vice Chairman), E Coates, R Bennett Jones, P Edwards, K Wood, A Capell and W Talbot Ponsonby.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr A Cockcroft, Mr A Goodchild, EDF; Mr N Holden, Jacobs; Ward Councillor D Hurcomb; and Mr R Hewitt, Clerk. Eight (8) members of the public were present.

2023/161 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- a) *Kingsland PC:* C Sawyers, D Fordham, D Thompson and J Vaughan.
- b) *Luston Group PC:* A Brandish and J Oatley.

2023/162 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION
There were no declarations made by the members present.

2023/163 LOCAL RESIDENTS' DISCUSSION
Luston Group Councillors raised several highway defects.

2023/164 REPORT ON HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL
Ward Cllr. D Hurcomb's report was noted, and a written copy will be circulated. The budget consultation anticipates ring-fencing funding for library services in 2024-25.

2023/165 PROPOSALS FOR WEIR IMPROVEMENTS ON RIVER LUGG
i) *Proposal to request support for ongoing local projects.* It was agreed to ask EDF/ Hinkley Point about community social responsibility funding for parish projects following the conclusion of the consultation on proposals for 'weir improvements.'

Ward Cllr. Hurcomb said the weir proposals will need to go through the planning process. Members of the public raised concerns about the proposal and reported that the weirs are not maintained properly at present.

ii) *Briefing by EDF on proposals for 'weir improvements' on the River Lugg to provide "easement of existing barriers to fish migration which... support plans already being considered by the Environment Agency".*

Mr A Cockcroft, Mr A Goodchild, EDF and Mr N Holden, Jacobs, briefed the meeting on their proposal to remove a weir on the River Lugg between Kingsland and Eyton as part of the consultation on the Material Change to the Development Consent Order for Hinkley Point. The intention is to undertake measures which support fish populations upstream of the River Lugg. The public consultation is the start of a process expected to conclude in 2026 with a decision by the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero.

With specific reference to the proposed removal of one of the weirs, it was stated that “Our intention is not to increase flood risk in any of our activity or in any final proposal”. According to the presentation, the weirs “offer no flood defence benefit” and “interrupt the natural sediment regime”.

Cllr. I Stevens (Chairman) invited comment from councillors and members of the public. Two members of the public said the weirs keep water in the river to support fish stocks in dry weather and prevent water running quickly downstream in wet periods. The weirs were put in place as part of a flood alleviation scheme to protect Leominster from flooding. The removal of a weir in recent years by the Environment Agency reportedly caused soil erosion immediately. It was felt that the weirs should be maintained properly, including the existing fish passes.

Ward Cllr. Hurcomb raised the question of who will pick up the cost of increased flooding and/ or saving fish from the river in the dry season as a result of weir removal. The cost is likely to fall on local taxpayers. The proposed scheme needs proper thought. EDF was urged to review their modelling.

Cllr. Saunders, Kingsland PC asked about other the projected benefits and suggested that the data from other similar initiatives shows no certainty that weir removal will lead to an increase in fish stocks.

EDF were asked whether or not fish passes had been considered, particularly given the existing fish passes in the weirs.

The Chairman of the joint meeting, Cllr. I Stevens, asked that the points raised are given serious consideration and thought by EDF, and noted that, to judge from the response in the meeting, the proposed weir improvements as outlined have caused significant disquiet.

Mr A Goodchild thanked the parish councils and public for the points raised and said an alternative option is possible: “If we can achieve the same objective then we can actively explore”. The parish councils were asked to consider responding formally to the public consultation.

[Kingsland parish councillors left the meeting at 8.45pm.]

[Luston Group Parish Council agreed to ask local landowners about their experience of the functioning of the weirs since the 1970s and continued to meet to consider parish planning and finance items.]

The Chairman, Luston Group Parish Council, closed the meeting at 9.00pm.

Signed:

Date: