

Leek Town Council Environment Committee

Tuesday 27th January 2026,

5:00pm, Town Council Office, 15 Stockwell Street, Leek, St13 6DH

MINUTES

1. **Welcome:** Chair Cllr. Keith Hoptroff, Vice Chair Cllr. Matt Swidleyhurst, Mayor Cllr. Derek Hilyer, Cllr Dee Young, Cllr. Sue Webster, District Cllr. Mark Johnson, County Cllrs. Mike Broom and Bob Egginton. Minutes Denise Wheat Clerk
2. **Apologies:** County Cllr. Charlotte Kelly
3. **Declarations of Interest:**
Cllr. Mark Johnson – Project Lead for SMDC for Nature in Your Neighbourhood with Moorlands Climate Action (MCA)
Cllr. Mike Broom (Biddulph North) – Chair of Planning and Chair of Countryside and Public Rights of Way at Staffs County Council
Cllr. Bob Egginton (Biddulph South and Endon) – Vice Chair of Planning and Public Rights of Way at SCC.
4. **Peak Cluster:** A update was given by Cllr. Mark Johnson about the Peak Cluster project, a de-carbonisation plant and pipeline. The Cement industries and the UK government are funding the project. If successful the pipeline will reduce the carbon footprint of the industry in the UK. The Staffordshire route will run from the Cauldon cement plant and join with a pipeline from other plants in Derbyshire.

The Peak Cluster is a National Significant Infrastructure Project which will be decided by the Secretary of State. The Planning will be subject to industry standard surveys for example Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. Cement production releases carbon dioxide through 'calcination' in the process of converting from limestone. The CO₂ will be captured and transported and stored deep on the sea bed. CO₂ is not dangerous if managed properly but is the largest contributor to global warming.

A major Severn Trent project which is in the planning stages is the water link from Carsington Reservoir to Tittesworth Reservoir to improve water supply to the area. It is important that the two projects co-ordinate their strategy to minimize disruption.

Ecologically there are no Sites of Scientific Specific Interest along the Staffordshire route, although some sites of lesser ecological value may be affected. The pipeline would pass close to the Hargate Estate, and Leek North Councillors have engaged with Peak Cluster from the start in order to make sure that issues such as public rights of way are maintained.

The Town Councillors discussed their response to the consultation.

- a) **Communication:** good communication is needed to residents who will be affected. It was noted that the area is often used for anti-social behaviour and that health and safety considerations of local people who may stray onto the land will be necessary.

The Council agreed that communication needs to be managed well, at the planning stages, during construction and afterwards when the land is restored.

It was noted that the project would sterilize the land, as no building construction would be allowed in that area in the future.

- b) **Public Rights of Way: the Council resolved to campaign to keep rights of way open where possible and to ensure restoration afterwards with minimum scarring to the landscape.** 10% Biodiversity Net Gain is the mechanism for this is the County Council Nature Recovery Strategy framework.

- c) **Logistics:** Monitoring the movement of groundwork construction materials and the effect on the Highways was discussed. There will be an engineering base and heavy plant machinery movements in the area.

- d) **Community Benefit:** It was noted that large construction of this kind brings funding for community projects to benefit affected areas. The project is also predicted to create 1500 construction jobs, also protecting 2000 jobs locally in the Cement industry.

5. Nature In Your Neighbourhood:

A paper was circulated about the Nature in Your Neighbourhood project. The main points are:

- The project is lottery funded, to help communities in the Moorlands manage green spaces, overcoming barriers like permission and providing ecological survey technical support.

- Partners are: Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Keele University, Moorlands Climate Action, Outside Arts, SCVYS (Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services) and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.
- Keele University are conducting carbon sequestration studies on selected sites.
- Funding for improvements such as wildflower planting and hedgelaying will be released.
- Most sites have robust community groups engaged in the projects, some sites need help to recruit more volunteers.

Sites in Leek:

- a) **Haregate Carlton Terrace** – Site owned by County Council, community group – Swifts of Leek and MCA)
- b) **Ball Haye Memorial Rec:** - owned by Leek Town Council, needs more volunteers, can progress to planting plants and could also be a site for and artwork installation (with agreement of LTC).
- c) **Woodcroft:** owned by SMDC, community group Greenwood Growth CIC. Could do with more support. The group is founding a 'Friends of' organisation. It was suggested the Allotment Holders might support this.
- d) **Westwood Rec:** owned by SMDC, established community group Action West End with the help of St Edwards School but the volunteers have found difficulty getting mobilised with the project.

6. Woodland Trust:

Offer of free tree and hedgerow packs. Item to be referred to Allotment and Green Spaces Committee.

7. 20's Plenty

Leek Civic Society are leading this campaign in Leek. It is the County Council who make the decisions about Highway infrastructure and who license the speed restrictions in the County.

Clerk to send the link to the meeting on 16th Feb to the District and County Councillors.

8. Any Other Business:

Green Spaces Strategy: SMDC manage lots of green spaces in the Moorlands except those managed by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust.

Individual site management strategies have been produced for several large parks including Brough Park. Public reaction has been favourable. The next in the process is for Pickwood Rec. There is a grant scheme available to fund improvements in Parishes and Towns of up to £500.

9. Future topics: No additional topics were suggested.

10. Next meeting: to be arranged

ACTIONS		
Peak Cluster	Consultation deadline 10 th February	Clerk to submit response on behalf of the Town Council
Nature in Your Neighbourhood	Recruit more volunteers	Green Spaces and Allotments Committee agenda item for February
Woodland Trust	Identify sites	GSA Agenda item
20's Plenty	District and County Councillors to attend a meeting	Clerk to send out the link