

Minutes for Stowey Green Spaces AGM Thursday 8th May 2025 7.00pm at Thomas Poole Library, Nether Stowey, TA5 1LN

The AGM was followed by a sociable evening with tea, coffee, wine and an excellent variety of nibbles provided by Lynn and Jo.

Present: Roy Osborne (Chairman); Paul Brierley (Deputy Chairman); Terry Abbiss (Treasurer); Sue Aubrey, Simon Pickard, Ron Scales, Judith Greig (core group members); Iain Porter (QHNL); Kevin Ferriday (NS Parish Council); Robin Brierley, Dick Best, Paul Clark, Jo and Dave Davison, Jacob Hopkins, Richard Ince, Maureen Kenny, Janet and Nigel Phillips, Ruth Pickard, Terry Sackett, Lynn Scales, Sue Sidery, Sam Westmacott.

Apologies: Nicola Hunt (Secretary); Mark Gough, Paul Pickles, Ro Fitzgerald, Julian Anderson, Ruth and John Graham, Kerry and Martin Trout, Andy Stevenson, Sandra Sidaway, Kate and Kit Houghton, Bill Jenman, Hilary and Andrew Bates, Rod Langdon-Cole, Paul Rutter, Team Wilder (SWT), Mark Baker, Hester Watson, John Andrews.

Agreement Minutes of AGM Tuesday 7th May 2025 Over Stowey Village Hall: Agreed as circulated in minutes of 14 May 2024.

Chairman's Report Roy Osborne: Attached

Treasurer's Report / Statement Terry Abbiss: Attached

Update on volunteer hours Terry Abbiss: Attached

Litter Picking update Paul Brierley: Attached

SGSG core group: To remain unchanged although additional participants would be extremely welcome. Terry to step down as treasurer at the end of the year and Judith as Tuesday-volunteering alerter.

Update on New Stowey Farm by Iain Porter, Manager - Quantock Hills National Landscape: Iain gave us a run-down on the work that the QHNL team are carrying out and plan to carry out on the Somerset Council owned 45 Ha. New Stowey Farm – bordering our woods, a particularly exciting project for SGSG. This 10-year project for creating a Regenerative Agriculture demonstrator site started in April 2024 and must pay its way. Heavy initial investment is required in infrastructure such as water supply, fencing and cattle pens. Pasture is to be grazed by cattle, with areas of woodland, some areas of natural regeneration, a community orchard and a wildlife corridor. Tree planting is under way, thanks to donor offerings, more planting and felling to come. Access to be improved – styles removed. Iain left us with literature and maps detailing the project: background objectives; the state of the Farm in 2023; what the team will be doing; potential benefits; and ways to get involved. More information is available – contact quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk Questions included: footpath access by kissing gates – to be as open as possible with minimum gates of any kind; finance – budget to balance by 5-year stage, viable financially by year 10; wildlife/biodiversity – hedges are of particular importance and require improvement, as yet not much done by way of other surveys but improvement is expected; open barn (restored after the fire several years ago) – to be enclosed for storage areas, water, power and room to shelter; visitors – interpretation trail planned but not a visitor centre that would compete with Nether Stowey's facilities and, in particular, information at the Thomas Poole Library.

AOB

- Nether Stowey Village Hall and Recreation Ground CIO: Jo Davison on behalf of the NSVH&RG CIO thanked the Stowey Green Spaces Group for their work on the Recreation Ground. The state of the Recreation Ground, and in particular the border areas and hedge, was particularly commended by the ecologists whose report will contribute to the planning application for the new build.
- Ponds in Stowey Wood and how to sensibly spend our £1,300 windfall from Quantock Eco (see Chairman's Report) – Judith Greig proposed that the funds be allocated to a ponds regeneration project with an initial report by professional ecologists to establish the current state of the ponds (they fit the description of 'zombie ponds' that was read out) and an outline of the possible next steps with regard to restoration and/or management. Scott Passmore of the Somerset Reptile and Amphibian Group of volunteers is visiting the ponds and will report back on his findings; he is looking for frogs, toads and newts. Somerset Wildlife Trust Consultancy has quoted for an initial scoping report. Judith agreed to obtain some comparative quotes. SGSG work in the Wood has, as to be expected, focussed on the trees - felling, planting and care of saplings, resulting in significantly more wildflowers with attacks on areas of bramble. We have very good records of the woodland flora and a professional botanical survey is underway, decent records of the birdlife and we wage a regular war against invasive plant species. We have not managed the ponds.