



Steering Group Meeting Monday March 14th 2016

Open Meeting to discuss Lindow Moss - the way forward

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| 1 | <p>Preceded by update from Jean Hill on Wilmslow partnership, the Neighbourhood and Local Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The old Stables, there needs to be enough interest from other groups involved in the Wilmslow Partnership as well as Transition Wilmslow to carry this forward. • The Neighbourhood Plan - WTC have a planning steering group in place for their area. Landscape, Heritage and Architecture will be key issues. • Brian Donahue wishes to meet with TW - an open forum is suggested. • The Local Plan is open for consultation. There are some significant changes. A decision will be needed as to whether we wish to comment on these. |
| 2 | <p><u>Main Topic for the evening - Lindow Moss.</u></p> <p>The Cheshire East Planning application meeting is now scheduled for April 20th 2016.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Handley from Transition Wilmslow introduced the Moss as it is now and the restoration plan. A position statement by Transition Wilmslow is attached as Annex 1. • Joe Pimblett from the Cheshire Wildlife Trust spoke about mossland restoration and of his role in managing the restoration if CWT take over. • Tony Evans from Saltersley Common Preservation Society introduced the concerns over the Hydrology of the Moss, the increasing area of subsidence and what might happen when the Moss is re-wetted. <p>A wide ranging discussion followed on the consequences of Croggan Peat winning their planning application or being turned down.</p> |

	To take the project forward it was suggested that interested parties should amalgamate into a single Friends of Lindow Moss Group and get other well respected organisations on board. An option appraisal could be commissioned.
3	<p><u>Any other business</u></p> <p>Future events: In order to raise awareness and lobby for the restoration of Lindow Moss; 2 guided walks on the moss, 1 dawn walk, another from the Plough and Flail and a stand at the Wilmslow show featuring Lindow Moss.</p> <p>Earth Hour - build on the success of last year organised at The Old Dancer. Song sheets would help with songs with an environmental slant</p> <p>Seedling Saturday May 14th</p>
4	Date and Time of next meeting: Monday April 11th 2016 7.30 at the Meeting House

ANNEX 1: The New Vision for Lindow Moss

Lindow Moss is one of the most significant peatland landscapes in Britain and yet it remains abused, neglected and officially unrecognised. Through this New Vision those who care about the future of Lindow Moss are coming together as the Lindow Moss Partnership to restore, conserve and celebrate this uniquely important landscape.

Its story begins in pre-historic times, when gravel, sand and clay from melting Ice Age glaciers were carried from the Pennines and deposited on the Cheshire plain. Over the centuries Lindow Moss has held a special significance for humankind. Following a deterioration in the British climate, and with a Roman army at the door, this was, 2,000 years ago, a place of propitiation and ritual human sacrifice. Lindow Man, the first almost intact ‘bog body’ to be found in Britain in 1984 was skilfully excavated, analysed and conserved and is now displayed to the world in Room 49 of the British Museum, London. There is an opportunity here to tell a compelling story which brings together climatic change, landscape history and the enduring importance of place in the relationship between humankind and nature. We would like that story to be told here in North West England, through the active participation of the British Museum and the Manchester Museum, and on-site interpretation at the Moss itself.

Lindow Moss seems to have originated as an ice-filled hollow in the bleak post-glacial landscape. The resulting lake was progressively colonised by reeds and other aquatic vegetation until the open water became a choked fen-carr. It then evolved towards a slow-growing mire with heather and

cotton grass, as we see on parts of the moss today. As conditions became drier, around 8,000 years ago, Scots Pine was able to colonise the surface and established an open woodland. Peat cutting has exposed the evocative skeletons of a pine forest which survived through the Neolithic and Bronze ages until increasing wetness prevented pine regeneration and transformed the mire surface into a soft carpet of Sphagnum moss.

The rapidly growing peat bog which entombed Lindow man became a precious natural resource for subsequent generations. Turbary - peat cutting for fuel - became established in the medieval period and it is no accident that five historic township boundaries converge on the Moss. Working from the fringes, the mire was progressively drained and cut for fuel along narrow strips or 'intakes' known as 'moss rooms'. This pattern of use was captured in the field boundaries which survive to this day and mark one of the best preserved landscapes of its type in Britain. It deserves to be recognised and conserved.

Meanwhile, industrial scale peat cutting for horticulture continues in the core of the Moss, founded on historic planning consents granted in the environmental 'Dark Ages' of the 1960s. Mechanical extraction has accelerated since the 1980s, desiccating areas of the Moss. New planning conditions were established following the 1995 Environment Act but these have not been enforced. For example, the principal outfall to the Sugar Brook is uncontrolled allowing water to bleed, not just from the peat workings, but from the wider landscape beyond. It is only the rather low hydraulic conductivity of peat which protects buildings and habitats in the surroundings (including Lindow Common) from more severe damage due to water table drawdown and peat shrinkage. With immediate effect the extant planning conditions need to be adhered to and enforced. Peat cutting should be terminated before peat removal continues beyond the point of no-return for re-establishing an ecologically viable mire habitat. This matters, not just for Lindow Moss itself, as it is a key 'stepping-stone' in the network of lowland mire habitats, linking the Meres and Mosses Natural Improvement Area to the south with the Mersey Basin to the north.

Around the outer fringes of the Moss, and intruding into it in places, are sand deposits. The attractive lake and successful coarse fishery at Rossmere was created by sand extraction in recent times, but it was Bronze Age land use that impoverished the soils and created the heathland of Lindow Common. This isolated fragment of heathland is now protected as an SSSI and Local Nature Reserve. However, the tendency to revert to woodland in modern times presents a challenge both for ecological management and the landscape, on a site acquired for recreation and dedicated to the people of Wilmslow.

The leisure economy is alive and well at thriving hostelrys on the sandy fringes which provide entry points for the many horse and cycle riders, walkers, runners and naturalists who enjoy the informality and comparative isolation of this classic edge-land landscape. Even the former landfill sites provide an extra challenge and offer splendid views of Alderley Edge and the Pennine hills beyond. But peat is not hard-wearing and investment is urgently needed to increase the resilience of footpaths, bridleways and byways (especially in winter) and to widen the spectrum of accessibility. The footpath network here is also of more than local significance, providing, as it does, the opportunity to create a green necklace of footpaths linking Wilmslow rail station, the Bollin Valley and the Moss itself.

If climate change brought the Moss into being, it is climate change that now represents one of today's greatest challenges to humankind. Careful management is needed to optimise capture of methane (a highly potent greenhouse gas) from the former landfills and to stem the flow of contaminative leachate into the surrounding watercourses. Even more significant is the effect of water table drawdown which accelerates the oxidation of peat soils to carbon dioxide, not to mention the physical removal of peat for horticulture. The final aim of the Lindow Moss partnership

is to reverse these trends and to re-establish the key ecosystem service of ‘carbon capture’ which was once the hallmark of the entire mossland landscape. The Lindow Moss partnership is an alliance of government agencies, voluntary bodies and local interest groups who all share a commitment to the Lindow Moss agenda, summarised below:

- Cessation of peat extraction and restoration of the peat working area to create an attractive natural habitat and to re-establish the Moss as a carbon sink
- Protection of the wider Lindow Moss landscape
- Improved access for recreation and exercise, for all ages and abilities
- Creation of an area where flora and fauna can flourish and be appreciated
- Interpretation of the rich natural and human history of the Moss, including Lindow Man, to enhance education and understanding
- Establish a green tourism destination while maintaining its natural character
- Recognition of Lindow Moss as a Green Infrastructure Asset and a green lung for Wilmslow and the people of Cheshire East