

NOTES of a PUBLIC MEETING
held at the Community Hall, Wyndham Road, Silverton
7.00 pm Monday 29th January 2024.

Attendance: Circa 50 parishioners

District Councillor Josh Wright welcomed members of the public to the meeting and explained he was the District Councillor for Silverton and he gave a brief resume of the Broad Oak tree.

Cllr Sarah Cross introduced herself as the Parish Council Chair and explained the meeting was not a Parish Council meeting but a meeting to enable parishioners to talk about their memories of the Broad Oak and to put forward any suggestions they may have with regard to how the wood should be utilised.

The Chair explained that the tree is not on Parish Council land but land belonging to MDDC who are responsible for tree and what now happens to it. The Chair confirmed MDDC are happy to liaise with the Parish Council on the way forward but their prime concern at the moment is the safety of everyone and work is anticipated on the tree tomorrow.

MDDC has confirmed the large base of the tree will remain on site. It is intended to move the base slightly to improve safety and a crane will be coming to carry out this week which hopefully will only take a day or two. When the crane is in situ it will be necessary for Coach Road to be closed as a through road. The majority of wood is to be set aside for parish use. The Chair explained that the Parish Council received numerous emails etc with requests for wood and these will be considered in due course. The Chair stressed that no decisions can be made until agreed at a full Parish Council meeting – the February meeting is scheduled to take place on Monday 5th.

Record cards were available for people to write down any suggestions or comments should they not wish to speak at the meeting.

It was noted that Tony Buckland (BBC) had suggested acorns may be lying dormant around tree and a request was made for an area be set aside to see if any acorns germinate. A request was made for anyone who has an offspring from the tree to let the Parish Council know. The Clerk informed the meeting someone in the village does have a sapling which is now 5 years old which has been offered to the village. Miles Snowdon indicated there was a sapling at Newton St Cyres arboretum.

Mr Neil Maylan stated that advice has been provided by a leading Dendrochronologist on how to take samples to date the tree. Unfortunately because of the rot at the base of the tree, we will probably not be able to find an exact date for the tree but we will be able to state that it was at least X hundred years old. Basic dendrochronology, counting the tree rings would give us the date of the tree, but tree rings are not uniform in size and their width is dependent on the weather each year; in a good year the tree ring will be wider than in a poor year. Dendrochronologists measure the width of the rings and produce a sequence. If the Broad Oak's sequence is produced it would allow the tree ring sequence of a piece of wood from a roof truss in a Silverton cottage to be compared with it and this would give a date for the roof truss and therefore the date of the cottage.

The Chair stated she personally felt that dendrochronology was a good idea and felt that maybe 2 structures showing the history of the tree could be provided with one being given to the school and one situate somewhere in the village to enable all parishioners to view it.

The representative from FOSS confirmed it would support any projects and work with the Parish Council. A suggestion was put forward that the Parish Council might wish to contact the Museum with regard to dendrochronology. It was noted that it is now possible to get the DNA of the tree and this placed in a small chip which could be placed into every item made. This is apparently reasonably priced

With regard to the wood, the Chair confirmed MDDC/Contractors will be erecting a compound where this will be stored.

A parishioner had a sample from the tree and confirmed what moss, lichen etc are on the tree.

A query was raised as to whether or not the wood could be purchased.

A suggestion was made that maybe someone could make bird houses and sell these at the Street Market in order to raise funds to purchase replacement trees for the village.

A request was made for an annual tree planting day to commemorate the Broad Oak.

The Chair indicated that the Parish Council would be open to all ideas with regard to tree planting etc.

District Councillor Wright stated there were grants available to be able to get trees. The Parish Council are happy to support any groups/organisations and point them in the right direction to get funding. He said it was great to see so many people at the meeting putting forward ideas and the Parish Council will do its best to meet everyone's needs.

A query was raised as to whether any part of the base that could re-generate and whether some of the brush could be used to protect the base for possible future re-growth.

Mr James Bond addressed the meeting. Mr Bond represents the Carving Community CIC and has been carving wood for over 42 years. He has worked mainly in the South West and in particular in deprived areas. He pointed out some of the tree can be cleaved. He said his main concern was sawing and limiting the size of the tree. The Chair pointed out MDDC do have contractors who will be dealing with it and they have assured the Parish Council they will be as sensitive as possible with their priority being to stabilize the tree.

Members of the public thanked the Parish Council for calling the meeting and the Chair thanked the Clerk for the additional work she had carried out over the past few days.

The Chair confirmed that the Parish Council Minutes could be found on the Parish Council Website, its Facebook page and the Noticeboard in the Square.

Meeting closed at 7:36 p.m.