

Sedbergh Parish Council

Queen's Gardens Committee

Note of a meeting held on 16 October 2014 at Queen's Gardens

Present:

Cllrs. Lancaster, Allan, McPherson and Atkins

Mr Mark Hewitt, Wildlife Conservation Officer, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

This was an informal meeting of members of the Queen's Gardens Committee with Mark Hewitt to seek his advice in relation to the ground clearance work proposed. All parts of the Gardens were inspected and a wide-ranging discussion took place on the general approach to the management and future maintenance of the gardens.

Mark Hewitt has subsequently provided a summary of his advice:

The garden currently has very good wildlife value and it should be possible to retain this with some careful planning and management.

The footpath network looks to be in reasonably good condition and some general tidying will emphasise the paths and aid identifying any issues such as loose/damaged edges or steps.

A clear plan should be produced so that everyone knows what is happening – what is coming out and when and what is staying etc.

I would suggest that initial work is focussed in the centre of the garden and that the perimeters are left largely untouched until the main restoration has been completed.

The rhododendrons and laurel species could be cut down and removed to let light in. Replacement planting could use similar plants but smaller species.

There are areas of natural regeneration of holly and other species these could be lifted and moved/sold.

A tree survey should be a top priority for two reasons, 1, it will address health and safety issues and 2, decisions can be made on what trees need to come out to enhance the garden whilst retaining the integrity of the design. Once you have this information you can plan work programmes, obtain quotes and plan which areas need clearing before felling works.

Aim to do work little and often rather than blitzing it as this will retain the wildlife interest and will not be a big shock to local residents.

The interpretation panel has some good information which should form a good template for the next steps.

This advice will assist in the Committee's deliberations on the work to be undertaken in the short to medium term.