



Borough of Tamworth

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**INFRASTRUCTURE, SAFETY AND GROWTH
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

28 June 2022

Dear Councillor

A Meeting of the Infrastructure, Safety and Growth Scrutiny Committee will be held in **Town Hall, Market Street, Tamworth on Wednesday, 6th July, 2022 at 6.00 pm.** Members of the Committee are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized initials and a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Chief Executive

A G E N D A

NON CONFIDENTIAL

- 1 Apologies for Absence**
- 2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Pages 5 - 12)**
- 3 Declarations of Interest**

To receive any declarations of Members' interests (personal and/or personal and prejudicial) in any matters which are to be considered at this meeting.

When Members are declaring a personal interest or personal and prejudicial interest in respect of which they have dispensation, they should specify the nature of such interest. Members should leave the room if they have a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of which they do not have a dispensation.

4 Update from the Chair

5 Responses to Reports of the Infrastructure Safety & Growth Committee

Update on responses received to Reports of the Infrastructure Safety & Growth Committee:

6 Consideration of Matters referred to the Infrastructure Safety & Growth Committee from Cabinet or Council

(Discussion item)

7 Dry Recycling Contract Update

(To receive an update on the Dry Recycling Contract)

8 Electric Vehicle Charging

(To receive a verbal update from Officers)

9 Petition to stop the netting of hedges in Tamworth (Pages 13 - 18)

(Report of the Assistant Director, Growth & Regeneration)

10 Forward Plan

(Discussion item – link to Forward Plan is attached)

<http://democracy.tamworth.gov.uk/mgListPlans.aspx?RPId=120&RD=0&bcr=1>

11 Working Group Updates

To receive updates from any Working Groups

12 Infrastructure Safety & Growth Scrutiny Committee Work Plan (Pages 19 - 20)

(Update and discussion on the Infrastructure Safety & Growth Scrutiny Work Plan)

Access arrangements

If you have any particular access requirements when attending the meeting, please contact Democratic Services on 01827 709267 or e-mail democratic-services@tamworth.gov.uk. We can then endeavour to ensure that any particular requirements you may have are catered for.

Filming of Meetings

The public part of this meeting may be filmed and broadcast. Please refer to the Council's Protocol on Filming, Videoing, Photography and Audio Recording at Council meetings which can be found [here](#) for further information.

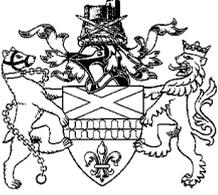
If a member of the public is particularly concerned about accidental filming, please contact a member of Democratic Services before selecting a seat

FAQs

For further information about the Council's Committee arrangements please see the FAQ page [here](#)

To Councillors: S Goodall, M Cook, A Cooper, S Daniels, R Ford, J Harper, S People, B Price and P Turner

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
INFRASTRUCTURE, SAFETY AND
GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON 14th JUNE 2022**

PRESENT: Councillor S Goodall (Chair), Councillors M Cook, S Daniels, R Ford, J Harper, S Peple, B Price, R Claymore and D Maycock

CABINET: Councillor Jeremy Oates
Councillor Stephen Doyle
Councillor Martin Summers

The following officers were present: Anna Miller (Assistant Director – Growth & Regeneration), Joanne Sands (Assistant Director Partnerships), Marisha Place (Partnerships Officer), Alice Poulton (Future High Streets Fund Project Officer) and Jo Hutchison (Democratic Services, Scrutiny and Elections Officer)

Apologies received from: Councillor(s) A Cooper and P Turner

95 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andrew Cooper and Paul Turner, and Councillors Daniel Maycock and Rosey Claymore attended as substitutes.

96 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED that Councillor Richard Ford be elected as vice-chair

(Moved by Councillor S Goodall and seconded by Councillor B Price)

97 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2022 were approved as a correct record.

(Moved by Councillor S Goodall and seconded by Councillor R Claymore)

98 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Sheree People declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 8 (Overview of Borough Council services relating to community safety) as a trustee of the Heart of Tamworth, a partner organisation.

There were no other declarations of interest.

99 UPDATE FROM THE CHAIR

There were no items from the Chair to update on at this time.

100 RESPONSES TO REPORTS OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE SAFETY & GROWTH COMMITTEE

The Chair updated the Committee on the recommendations which had been made by the Committee at the meeting on 24 March 2022 following consideration of the Recovery & Reset item, which were presented to Cabinet on 7 April and which Cabinet took on board.

101 CONSIDERATION OF MATTERS REFERRED TO THE INFRASTRUCTURE SAFETY & GROWTH COMMITTEE FROM CABINET OR COUNCIL

The Chair reported that there were no new items to report.

102 OVERVIEW OF BOROUGH COUNCIL SERVICES RELATING TO COMMUNITY SAFETY

The Chair introduced the Assistant Director, Partnerships who provided an overview to the Committee of the activities within the council relating to community safety which covered:

1. An update on the CCTV shared service which had commenced in March 2020;
2. Initiatives relating to homelessness and rough sleeping including work with local partnership organisations
3. Activities associated with Travellers, including with Staffordshire Police, Staffordshire County Council and the role of the Street Scene teams;
4. The arrangements which applied to parking enforcement, including the roles of Staffordshire County Council where there are traffic restrictions in place, when the Police can take enforcement action if obstructive parking affects road safety and the planned updates to the parking toolkit to include partnership approach to neighbour disputes;
5. Activities associated with Anti-Social behaviour, including partnerships work and environmental anti-social behaviour and the activities of wardens in support
6. The activities of the Partnerships team in safeguarding children and adults at risk and vulnerable people and the training provided to staff, councillors and taxi drivers and the role of the team in terms of PREVENT reporting (relating to persons at risk of radicalisation) and modern slavery reporting.

7. Coordination with partners to promote and raise awareness of community safety.

The Committee commented and sought and received clarifications in the following areas:

1. Whether there was data available on whether the new CCTV shared service had had an impact on the detection and reporting of crime. It was reported that figures could be provided on a bi-annual / quarterly basis going forwards, if requested.
2. Whether the distribution of the cameras was appropriate and whether there was planned to be any review of these, where it was confirmed that this could be provided as part of a more detailed update.
3. The Committee noted that whilst the figures from the rough sleeping count were very low, these were a snapshot in time and it was important for there to continue to be strategies in place to manage wider homelessness, as well as street homelessness.
4. The Committee sought clarification on when the parking toolkit would be updated and the Assistant Director expected that it would be possible to bring an update on this back to the Committee in Autumn 2022.
5. The arrangements in place with Staffordshire / Stoke on Trent Council regarding parking enforcement were discussed and further details requested. It was agreed that the Staffordshire Parking report would be circulated. Clarification on when and by whom parking enforcement action could be taken were sought, including in terms of parking on pavements and the importance of education work in terms of parking close to schools, where it was reported that the Staffordshire County Council Road Safety Team and the Police were working on this.

The Chair thanked the Officer for her presentation.

103 PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER MERCIA CLOSE

The Committee received the report of the Assistant Director, Partnerships to consider public consultation received and to support delegation to Portfolio Holder Voluntary Sector, Town Centre, Evening Economy and Community Safety for implementation of a Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO's) at Mercia Close.

The Committee sought and received clarification about the extent of the consultation undertaken, which had included letters to residents as well as the publication of notices on relevant posts and on websites.

Following consideration by the Committee of the results of the public consultation, the Committee

RESOLVED to:

1. Recommend progression for a PSPO at Land running behind 1 to 35 Mercia Close, specifically the Public Right of Way (Tamworth 25) that runs from No 11 to No 35; and
2. Recommend delegation for implementation of the PSPO to the Portfolio Holder Voluntary Sector, Town Centre, Evening Economy and Community Safety.

(Moved by Councillor S Goodall and seconded by Councillor B Price)

The Chair thanked the Officers for their attendance and the Assistant Director, Partnerships and the Partnerships Officer left the meeting.

104 ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

This item was deferred to the July meeting.

105 FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND UPDATE

The Chair welcomed the Leader of the Council, the Assistant Director, Growth & Regeneration and the Future High Streets Fund Project Officer to the meeting for this update on progress on the Future High Streets Fund programme. The Chair thanked the Officers for the recent site visit which they had organised for committee members which had provided good context to members.

The Committee commented and sought and received clarifications in the following areas:

1. In terms of the demolition works the expected duration for these works, where it was reported that demolition for the College Quarter project was expected to take around 22 weeks following which building works were expected to start. It was expected that there would be hoarding in this area for around two years.
2. The extent of the preservation of the historic buildings whilst ensuring these buildings were brought back into use and the cost implications of this, where it was reported that whilst some further survey work had been completed (in respect of the timbers), more remained to be done and following that there would need to be an assessment of what could be maintained and preserved.
3. The importance of the projects in being a catalyst for further investment in the town and the need for the design of new structures to be of quality and to have a positive and confidence building effect.
4. The Committee discussed with the Leader and Officers the funding of the projects and the delivery of value for money, including where projects could deliver benefits in non-cash terms, by generating growth and encouraging footfall in the town centre. It was reported that if the project went outside of budget (including the contingency) then this would require Cabinet and /or Council to consider further.

The Chair thanked the Leader and Officers for their update.

RESOLVED that the Committee endorsed the Report.

(Moved by Councillor S Goodall and seconded by Councillor R Claymore)

106 NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

The Report of the Portfolio Holder for Skills, Planning Economy and Waste on the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was received with proposals for a process for Neighbourhood CIL spending.

The Committee considered the proposals and sought clarification on the resources available to support the process, which it was noted was aimed to be proportionate to the funds available. The Committee proposed a mechanism for inclusion in the process in the event that all three ward councillors cannot agree on a single project to propose to Cabinet.

RESOLVED that the Committee agreed the approach set out in the report for the distribution for neighbourhood CIL money with the addition of a process where the three ward members could not agree on a single project. In such a case the Committee proposed that were the ward members unable to agree on which project to put forward to Cabinet, firstly there should be a vote between the three ward members, if there was majority support for one project, that project would go forward to Cabinet, if there was no majority support for a single project, then Cabinet would make the decision on their behalf.

(Moved by Councillor S Goodall and seconded by Councillor M Cook)

107 FORWARD PLAN

No further items were identified which were not already noted on the Committee's work plan.

108 WORKING GROUP UPDATES

In respect of the Facilities for HGV Drivers in Tamworth, Councillor S Daniels and Councillor M Cook agreed to join this working group.

109 INFRASTRUCTURE SAFETY & GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

The Committee considered its work plan and updated it as follows:

Infrastructure, Safety and Growth Scrutiny Work Plan

Work Plan	
DATE	SUBJECT
July 2022	EV Charging – council car parks (verbal)
July 2022	Netting of Hedges (petition referral)
July 2022 (tbc)	Local Plan
July 2022	Waste Management
September 2022	Net Zero – baseline reporting
October 2022	Amington local centre
Quarterly updates	Future High Street Fund (Growth)
Quarterly updates	Waste Management
Quarterly	Reset & Recovery updates
Date to be confirmed	Council Housing Repairs Policy
Date to be confirmed	Review of policy / engagement with stakeholders relating to Travellers
Date to be confirmed	Fire Safety Update
Date to be confirmed	Town Hall
Date to be confirmed	Funding of public toilets (link to HGV working group)
Date to be confirmed	Strategy for older buildings
Date to be confirmed	Review of Taxi Licensing Policy – Points System
Date to be confirmed	CCTV update

Working Groups		
Topic	Possible WG Members	Target IS&G Com meeting date
Review of policy / engagement relating to Travellers		
Facilities for HGV Drivers in Tamworth	Cllrs B Price (WG chair) Cllrs S Daniels and M Cook	

**Upcoming Infrastructure, Safety and Growth Scrutiny Committee
Meetings**

Meeting dates:

6 July 2022

14 September 2022

11 October 2022

22 November 2022

18 January 2023

23 March 2023

Chair

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Wednesday 6 July, 2022

Report of the Assistant Director - Growth & Regeneration

Petition to stop the netting of hedges in Tamworth

Not Exempt

Purpose

To provide evidence to the scrutiny committee which will support the preparation of a report from the Committee to Cabinet in the Autumn, in response to a public petition on the netting of hedges.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. The report is endorsed and forms part of the ISaG response to Cabinet, later in the year.

Executive Summary

A petition was submitted to the Council on 1st March 2022 seeking to stop the netting of hedges in Tamworth. The petition contained over 4,600 signatures.

The petition was presented at the Council meeting dated 15 March 2022. The minutes of the meeting are set out as follows:

The Leader of the Council:

1. Noted the petition and shares the sincere concerns of the signatories to protect our local natural wildlife;
2. Noted and that a prima facie review, or initial impression of the issue, suggested that the power to act may lay outside the Council's statutory powers;
3. Agreed that given the importance of this issue, the matter be referred to the Infrastructure, Safety and Growth Scrutiny Committee (ISG) with the brief that they review the relevant sections of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and new Environmental legislation currently before the Commons, and any other material they believe relevant and;
4. Agreed that the Infrastructure Safety & Growth Committee bring a report to Council by the Autumn so that there would be time to act on the report by the next breeding season.

This issue of netting hedges came to the fore in 2019 when a number of national newspapers and TV programmes reported on the increasing use of netting on hedgerows and trees by developers. The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), which is set out below, has resulted in developers using nets to cover hedgerows and trees with netting in and around their sites before any bird nesting activity begins, as this could stop or restrict building during the summer months.

Legislation protecting Nesting Birds

It is an offence under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981 (WCA) to intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built, or to intentionally kill, injure or take chicks or adults, or intentionally take or destroy any eggs.

Within the WCA no dates are legally stated between which hedges cannot be trimmed, cut, laid or coppiced, however the main bird breeding season is recognised as being between 1 March and 31 August. The risk of committing any of the above offences is therefore increased between these dates.

If any work is to be undertaken on a hedge (or tree) within these dates it is recommended that the hedge is checked for any signs of breeding activity first, such as observation from a distance using binoculars and direct searching of the hedge for nests.

Developers who are removing a hedgerow or tree as part of a planning consent, net the hedges and trees, so that they do not undertake works illegally should wild birds be present. Netting is therefore mitigation for the developer so that they don't fall foul of the WCA.

If it is suspected that an offence is/has been committed in relation to wild birds then the first point of contact should be with the local Police Force. An investigation will then be held by a Wildlife Crime Officer (101) and there will be an incident number so that you can go back to them if necessary.

Natural England does not regulate the use of netting however developers must look for the most suitable options for complying with the law. For example, as part of the planning process survey reports and mitigation plans will form part of that process for projects that could affect protected species. Mitigation plans need to show how developers will avoid or manage any negative impacts on protected species. In some limited circumstances Natural England acknowledge that netting may have a role to play in avoiding temporary impacts. It is also important to consider the netting mesh size to ensure that it is suitable for the species involved and is properly maintained so that offences against wild birds are not committed.

National Wildlife Crime Unit

The National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU) is a police led, stand-alone, multi-agency unit with a UK-wide remit for wildlife crime (see [National Wildlife Crime Unit](#)). The NWCU Investigative Support Officers also offer free assistance to police forces. Part of the NWCU strategy is to identify organised crime groups involved in wildlife crime. The priorities for the NWCU include monitoring:

- Badger persecution.
- Bat persecution.
- Illegal trade in endangered species protected under CITES. It includes illegal trade in raptors, ivory, medicinal and health products (including rhino horn), reptiles and timber. For more information on CITES (see [Practice note, Habitats and wildlife: international conventions: UK implementation](#)).
- Poaching.
- Raptor persecution.

The National Police Chiefs' Council, Crown Prosecution Service, Natural England and Natural Resources Wales have signed a memorandum of understanding on the prevention, investigation and enforcement of wildlife crime (see [NWCU: Memorandum of understanding on the prevention, investigation and enforcement of wildlife crime](#)).

Environment Act 2021

Part 6 of the Environment Act deals with nature and biodiversity. Paragraph 98 specifically references Schedule 14 which makes provision for biodiversity gain to be a condition of planning permission in England.

During the netting debate in 2019 the Government's response was twofold; firstly they wrote to developers setting out their responsibilities in relation to netting and secondly they planned to require developers to deliver biodiversity net gain (BNG) which is now incorporated into the Environment Act.

The Act requires all development schemes in England to deliver a mandatory 10% BNG to be maintained for a period of at least 30 years. The concept seeks measurable improvements for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats in association with development. Development proposals must "leave biodiversity in a better state than before".

BNG means developers and land owners in England must determine and evidence a project's final BNG value using the specified Defra biodiversity metric if they want their plans to move through the planning process swiftly.

The introduction of the requirement to provide a 10% net gain of biodiversity for all new developments is as a response to the government's goal to leave the environment in England in a better state than it is found over the next 25 years, as set out in their policy paper "*A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment*".

The National Planning Policy Framework 2021

The National Planning Policy Framework expects planning policies and decisions to enhance the natural environment by minimising the impacts of development on, and providing net gains for, biodiversity. The relevant paragraphs from the NPPF are in Appendix 1. There is no direct reference to netting but it does pick up the requirements from the Environment Act around biodiversity net gain or BNG.

Borough Council officers have been implementing BNG and refer applications to the County ecologist to assess and advise. Policy EN4 provides the hook within the local plan which will in due course be reviewed to reflect more recent legislation, as set out in this report.

There are application exemptions and these include applications for development proposals which result in negligible impacts or minimal impacts to low or medium 'distinctiveness' habitats such as agriculturally productive land, householder applications; and change of use applications.

The Government's response to the netting debate in 2019 was with the BNG agenda – which is not about netting hedges but about improving habitats. Biodiversity Net Gain requires developers to either mitigate harm from their proposals by ensuring that more habitats are retained on site and/or that habitats provision is improved post development on or off site.

Conclusion

All wild birds are protected by law and disturbing them and their habitats is a criminal offence; however there is no specific regulation of the use of netting and it does not require planning permission to do it.

Appendix 2 provides an example by Shopshire Council who have dedicated a website page to the issue, which is something that we may wish to consider.

Additionally Shropshire put an information note on their decision notices to outline developer responsibility when it comes to netting hedges. This is also something that we could consider.

We cannot though, as a planning department, enforce against the netting of hedges. We often speak with developers about the issue but ultimately refer concerned residents onto the Wildlife Crime Officer.

We are currently in the process of developing a new local plan for Tamworth which will reflect Government policies and guidance including requirements around BNG which may influence how developers consider existing trees and hedgerows in future.

Options Considered

n/a

Resource Implications

n/a

Legal/Risk Implications Background

The relevant legislation to protect wildlife is set out in this report.

Equalities Implications

n/a

Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)

Netting hedges by developers is their way of protecting birds during the development process. Legislation is recently enacted to enhance and improve biodiversity on development sites which could have a positive impact on the retention of hedges and trees.

Background Information

A petition titled 'Make 'netting' hedgerows to prevent birds from nesting a criminal offence' received 365,508 signatures was submitted to Parliament for consideration. The topic was debated on the 13 May 2019.

On 8 April 2019, in response to public concern about anti-bird netting around permissioned or potential development sites, a letter from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government was forwarded to major house-builders. It reminded them of their legal obligation to consider the impact of any project on local wildlife and take precautionary action to protect habitat. The Government also responded by outlining that Biodiversity Net Gain was an important feature in forthcoming legislation, now the Environment Act.

Report Author

Anna Miller – Assistant Director – Growth & Regeneration

List of Background Papers

None.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Paragraph 179 – 182 of the NPPF 2021.

Appendix 2. Shropshire Council guidance on netting hedges and the planning process

Appendix 1: Relevant Paragraphs from the NPPF 2021

Paragraph 179: To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

- a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity⁶¹; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and
- b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

Paragraph 180: When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
- b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
- d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

Paragraph 181: The following should be given the same protection as habitats sites:

- a) potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;
- b) listed or proposed Ramsar sites⁶⁴; and
- c) sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.

Paragraph 182: The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.

Netting, nesting and the planning process – some guidance

Following national coverage of the issue of netting vegetation to prevent birds from nesting, Shropshire Council has been receiving phone calls from residents. Where planning applications are involved we have been passing on the reports to the developers.

Normally we don't put a condition on planning decisions regarding nesting birds as they have legal protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and, as such, birds are protected whether or not the planning process is involved. But, we do raise awareness of the legal protection of nesting birds by putting information on the planning decision notice. The responsibility therefore rests with the persons authorising and installing the netting, and their ecological advisors, to ensure that an offence is not committed under wildlife legislation.

We would always encourage developers to plan their work to avoid the bird nesting season and hence prevent the need to use other methods such as netting vegetation.

If members of the public see vegetation being cleared, which they know is supporting nesting birds, or birds are being trapped under netting and the owners cannot be contacted, they should call the **Wildlife Crime Officer on 101**.

Infrastructure, Safety and Growth Scrutiny Work Plan

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DATE	SUBJECT
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Working Groups		
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Review of policy / engagement relating to Travellers		
Facilities for HGV Drivers in Tamworth	Cllrs B Price (WG chair) Cllrs S Daniels and M Cook	

Upcoming Infrastructure, Safety and Growth Scrutiny Committee Meetings
Meeting dates: 6 July 2022

23 August 2022 (new)

14 September 2022

11 October 2022

22 November 2022

18 January 2023

23 March 2023