

Friends of Horton Country Park

Notes from the meeting held 06/12/2011

Present: Ray and Rosemary Eyres, Anne and Alan Cheshire, Brendan Kilby, and Sarah Clift.

Apologies: Mo and Pam Pearcey and Terry Summerfield.

Matters Arising:

It was agreed not to have an Autumn Fair in 2012 but would investigate whether it would be worth having a stand at the 75th anniversary of Epsom and Ewell event in Sept 2012.

No more has been heard regarding the planning application by the Children's Farm. The group were concerned about the possibility of loud halers being used but Brendan confirmed that when he spoke to the EEBC planners, no such application had been made. Concerns were also raised regarding the height of the new equipment but Brendan reassured the group that he had looked at the plans and the measurements were not much different to what was there now. There were also concerns about the size of the car park not being big enough.

ACTION: Brendan to look in to the car parking arrangements.

West Park development – modified plans have been suggested but no official plans have yet been sent to EEBC or the Environment Agency.

The group were very pleased with the work carried out behind Meadow Pond to open up the path and manage the hedgerow and grassland. Sarah informed the group that this was carried out by the Countryside Team volunteers who work every Thursday and she would pass on their thanks. It was noted however that the bridge going over the stream was in need of repair. **ACTION – Sarah to pass this on to the Rangers.**

A contractor has been contacted about carrying out work to the trees in the Orchard. Brendan raised the idea again about buying some more trees from Brogdale Nursery but members fostering the new trees for a few years before putting them in the Orchard to increase their resilience to vandalism. **ACTION - ALL to consider the possibility and email Brendan if you are interested on bkilby@btinternet.com.**

Subsequent to the meeting, Stewart mentioned that the tree officer, Jeremy Young, could get hold of sturdier tree guards. **ACTION – Sarah to contact Jeremy.**

Sarah made the group aware that the Ranger Service is now only patrolling Horton Country Park once a week, which rose concerns about site management of visitors and their behaviour and preventing problems in the park from escalating. **ACTION - Sarah to discuss the implications more fully with Brendan over the next few weeks and report back at the next meeting.**

Membership/Events/Publicity:

Ray thought it would be a good idea for the group to organise regular talks. Those who attend could then be encouraged to join the Friends and made aware of the opportunities to get involved in the management of the Country Park, whether it be attending meetings, joining in on practical tasks, carrying out some surveys or just reporting issues they might see around the park.

It was agreed to organise a talk but with the knowledge that the committee would all have to help towards it. Therefore the first item on the agenda of the next meeting will be to organise the talk. In conjunction with this, a newsletter will be sent out just before the talk to maximise the advertising and revitalise the membership.

Site Notices:

Brendan raised a concern with the coppicing being carried out in Four Acre Wood. The site notice describes what coppicing is and why it is beneficial but not why the original area is being cleared again. This is due to the fact that the spacing of the hazel understory was not dense enough to quell the brambles. Therefore we are clearing the brambles from the first area and will be planting hazel to ensure the correct density is achieved.

Lindsay, with the help of our volunteers has created new sign boards to go around Horton Country Park and these will go up in due course to explain more fully what is happening in Four Acre Wood. They will also be placed around the park to explain other management methods and in areas where we have access issues. For example, in Pond Wood ground flora has been trampled and the banks of Field Pond have been eroded due to dogs scrambling in and out. The wildlife diversity in the pond has also drastically reduced.

Ponds:

The dipping platform around Field Pond has been burnt out and is in need of repair. Sarah will be asking NEScot if it is a project they would like to be involved in and Sarah will keep in touch with Gary (Ranger Service Manager) about the costs.

Woodland Management:

-The thinning work in Lambert's Wood has been completed by Richard Manners. The Willow that has been removed is being stored in the Piggery. Some of the wood will be removed on 8th Dec. It is used as part payment for the work to be carried out and the contractor sells it on for use as timber or firewood.

-Richard Manners is also about to commence work in Pond Wood (thinning work with subsequent planting of Hazel and then fencing), Butchers Grove (coppicing, planting and fencing) and Hendon Grove (thinning). The Burning Area is hoped to be used to store the cut timber.

-The dead limes trees that had fallen in Sherwood Grove have been cleared away.

Information Centre:

The Countryside Team will trim the hedge this winter to improve site lines from the car park and to benefit the hedge itself.

(Sarah would like to discuss the update of the display in the next meeting).

Species Sightings:

A Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was seen on 1st Dec in Four Acre Wood.

Date of Next Meeting: Tues 7th February 2012