



Friends of Horton Country Park

Minutes

For the AGM and meeting held on the 01/04/2008

Present

Brendan Kilby (Chair), Anne Cheshire, Alan Cheshire, Rosemary Eyres, Tony Gibbs, Sarah Hallums (Countryside Officer), Pat Lowe (Minutes Secretary), Terry Summerfield (Treasurer), Ian Tilbury.

Apologies

Laurence Coley, Ray Eyres, Brenda Hammond-Gibbs.

Chairman's Statement

It has been a quiet year on the whole. It was the first year in which our tasks were amalgamated with those of the Countryside Team. The Winter tasks were very well attended, particularly the one on the water-vole habitat. Stalwart work has been done on the Information Centre, which will be open this Spring. We did not do quite as much in the Summer. The Ragwort pulling was not attended, in spite of approaches to the groups who had requested it, so that will not be one of our tasks this year.

Our push for the coming year is to maintain the Tasks and to work on increasing our Membership. In all organisations there is a natural "lull" in membership every 3 to 4 years. New people are needed in order to keep the impetus going. We have had no serious recruitment effort for 3 or 4 years so we need to push now for new members. Thank you very much to all the loyal members who have worked so hard.

Re-election of officers

It was decided at the last AGM to elect Officers on a three year cycle in co-ordination with the election of the Chair, unless there were retirements in the meantime.

All existing officers were re-elected.

Proposed: Alan Cheshire

Seconded: Pat Lowe

Treasure's Statement

There was an increase of 10 on previous year's membership. Members' subscriptions for 2007-2008 were therefore £99. There were donations of £12. These together with Cash-in-hand of £701.37 gave a total of £812.37. The only outgoing was £15 for Lower Mole Trust Membership. So we have just under £800 at present. It was agreed last year that the increase of £1 per person in Membership subscriptions should go towards insurance cover for doing our Tasks without a member of the Countryside team being present. This will be increased by the Council's contribution of £1 per day for each volunteer for tasks in the Park. To date this amount should be £43 for 2006 – 2007 and £33 for 2007 – 2008. However, although promised, this has not yet been received and there is a query as to how much we will get.

Our Account is healthy at present but Insurance will erode this. However, there is a surplus which we will now start to use.

Bill Facer has felt unable to audit the Accounts this year, due to illness. Brendan and Sarah are arranging for another auditor.

Members agreed the Accounts

Proposed: Ian Tilbury

Seconded: Tony Gibbs.

A.O.B.

Anne asked if a contribution of £10 from a neighbour had been received, as they had received no acknowledgement. Brendan will talk to Lawrence. There is a standard form for sending out in response to contributions.

The AGM was followed by the bi-monthly meeting.

Brendan referred back to the need for increasing Membership. He pointed out that although we have a fair bit of money at present it has taken years to build up and will soon be used up once we decide what to do with it. So we need to be thinking of ideas to increase it. Another Apple Day could be a good way of raising public awareness of the friends and thereby increasing Membership

Stewart has suggested a countryside Equestrian Event with stalls and activities at which the Friends could have something. . Sarah reminded us that an Event requires a lot of pre-planning so we need to decide on one soon in order to invite other participants etc. Rosemary asked if there was a policy for contacting lapsed members. Brendan replied that it had been tried in the past but usually got a poor response and was not the best use of energy. She also suggested we talk to people using the park and tell them about the Friends. Many members said they already do so. Often people are happy to talk and praise the friends but are less ready to “put their hands in their pockets” for membership fees. We get more new members at Events because people have come intending to spend money.

The Newsletter can introduce new members but unless we contribute articles one cannot be printed!

Members were asked to come to the next meeting with ideas for an Event Day in the Summer or Autumn.

Tasks

The Litter-Picking at the Ruxley Lane Entrance went very well. The path near that gate was fairly clear so the team moved on to the area near the Colliers Close Entrance where there is a lot of old , heavy rubbish which appears to have been thrown over fences from neighbouring houses. They cleared the loose litter but had to leave the heavy stuff.

Wed. April 2nd 10am to 4 pm

Information Centre - Tidy ready to open.

Sun April 13th 10am

Lower Mole Workshop Join Moles on their task day to make signs for Info. Centre. This is changed from Sun April 20th.

Sun May 18th

Membership push. Meet at Info. Centre 10am to distribute leaflets to public using the Park and invite them to join. Meet back at Centre at 12 noon for coffee and to decide on continuing.

Matters arising from previous minutes

Turkey Oak

We are still waiting for the Council to decide who pays for this to be pruned.

Vandalism

No further problems at the bat roost.

Terry had put logs in position to try to close the gap at the Clarendon Park entrance but they are getting moved. A further post is needed.

AOB

Brendan has still not seen the owl! But Lindsay (Ranger) has.

Terry and Tony talked about the herons. There are over 10 nests.

Ian reported that the Girl Guides have applied for planning permission to put a building on their field to provide a toilet block.

Brendan reminded us that we wanted a Floral Walk to learn to identify the plants in the Park. Sarah said that would be very useful when it came to help with the survey and monitoring she will be doing later in the year.

Sarah suggested combining the Apple day with a Woodland Craft Day and Barbecue, but emphasised the need to decide soon on who to include etc. Ian suggested that having Apple Day on National Apple day on October 21st would generate inclusion in Press notices and so better advertising for Friends. September is however a better time for our fruit. Others said we should put notice in the local press.

Brendan thanked Members for coming and for all their help throughout the year.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday the 3rd of June.