



Friends of Horton Country Park

Minutes

For the meeting held on the 02/06/2009

Present

Brendan Kilby (Chair), Sarah Clift (Countryside Officer), Anne and Alan Cheshire, Laurence Coley (Membership Secretary), Pat Lowe (Minutes) and Terry Summerfield (Treasurer).

Apologies

Kate Cochran, Val English, Rosemary and Ray Eyres, Tony Gibbs, Brenda Hammond-Gibbs, Pam and Mo Pearcey, Ian Tilbury.

Matters arising from previous minutes

Benches

Damaged benches are being refurbished by Rob Stringer, the coppicer. He is taking out the benches, sanding down or replacing the tops, replacing the legs and then re-installing the benches. They should be back in place within the next two weeks.

Vandalism

The picnic table in the Orchard area has not yet been repaired. It has since been further vandalised. Terry said that his neighbours had seen trail motor bikes being ridden around the Butchers Grove area of the Country Park at dusk. Sarah asked him to get his neighbour to phone the local police to make them aware of it. Brendan asked if the Rangers could make a point of checking that part of the park as it seemed that vandals were concentrating on that and the surrounding area. He felt that an Action Plan was needed to provide random patrols in the evening. Sarah said that at that time in the evenings Rangers were locking the other parks. Brendan is becoming increasingly angry that the Country Park is being neglected in favour of other parks and streets. The problem of vandalism is increasing and the Country Park is deteriorating, and has been doing so in the 2 years since the Ranger presence in the Country Park has been reduced. The Friends have been protesting about the deterioration and asking for a greater Ranger presence throughout this time but we have received no support from the Council's management. Terry pointed out that with the forecast of a hot dry summer the fire risk will also increase. Brendan said that the Country Park needs to be visibly managed and "policed." Rangers should be out and about in the Park on Summer evenings, not in the Office. Members agreed that the matter needed to be taken higher than the person in charge of the Ranger Service (Ian Dyer) and Brendan will be contacting the Director of Operations, Steve Davis, to make the Friends' concerns known.

Dog poo bins

There has been no action yet on the re-siting of the existing bin because it is concreted in place. Sarah had inquired about the possibility of a new bin but had been told that there were none available. Brendan asked her to get us an answer to the question "When will

we get a bin in the position requested?” so that the entrance to the Country Park is not littered with used bags because visitors cannot find a bin to put them in.

Signs at Main Road Entrance to Car Park

Although small signs had been put up directing cars to the Children’s Farm they were not easily read from the road. Drivers are still coming into the Country Park by mistake, especially since the bottom of the sign for the Country Park is missing. A new sign is needed and if possible one directing cars to the Farm. Pat suggested that the Children’s Farm might be asked to provide one for the sake of their business.

Orchard

Sarah provided a list of tree varieties in the Orchard. The Friends have previously planted 8 apple trees of different old varieties appropriate to the age of the Orchard and one pear tree to replace those lost. Jeremy Hart has also planted 5 varieties, in the field between the Orchard and the golf course, which had been removed from Nonsuch Park. The Friends agreed to plant more trees to replace those lost during last winter. These will include “Joybells” which we had planted but had not survived. Brendan will consult Jeremy’s list about suitable varieties.

Pond Action

Laurence has printed off information from the Internet and will read up on this and report back to us. We cannot apply for funding from the Lottery unless we have a bank account requiring at least two signatures. Terry will organise a dual signature account. Members agreed that Brendan should be the second signatory. Laurence asked if it would be possible to have Membership Fees paid by Direct Debit. Terry will look into that. Brendan suggested that it might be sensible to put some of our money into a long-term savings account. Members decided that in the present financial situation with out small amount of money the increase in interest would be too little to make it worthwhile.

Roller blind display

Brendan reminded Sarah we had agreed to pay for one to be made. We need some up-to-date photographs of tasks being done. She will look for some. Alan has some he will e-mail to her.

Tasks and Dates

Tasks will take place on the third weekend of the months in which we do not hold a meeting, as follows:

Sunday 19 th July	Making a woodchip path to the newly cleared area of stream in Pond Wood.
Sunday 27 th September	Autumn Fair
Sunday 15 th November	Water vole habitats
Sunday 17 th January	Water vole habitats

Park Management

Ruth Hanniffy from the Environment Agency has been to check for water voles. She couldn’t see if there were any from the bank because the stream is overgrown with meadowsweet. She will return with waders to walk the stream to look for them. The

cleared area of the stream looks promising with lots of evidence of mammal activity, droppings, runs etc. Ruth can also advise us on what work to carry out and where when our tasks concentrate on the water voles in the coming winter. Sarah has e-mailed John Newton about checking the bat roost but they have still to find a mutually available date.

Wildlife

Howard Wallace, the County recorder for mosses and liverworts has visited pond Wood where he found nearly 50 different species. He was very pleased with what he found. He will check all the Country Park woodlands and list what he finds. He has visited previously and will see if he finds any changes. He will for example be looking for sphagnum moss in Hollymore grove.

Alison has been checking the dormouse boxes. She has found a dormouse nest in Great Wood and one previously in pond Wood. In one of the boxes there was evidence from droppings that a weasel had eaten a woodmouse.

Laurence reported seeing a Badger crossing the road from Manor Park into the Country Park.

Sarah has been pond-dipping with a cub pack in the Field Pond and they found six newts. Sarah will be contacting a Woodland archaeologist, Nichola Bannister, to come and visit to see if the various hollows etc. indicate the site of a possible mill.

A monitoring walk in Pond Wood has shown that there is not enough light getting through so some thinning is needed.

Sarah thanked Alan for finding, renovating and bringing in a display board for use outside the Information Centre.

A.O.B.

Anne asked how many new members we had got since the recruitment drive. Laurence told us we had 11 since April.

On recruitment day Sarah had met a “birder” who is sending her all his records of birds seen in the park, and some butterfly records.

The next meeting of the Friends will be on Tuesday 4th August at 7.30 in the New Hall.

Members are asked to use the Car Park and not block the area in front of the Rangers' Office.