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## **The Friends of Horton Country Park**

Minutes for the meeting held on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December 2012

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### **Present**

Alan Cheshire, Anne Cheshire, Brendan Kilby, Terry Summerfield, Ian Tilbury, Gill Munton.

### **Apologies**

Ray and Rosemary Eyres

### **Matters Arising**

It was decided to email a newsletter to members' A.S.A.P, as we have most of their email addresses and just a send a paper one for those who don't have email.

The fleeces actually cost £23.50 each once the VAT and delivery charge had been taken in to consideration.

The apple trees are due to be delivered from Brogdale shortly. Under advice from Lewis from the London Orchard Project, it has been decided to plant the trees straight in to the orchard rather than foster them at home. Although we have concerns over vandalism, the trees will establish better if they go in to the ground sooner rather than later. To combat the vandalism issue, we will ensure sturdy and non-attractive guards are found for the trees. Perhaps chestnut pale fencing attached to stakes rammed far in to the ground. BK also suggested that we leaflet the surrounding houses explaining why the trees are being planted, that they are part of a community orchard which we would encourage the local residents to enjoy and pick the fruit from. A notice near the trees will also be displayed. Therefore the trees will be planted on the workshop planting day on 27<sup>th</sup> February.

### **Woodland Management**

The work in Pond Wood has been completed by Richard Manners. He has now begun the first cant in Hendon Grove.

The Lower Mole Project volunteers will be coppicing on 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2 sections in Sherwood Grove will be re-coppiced and then the section of Four Acre Wood which was coppiced in 2009 will be cleared again ahead of schedule. This is due to inadequate spacing of hazel stools. Without enough Hazel, not enough shade is cast to quell the brambles, which then smothers the woodland flowers. Hazel whips have been ordered and have arrived so that once any new area of coppice is cleared; hazels will be planted to ensure a spacing of at least one hazel tree every 3m. Some of the existing stools will also be cut leaving one stem long, which will then be staked in to the ground. It will hopefully send up new shoots resulting in a new hazel tree. This process is called Layering.

### **Orchard Management**

The London Orchard Project will be leading 4 workshops on both Lambert's Orchard and Longrove Orchard. These will be held on **Wed 12<sup>th</sup> Dec, Sun 13<sup>th</sup> Jan, Wed 30<sup>th</sup> Jan and Wed 27<sup>th</sup> Feb**. The first three will involve learning how to prune and maintain the trees and in the case of Lambert's Orchard, restore the very old trees. The last workshop will involve planting new trees.

### **Grassland Management**

The flail collector has finally been ordered so the rotational cutting of some of the meadows has now been completed by the grounds maintenance team.

### **Hedgerow Management**

The Countryside Team volunteers have had another task, scalloping Tenzle Hedge, which runs between meadow pond and the golf course. The team will also be carrying out hedge-laying along the hedge opposite Four Acre Wood on **Thurs 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Dec**.

### **Pond/Stream Management**

The section of the Green Man Stream which runs between Field Pond and Pond Wood has had 3 volunteer tasks along it, 2 by the Countryside Team Volunteers and 1 with volunteers from the Environment Agency. The vegetation has been controlled along the bank, leaving some scrub islands, with a view to encouraging good habitat for Water Voles.

There is some concern that we may have mink on site as they have been seen nearby, so mink rafts have been bought in order to survey the streams for their presence. If we can prove there are no mink present and we create the right habitat, we may be able to reintroduce Water Voles to the Country Park.

### **Site Interpretation**

The Living Woodlands Fayre was a great success. 4 new members were signed up during the day and considering the weather, we had a relatively good turnout. A bench was made by a chainsaw sculptor, which will be placed in front of Four Acre wood in the next few weeks. A scene of bluebells has been sculpted on the front of the bench using the chainsaw.

### **West Park Development news**

The wetland creation in the southern end of the park is due to get underway in the next few weeks. The developers have to carry this out as part of the planning consent for the development of West Park Hospital. They are hopeful the work will take about 8 weeks. The vegetation clearance will certainly happen now, but it is possible that the ground conditions may delay the landscaping work.

## **Children's Farm development news**

N/A

## **Visitor management/Site security**

The Rangers are aware of the platform which IT mentioned at the last meeting and are considering the best way of removing it as it is very high up in the trees.

The fleeces look very good and BK is sure they have an effect on people's behaviour when they see them.

## **Species sightings**

Alison Fure, who leads the dormice survey on HCP, visited the park last week and along with Sarah and Pete from the Countryside Team, has re-sited and replaced the boxes in Pond Wood and Four Acre Wood. A Pygmy Shrew was found in one of the boxes. The boxes in Great Wood and Butcher's Grove will also be made ready for the next season over the next couple of months.

The butterfly records have been sent to Butterfly Conservation.

A monitoring schedule/priority list will be made by Sarah and Pete, before Sarah leaves to go on maternity leave.

## **Any other business**

It has been noticed that the information centre is often shut and the signs are not being turned around to indicate whether it is open or closed.

## **Date of next meeting**

Tues 5<sup>th</sup> Feb.