



Friends of Horton Country Park

Minutes

For the meeting held on the 03/10/2006

Present:

Brendan Kilby (Chair), Anne Cheshire, Alan Cheshire, Laurence Coley, Sarah Hallums, Pat Lowe, Pam Pearcey, Mo Pearcey, Terry Summerfield, Ian Tilbury.

Apologies:

Rosemary Eyres, Ray Eyres, Bill Facer, Tony Gibbs, Brenda Hammond- Gibbs

Matters Arising:

Tool Maintenance Day 24th October

Brendan said he was happy to attend and then pass on what he had learned to the Friends, unless anyone else would like to go, there were no other offers, so he will go.

Information Centre

Sarah worked on the addition to the Centre for a week in August with help from Pat and Hannah (Sarah's sister in law.) The displays are nearly all finished, but she needs artefacts etc. for the History corner. The Council's I.T. department are producing a large scale photo map of the park to go on the wall. There is still a "touchy-feely" display to be made. The floor needs cleaning and it would be nice if we could paint the exterior woodwork to make the centre more appealing. Sarah will set aside another week, hopefully before Christmas to finish it. She will let Friends know the date as she would appreciate some help

Anne, Alan and Ken Houghton have again been manning the Information Centre at week-ends. Thanks were given.

Car Park

Quotes are being obtained from contractors for the re-surfacing. The new Entrance will be done first and any money remaining will be spent on the tracks.

Fishing

This is still a problem. "Operation Crafty Carp" has taken place, when the Rangers and Police were out from 7 to 11 p.m. to try to catch illegal fishers. The large fish are going to be removed to discourage fishing. Some young men had recently been fishing in the Golf Course pond and had said they had permission from the Golf Club. Sarah said that the Golf Club had already been told by Stewart not to "turn a blind eye." They will be reminded again that no fishing is allowed anywhere in the Country Park. Unfortunately the fishermen have been abusive or violent in the past and no one should tackle them alone. A greater patrolling presence is needed in the Park for the ban to be effective.

Awards for All and other Funding

Brendan has looked at the “Awards for All” website. Funding up to £10,000 is available for an event or function. The money will be available for up to one year after an application is granted. They will only give money to organisations which have a bank account requiring two signatures. The application would have to be a Friends initiative, as a Council Service the Rangers would not be eligible.

Sarah said that The Lower Mole Trust has money available for a project. Sarah made some suggestions for projects.

- Maintenance work on trees in the orchard is needed. It would cost about £600.
- Hedging is needed and costs approximately £250 per 100metres.
- Coppicing to be economically successful needs deer-proof fencing around the site, so the Coppicer in Residence might prove too expensive.
- Restoring Orchard Pond.
- Clearing reed mace from the Pond Wood pond.
- Repairing the Meadow Pond spillway (£10,000!)

Brendan asked members to think about projects we could apply for and get back to him with suggestions.

Seats

More seats are needed and replacements for rotted or vandalised ones. Brendan will approach Jan Mason to see if she can help with funding these in small amounts, rather than the Friends applying for them as a Funding Project.

Management Forum

Brendan said this was under discussion and he will keep pushing for it. Initially he hopes that everyone involved in the Park, in any way, will be invited to take part in an informal meeting at which everyone can “chip in” so that no-one feels it is not for them.

Running Events

Sarah asked what Friends thought was a “reasonable” number of these to allow. Brendan said that following the discussion at the last meeting the answer was “None!”

Tasks

Hedging – 29th September

This took place in spite of torrential rain at 10 a.m. and was very enjoyable though very thorny, hard work. Sarah thanked Pam and Mo and Pat for attending. A large new scallop had been cut on one side and a Nescot team had cut a second one on the opposite side and started another. All the waste wood had been burned on site. Nescot will be back to continue on 6th October. All help is welcome.

Fruit and Nut walk – 1st October

This had to be cancelled for Health and Safety reasons because of the thunder and lightning.

Tree Seed gathering and potting – 8th October. This is a Lower Mole project. Friends are welcome to attend.

Halloween Night Walk – This is now fully booked. Friends would be welcome to come and help with guiding walkers round the course in the dark, or to dress up and frighten them!

Tree planting - 19th November

The session on 22nd October has had to be postponed because the saplings are not ready, so it will now take place on the above date.

Hedge-laying – 28, 29th November

This is with the Lower Mole Volunteers and is an excellent way of learning the skills. They work from 10am till 4pm so bring a packed lunch.

Coppicing – 12, 13, 14, 17, 19, 20, 21 December

Learn this skill with the Lower Mole Volunteers. Friends are welcome whenever they can join in.

Insurance for tasks

Brendan has been looking into using BTCV for this. It would cost £198 each year; £118 Premiums + Membership and Administration Fee. As the advantages of membership were not great to our group it was agreed that this was more than the Friends could afford on an annual basis. He will approach a broker to find cover at a better price.

Newsletter

Friends were asked if anyone could provide input on the wild-life section. Brendan and Laurence will deliver the newsletters by hand so that they can also ask members whose fees are overdue if they wish to continue membership. This led to a discussion on the need to have a more accurate account of actual membership numbers, for example when putting in bids for funding. It was said that the cost of producing the Newsletter was such that it was not economically viable to use delivering it alone as a means of increasing membership. It will in future only be delivered to those members whose fees have been paid. A separate form for paying fees will be delivered with it. Those members who have Internet access will be asked for their e-mail address and encouraged to download the Newsletter to cut down production costs. Ian suggested having local “reps” to whom members could pay their fees. Anne and Alan volunteered to be reps for Clarendon Park.

AOB

Management Changes

Members expressed concern about the lack of “Rangers’ presence” in the park, noting the increase in vandalism and anti-social behaviour. It was also noted that it is now often not possible to find the office manned or get a response to a telephone call reporting a problem, e.g. Anne and Alan had to take care of a lost dog brought to the Information Centre because the Rangers’ Office was closed. Sarah explained that their new working conditions meant that Rangers were now deployed in other parks leaving a much shorter time for them to work in the Country Park.

Brendan will send a letter expressing our concerns about problems these changes have brought about and asked members to monitor;

- Lack of Ranger presence
- Vandalism
- Anti-social behaviour
- Rangers’ Office Closed
- Unable to contact a Ranger.

Funding

Sarah told us about the “Park It” scheme which funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is inviting bids for up to £5000 for a Park event held Summer 2007. Brendan asked for members suggestions. Sarah pointed out that Epsom Common Day is already planned for 2007 with the possibility of the Autumn Fair being held on alternate years. It was also explained that the Ranger service would not be available to help with the Autumn Fair to the same extent as last time – the Friends would have to put far more into the planning and running of it. The “Park It” funding would be for an additional event organised by the friends. Brendan will consider suggestions for this alongside the “Awards for All” scheme.

There is no money set aside from the Council for the Country Park. There is a “Single Farm Payment” of £1000 from DeFRA which will be spent on the Country Park. This could be used for hedging near the Bat Roost and an Information Panel. We also need new tools e.g. log saws.

Volunteers will also generate a payment from the Council’s Volunteer Budget, of £1 per volunteer per day!

Rubble Field

The field is now clear, apart from two small rubble heaps left as shelter for wild-life. The heavy clay clods now have to be broken down, hopefully by frost over the winter, but failing that by the use of a chain harrow. Sarah asked if we knew anyone like a local farmer who could lend one. The area will then be left to self-seed.

Golf Club

The golf Club is about to become part of the Local Nature Reserve. The motion will be advertised in the local paper for two weeks and if there are no objections it will automatically be carried.

Entomology

The lesser Marsh Grasshopper has been found in Hendon grove by Ian Menzies who has been spending more time on the Country Park. Hopefully this will lead to more surveys and recording and the possibility of being awarded SSSI status.

Dates

October 31 st Tuesday	Hallowe’ en Event
November 19 th	Tree planting
	Days of Steam Walk
November 28/29 th	Hedge-laying with LMV
December 10 th	Christmas Yule Log Hunt
December 12/13/14/17/19/20/21	Coppicing with LMV

Next Meeting Tuesday, 5th December 7.30pm in the New Hall

Meetings are always on the first Tuesday of every second month throughout the year- June, August, October, etc.

Members are asked not to use the Rangers Car Park for meetings. Please use the public Car Park and Sarah promises to make sure no-one is locked in.