



Friends of Horton Country Park

Minutes

For the meeting held on the 05/12/2006

Apologies: Alan and Anne Cheshire, Bill Facer, Pat Lowe, Brendan Kilby

Present: Ray and Rosemary Eyres, Terry Summerfield, Ian Tilbury, Ken Houghton, Laurence Coley, Mo and Pam Pearcey, Nick Owen, Sandy Fleming, Sarah Hallums.

Matters arising:

The last meeting minutes were agreed.

The tool maintenance course that Brendan went on was very successful and Nick Owen told the group that he would repeat the course next year. He will keep us updated.

When looking for grants for use in HCP Nick reminded us to think about applying to the Lower Mole Trust as we did for the trees for the Orchard, especially if it for relatively small amount, which other grant aid bodies would not give.

Notes from Brendan:

In Brendan's absence, Sarah discussed the points he wanted to raise.

Events – A decision from the group was asked for as to whether the Friends wanted to hold their own event this year. The Countryside Team will help run one large event every other year. In 2007 there will be Epsom Common Day and then the Autumn Fair will be held in 2009.

The group agreed that this year they should try having a stand/stall at other events already happening within HCP and capitalise on the numbers of people going to these events. For example there will be the Valentine's Carriage Drive on Sun 18th Feb and there should be a bird event again held by the Surbiton and District Bird Watching Society.

Rosemary suggested contacting the Scouts to help us run future events.

Insurance – Until the group is at the stage where we want to carry out more tasks than can be supervised by the Countryside Team, we will leave organising insurance for the group.

Newsletter – Apologies for it not being completed but Brendan really does **need** some **contributions from others**. Please send contributions to Brendan or Peter and then it can be completed and sent out. Brendan's e mail is bpkilby@aol.com, contact Peter through the website.

Tasks – It was disappointing to have a very low turn out on the last two tasks, tree planting and hedge laying. Regarding the tree planting, it could have been a disaster as only two people turned up with 500 trees to plant!! From now on, if we agree on a task that needs a certain amount of people to be there, and members commit to come along, they must turn up. Luckily, the students from Nescot did a great job in finishing off the task.

Coppicing in Butcher's Grove:

Nick Owen of the Lower Mole Countryside Management Project (LMCMP) talked to the group about the idea of using deer fencing during Spring/Summer 2007 to protect the area coppiced in December 2006. The deer present in the wood at the moment nibble the new young shoots, which grow after coppicing the hazel. They are extremely attracted to the young shoots as there are a lot of nutrients and sugars present in these shoots. From eating the shoots, the growth of the stems become bendy at the base, meaning valuable produce is lost. Therefore the coppice stools need to be protected if we are to attract a coppice worker to work in Butcher's Grove regularly, as they would need a good crop. The value of having a coppice worker in residence would benefit HCP as they could continually manage Butcher's Grove and the LMCMP could move on to other woodlands in the park which also need their help in managing.

The LMCMP have the money from Surrey County Council through the Green Arc project to buy the special deer fencing, which is about 8ft tall and made of a green plastic mesh. They would like to fence off the area coppiced Dec 2005 and Dec 2006. As a control they will also be having one area cut which will be left unfenced, to try and prove that the deer definitely have a damaging effect.

Nick asked the group whether they had any objections to this experiment and also whether they would be able to help in checking the fence when walking past. If we see any vandalism then the LMCMP should be informed. In their absence, the Rangers should be contacted. LMCMP contact no. 01372 743783. Rangers' Office no 01372 741191. The idea would be to leave the fence in situ for about 2-3 yrs, and it can then be moved on to a new area.

The group agreed that this was a great idea and would be happy to check on the fence when walking past.

Grants:

The group were asked for ideas to spend their money on and also projects they could apply for grant aid for. Laurence suggested the restoration of Pond Wood Pond as a potential project. The group were asked to bring a wish list of improvements they would like to see within the park to the next meeting. Ian asked if projects identified in the management plan could be on the list, which was agreed.

Nick reminded us to not forget about Green Arc as a potential funding resource. It is a project aimed at significantly improving the environment and accessibility of the open space and countryside around London. It is focusing on the South West area of green belt around London at the moment.

Hedges:

There will be a contractor going around the Country Park, practising with a side arm. Luckily this means we will get some hedgerow and ditch management for free! He will cut the grass in the ditches running alongside the steep track and the track with Field Pond on, and trim the hedges which are starting to protrude over the tracks. He will do as much as he can in the time he is given.

Elm/stump treatment:

The elm cut down by the friends on 19th March was worked on by the Countryside Team. The stumps had started to shoot and needed to be cut lower to the ground. This was done using chainsaws and the stumps were treated with roundup to kill them off.

Hedge planting 19th Nov:

On the other side of the fence to where the elms were removed, a hedge was planted. On the task day, only 2 members turned up so about 200 trees were planted. The remaining 300 were planted by the Nescot students in the following week. The hedge will be maintained to the level of the fence so the views across the field are not obscured.

Hedge laying task, 28th and 29th Nov:

The friends teamed up with the LMCMP to learn how to hedge lay with the view to continuing hedge laying around the park and increase the skill of the friends volunteers. Unfortunately only 2 members turned up again but it was a great success. The Nescot students had a go on the 28th and most of the hedge was completed. The hedge worked on was at the bottom of the sloping track running past the event field, next to Upper Norris' field. The hedge will be completed by the Friends and LMCMP on 19th and 21st Dec.

Equss entrance:

The changes to the car park are due to the agreement made a few years ago with the equestrian centre. They wanted a better entrance, particularly for some of the large vehicles that have to reach the centre. The verge on the corner near the Rangers' Office is often driven over due to large vehicles.

The extra barriers are present to secure the site as the new entrance to Equss and Primrose Cottage will have to remain open. They will have to the added bonus of allowing us greater flexibility in using the car park and managing vehicle movements. We may for example start using the exit gate again. Also, if there is concern for the site security due to traveller threat we can also shut the park much more efficiently.

The new access will hopefully also have the effect of calming the traffic around the office and the information centre. The Countryside Team often have school children congregating here and it can be quite dangerous considering the speed that some drivers go when visiting Equss. It will hopefully make the walk to the information centre easier too.

Golf Club:

The golf club is now part of the Local Nature Reserve. A new leaflet is being printed at the moment to reflect this and we will then work towards updating the notice board posters. A press release is also being written. If anyone has any ideas of how to celebrate the designation, please let Sarah know.

Red Dots:

There have been a few red dots appearing on the trees around HCP. This is work carried out by the tree officer, marking trees that need attention or that need felling.

Management Plan:

The Countryside Team has been meeting to discuss the progress of the management plan, assessing what can still be achieved this year. Hopefully next year we will have more funding which will help a great deal in starting more projects around the park.

Action for Sarah – organise bat and bird boxes to be put up!!

Next years task dates:

Sun 14th Jan – Finish scalloping the hedgerow between Osiers and Lawn Barn Meadow. We must also burn what has already been cleared.

Sun 18th Feb – Work on the information centre. As many hands as possible please if the weather is nice. Hopefully we can paint the outside.

Nick Owen told the group of a task the LMCMP is doing near the Country Park. They will be working on the Bonesgate Open Space between Filby Rd and Chessington Rd on **30th, 31st January and 1st February**. They are also putting in a bid to work on the path in Castle Hill next winter.

A.O.B:

Laurence mentioned there was a monkey puzzle tree within Clarendon that looked like it was dying. Sarah said she would tell the tree officer.

Publicity for the group was discussed. Ray thought it would be a good idea to put the next newsletter through all the doors on Livingstone Park to raise awareness. Ken suggested putting up more posters about the group around the park. Ian suggested writing a column to the local paper (Guardian) as they have a section set aside for local groups. **Action** - Ian agreed to investigate how we can do this.

It was also suggested that there should be an advert for volunteers on the website. We should also be put in the listing in the Insight magazine. It was suggested we should also make more use of the RA newsletters and magazines advertising tasks and general information.

We could also go in the Epsom Directory. Sarah to talk to Susan Bush.

It was also thought a good idea to contact the organisers of Springwatch and Countryfile.

Next meeting:

February 6th 2007.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!!!!!!