



Friends of Horton Country Park

Minutes

For the meeting held on the 01/08/2006

Present:

Brendan Kilby (Chair), Anne Cheshire, Alan Cheshire, Rosemary Eyres, Ray Eyres, Sandy Fleming, Tony Gibbs, Sarah Hallums, Pat Lowe, Pam Pearcey, Mo Pearcey, Terry Summerfield, Ian Tilbury, Peter Tomlin, Louise Wilford.

Apologies:

Laurence Coley, Brenda Gibbs.

Matters Arising:

Ragwort Pulling

The ragwort came up easily thanks to rain beforehand. Unfortunately the task was poorly attended and another session will need to be organised; there is so much to be pulled that a large team is needed to remove it all. No Cinnabar caterpillars were seen but 3 Wasp spiders were. Tony said there are very few Cinnabar caterpillars to be seen this year.

Clarendon Park Fun Day

Sarah and Sandy set up a stall with information about the Country Park and The Friends activities. Alan and Anne Cheshire and Pat Lowe helped to man the stall. It was a very hot day and although well-attended most people stayed resting in the shade under the trees. We did manage to attract 3 new members.

Tasks

Annette had asked about the possibility of volunteers doing tasks in mid-week. Sarah said Rangers would find it easier to be available then. It was put to members most of whom agreed that they would find weekdays easier. It was decided to try some mid-week sessions as well as Sundays to see how it worked out. It was agreed that we could have tasks monthly with weekday tasks alternating with Sundays.

Sarah said work was needed on hedge trimming and tree planting. Tony Gibbs asked about leaving gaps in hedges for viewing. Sarah agreed that some hedges were overgrown but said that they were not a priority at present. Louise suggested hedge-laying.

September 29 th Friday	Hedge "zigzagging" at Lamberts Mead
October 22 nd Sunday	Tree planting where elms removed by Events Field Louise offered saplings from seed gathering days.
October 31 st Halloween	Sarah may need help with events. Ghosts and ghouls are asked to volunteer

November 28,29th mid-week Learn Hedge-laying with Louise. Friends can turn up on days that suit them. She and Sarah to liaise to choose appropriate hedge.

December – mid-week on 12/13/14 and 19/20/21 also on Sunday 17th with **Lower Mole Volunteers**
Louise suggested that volunteers just turn up on any of those days and she and other experienced coppicers would explain why it was done and show us how.

A Tool Maintenance Day is to be booked with the LMV.

Information Centre

Anne and Alan Cheshire, Pat Lowe and Ken Houghton have done several weekend sessions. The sighting of the Centre is not ideal and signposting needs to be improved to encourage visitors. There is an A-board which can be put in the Car Park but it is heavy and needs to be put away each time. Sandy suggested tying balloons to the sign to attract attention. Sarah is looking into the possibility of selling drinks. Anne suggested volunteers manning the Centre could take “cool boxes” if drinks were on sale.

Action

Sarah will cut back branches obscuring signposts.

Sarah will also be working on the extension to the Information Centre on 14 to 18th August and would welcome help from “Crafty” or “Arty” members.

Bat Roost

The pigeons have been cleared out and their entry point closed. They are no longer resting on the roof in large numbers. We are now hoping the bats will return.

Hay Meadows

Mr Anderson from the Equestrian Centre has had the hay cut, baled and removed. There was so much that he was able to give some to Riding for the Disabled and the Children’s Farm.

Car Park

The improvements to the Car Park are imminent, paid for with Section 106 money from the hospital sites developments. Sarah showed us a plan for the new Main Entrance, further south on Horton Lane where there is already a gate but it is rarely open. This will be the only public access. There will be two height restriction points within the car park and the road surfaces tarmac ked, but not the parking bays.

The rubble fields (Slip Meadow) are also due to be cleared. Some of the rubble may be left for reptile hibernation. When members asked about reptiles it was mentioned that there are grass snakes in the Lower Mole’s garden and adders in the Burning area.

Fishing

Sandy told us about “Operation Crafty Carp” when the Rangers and Police will be out from 7p.m. till midnight to try to catch illegal fishers. The large fish are going to be removed to discourage fishing. Ray suggested that they should have signs up saying that their fish removal is official, to inform the public and avoid them being reported! Members were asked to report anyone, carrying fishing equipment etc, appearing to be heading to fish in the ponds.

Awards for All

Brendan will look at the Awards for All website and co-ordinate applying for a grant on behalf of the Friends.

Seats

Five benches have been lost; one due to rotting but four from vandalism. They cost £60 - £80 plus the cost of installation. Mo asked if they would be replaced. Sarah told us there was no funding available- the budget for HCP and the Hogsmill is zero. Louise suggested the Friends apply to the Lower Mole Trust for financial help. There was discussion about the possibility of making our own seats, e.g. large logs with the top levelled with a chain-saw. Sarah will look in the Burning area and ask “Cleanaway” about suitable logs.

Fire Patrols

Rangers have been carrying out patrols to check for fires. There is concern about members of the public lighting fires – four sites have been found in Lawn Barn Meadow.

Management Forum

It is hoped to form a Management Forum where those groups involved in using the Country Park can meet to discuss issues. This would build better liaison between all bodies using the Park.

Running Events

Members were asked for opinions on the use of the Park by running clubs and groups. It was reported that some runners had been rude to Rangers. Members reported that they had been forced to move aside by groups of runners who took over the whole width of paths and that when gathering to start they had blocked the Car Park. Some groups ask permission and register in the Hall, others just turn up. Sandy felt that meetings should take place on a proper cross-country track. The general feeling of members was that they should not be encouraged.

AOB:

Owl Box – This is now in place on the end of the Hall

Flooding – Ray reported that the new footpath beside the children’s farm was often flooded because the water supply to the animal troughs was left overflowing.

Brendan thanked everyone for their help and for such an unexpectedly high turn-out.

Dates:

September 29th
[Friday]

Hedge cutting.

October 1st
[Sunday]

Fruit and Nut walk.
Looking for Natural foods and herbs.

October 31st
[Tuesday]

Halloween Event

November 28/29th

Hedge laying with LMV

December 12/13/14/17/19/20/21 Copping with LMV

Next Meeting Tuesday 3rd October, 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.