



Friends of Horton Country Park

Minutes

For the meeting held on the 06/12/2005

Present:

Sarah Hallums (Chair), Terry Summerfield (Treasurer), Pat Lowe (Minutes), Alan Cheshire, Anne Cheshire, Laurence Coley, Ray Eyres, Rosemary Eyres, Tony Gibbs, Brenda Hammond-Gibbs, Anne Hill, Chris Hill, Mo Pearcey, Pam Pearcey, Eileen Tomlin, Peter Tomlin.

Apologies:

Brendan Kilby, Shirley Baxter, Marie Cantro, Bill Facer, Ian Tilbury.

Website

Apologies were sent from Brendan because it had not been possible to put previous minutes on the website. This month's will be. The website address is www.friendsofhorton.co.uk .

Bat House

Suggestions had been asked from members for a name for the bat roost on the site of the demolished Farmstead School buildings. Stewart Cocker (Countryside and Community Development Manager) was keen to keep links with the old buildings, so **Farmstead Belfry** was put forward and accepted by members.

Badges

Sarah distributed badges for the Friends of Horton Country Park so we can recognise one another on walks and to raise awareness in the public of our role.

Working Party 20th November

Thanks to Tony, Terry, Mo, Pam, Ian, Laurence, Peter, Annette, Stewart, Dougie, Helga and Doreen for their hard work on cutting bays in the hedgerow in Lawn Barn Meadow. Terry suggested that future notices about tasks should say where the work is taking place so that those who cannot make the meeting point can join later.

Newsletter

Peter circulated his draft template for the 'new-look' Newsletter. Friends who wish to put something on the website or in the newsletter can e mail Peter. **Action** - Laurence agreed to contact Brendan for addresses of new members so that they could be sent a copy of the latest Newsletter. He will also produce a new membership form with help from Peter and Brendan.

Autumn Fair

Approx £300 (proceeds from the event) has been banked. There was a discussion about how this could be spent and members were asked for suggestions. Terry said that approximately £100 would go on paying the remainder of the cost for new trees.

Sarah suggested paying for insurance so that the Friends could carry out some tasks unsupervised but still be covered. She also suggested buying some tools: loppers, slashers, bow saws, to be kept for the Friends' use when carrying out these tasks without the Countryside Team.

Other suggestions were; more trees for hedgerows, a Friends' chainsaw sculpture, bird boxes. **Action** – Terry to arrange finance meeting with Brendan.

Sarah said that the Autumn Fair was not going to be an annual event, but possibly alternate with the Epsom Common Day, at which the Friends could have a stall. When it is held again, more support will be needed from the Friends for stewarding e.t.c.

Section 106 Money – from Clarendon Park developers as part of the Handover Agreement.

This has been paid to EEBC because of the disturbance and also expected increased use of the park from residents of the new housing development. Some of this has been used to remove the old hospital fencing. The remainder will be used to improve some of the tracks around the park, for example in Butchers Grove.

Bill Facer had asked for the issue of the car park surfacing to be raised. EEBC recognises that the car park gets repaired and then soon after is just as bad with pot holes. If there are funds enough left from the section 106 money, tarmacing the car park has been considered. There will also be section 106 money from the development of the West Park Hospital, which may be used towards an upgrade of the car park once other priorities have been addressed.

There are advantages to having pot holes in the car park as they do act as speed bumps. It was suggested that if the car park was tarmaced then it may encourage some people to use it as a racing circuit, so perhaps it could be turned in to a U shape. There is a possibility that the entrance will be changed allowing easier access to the Equestrian Centre which may solve this potential problem.

Discussion of issues following the demolition of Farmstead School and removal of the old hospital fencing.

Ray said that as a result of the fences being removed the open manholes were now easily accessible which he felt should be covered, as they lead down in to deep shafts which have become filled with water. Sarah said they should have been made inaccessible and would look in to this.

Rosemary and others said the path near the demolition site was very muddy from heavy machinery and needed clearing. Sarah said the contactors should have cleared the mud but would follow this up. Some work would have to wait until dryer weather, for example the footpath running past the Children's Farm (FP73) which was damaged by heavy machinery, and finishing off the removal of the rubble from one of the new fields. The area around the bat roost will be planted up and a notice board put up on the building providing information about the bats within the Country Park.

The cut vegetation left after clearing the fence line along FP 73 has been removed and native trees will be planted in their place to give nearby houses a bit more security.

Brendan has been invited to the AGM of the Clarendon Park Residents Association (30.1.06) and their Chairman, Alan Culff, has said that as good relations between the Friends of Horton Country Park and the residents was important, the CPRA would consider financial help with relevant projects.

Tony Gibbs asked if the path to the stile on the Chessington Countryside Walk could be surfaced as this area is also very muddy.

Eileen and Peter reported that golf buggies had been seen driving through woods in Butcher's Grove at speed and not keeping to permitted paths. Sarah will contact the Golf Club.

Several members commented on horse riders going off paths and through woods and the orchard. Sarah noted that what was really needed was greater Ranger presence within the park to talk to offenders. She said that the Ranger Service was recruiting new patrol rangers and hoped that would help.

Funding and Management Plan

There is a table at the back of the plan outlining all the works we need to carry out and projected costs, which run in to £100000s. Finding funds to carry out the works identified in the management plan may prove difficult. Due to this, the plan may take longer to complete than the projected ten years, but at least we do have a plan to work to. There is little financial help available from the Council at the moment, but there are possibilities of getting grant money, for example from Stewardship Payments administered by the Rural Development Service. (Eventually the new government body, Natural England, made up of elements from English Nature, the Countryside Agency and Rural Development Service, will oversee this grant scheme.)

Both Epsom Common and Horton Country Park have been registered to receive this grant money, the next step is to write a Farm Environment Plan and make grant applications. EEBC will receive money for carrying out conservation projects e.g. coppicing, wetland management, hay meadow management e.t.c.

Sarah and Annette and a Lindsay (Liaison Ranger) will be going on a chainsaw course as well, so will be able to do a proportion of the woodland thinning required themselves. However, help from volunteers will be needed to deal with the felled wood and help create log piles or man the fires.

Anne Hill asked about the possibility of using woodchips from this work for surfacing paths. Sarah pointed out that they compost down and have to be replaced quite frequently. They may be suitable for desire lines but not the formal paths. Brenda asked about selling the woodchips to help with funding. She also suggested the possibility of producing 'green' bio-degradable coffins and charging for burials within the Country Park. A pet cemetery was also suggested. Members said they would not want stone memorials!

Tony asked if the hedges near Pond Wood, which are very high and solid on both sides of the path, could be lowered and gaps created to open up sight lines. Brenda asked if it was policy to layer hedges. Sarah replied that the LMCMP have been layering a few of the hedges around the park. Some are tractor flailed to show the difference between both types of management as an educational tool. Sarah suggested the Friends may like to take on layering hedges as a task, and would ask Nick if he would be willing to tutor the Friends volunteers.

Nescot

They have finished clearing dead elms from the hedge near Field Pond and have started work on the orchard stream, which is heavily overgrown. Tony asked if they would clear the balancing pond. Sarah said that all the ponds in the Country Park need clearing of

reed mace but that it is very heavy work. The roots are very strong and the work is a bit beyond the volunteers. It really needs to be carried out by machine.

BMX Track in Butcher's Grove

Sarah said that although this is a 'marvellous feat of engineering', health and safety issues mean that it will have to be removed. The Lower Mole Countryside Management Project (LMCMP) volunteers will be coppicing near the area of the BMX track, so the wood from the track will be burned on their fires. Sarah asked members if they knew who was responsible for constructing it as she would like to meet them, and explain why it had to be removed.

Coppicing

The LMCMP volunteers will be working in Butcher's grove after which they would like to move on to other areas within the park. They have asked if volunteers from the Friends would like to go out on task with them and learn how to do it for ourselves. Sarah says there is a corner we can practise on. Dates they will be working are Tues 13th, Wed 14th, Thurs 15th, Sun 18th, Tues 20th, Wed 21st, Thurs 22nd Dec. Meet at the workshops at 10 am.

Nick (LMCMP manager) is investigating recruiting a coppice worker to take on some of the management of the woodlands within HCP as a business project, so HCP could have a 'Coppice worker in residence'.

Tasks

Sarah suggested that tasks be organised for the alternate months when there are no Friends meetings. Notices are put up around the park, on the notice board and on the website. Ideas given are:

- Rubbish clearing – especially at backs of houses alongside path near Butcher's Grove.
- Tree planting – old native varieties for the orchard.
- Water vole habitat – clear bank-side vegetation from stream running from West Park.
- Hedgerows – finish removal of dead elms, replanting and plant new hedgerows. Also finish cutting bays in to overgrown hedgerows as started on 20th Nov 05.
- Ragwort clearing - some along tracks used by horses. Also clear Michaelmas daisies and Crassula.
- Reed mace clearance from ponds.
- Longrove Wood – clear non-natives e.g. Laurel.
- Flora ID – To enable the Friends to keep an eye on flora, Sarah suggested an identification walk in the spring. Tony suggested she contact June Chacksfield of Nonsuch Park.
- Tree planting once secondary woodland has been thinned.
- Social event, BBQ?

Dates to be decided in advance but tasks set at previous month's meetings. Members agreed Sundays were best so:

January 29th Task Tree planting in the orchard followed by rubbish clearance near Ruxley Lane entrance. Meet at Rangers Office 10 am.

March 19th Task to be decided at February's meeting.

Many thanks were expressed to Sarah for chairing the meeting and the Eileen for suggesting the very pleasant social event that followed with mince pies, hot drinks, e.t.c.

Next meeting 7th Feb 06 at 7.30 pm in the New Hall.