MINUTES OF THE FRIENDS OF MEADOW PARK COMMITTEE MEETING
4th March 2022

1) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Kevin Shaw, Sue, Paul.
Present: Andy, Andrew, Kev, Ian, Mel, Brenda, Alan, Neil, Trevor, plus guest Cllr Jason Billin.

2) MINUTES OF THE FMPC MEETING OF MARCH 2020 WERE RATIFIED.
This was following a discussion on flooding signage that Alan had raised with the Parish and Rushcliffe councils, but neither were prepared to commit to any exact wording. Alan went on to explain about his understanding of the re-development of the proposed new pumping station in the village, and the concern that the replacement of the existing 10 inch pipe that runs across Meadow Park with a new larger one will create disruption to Meadow Park when it happens.

Jason also explained in more detail that the proposed re-development of the pumping station is not scheduled to be completed until 2024. It will include upgrading all the pipes running in from Woodgate road, The DNRC, Gotham road and upstream from Widmerpool, Wysall and Costock. The new pumping station will be a 15 metre deep silo and will be installed with new pumps. A new wider pipe will run from the pumping station alongside Kingston Brook through the tunnel that runs under the railway, and on to the West Leake Sewage Farm which will also have its capacity increased by about 90%. This work should reduce the number of floods but there is no guarantee that it will completely stop them.

We were also made aware that Severn Trent have a team of people that can be approached to clean the park if flooding does occur.

Neil asked if we can ensure that this work will not affect the brook. It was felt that we should work closely with Severn Trent during this development to try and ensure this and understand if we may be able to use their resource to help the FOMP to potentially use this to the parks advantage, however we must consider this carefully so as to not adversely affect the flood plain. We may also be due some compensation for disruption that we could use to fund other projects.

Ian stated that at the moment the pumping station tends to discharge into the brook whenever they want, far over the allowed discharges of 9. The brook is essentially dead and pretty devoid of life subsequently, but at least this work should reduce discharges.

3) MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES PLUS DEVELOPMENTS

i) How we carried on during the Pandemic - (Kev)
The Covid Pandemic has been a testing time for all organisations and how they operate. Despite having no meetings for over 2 years we continued to help manage and look after the park whenever we were able, and everyone has done their bit.

Andy has continued to lead the work parties whenever we were allowed by the regulations, When we couldn't work in groups we worked as individuals, repairing paths, watering trees, managing the wild flower areas, picking litter and so on. Also Brenda continued her brilliant work, with the newsletter, articles in local Press and of course information in the Plinths.

In short, we just got on with it, and it is of great credit to everyone here, and other volunteers.

II) Committee leavers and how we run going forwards - (Andy)
Andy expressed the Committees thanks to Ann, who had been a stalwart member since the parks inception and did hugely valuable work as Chairperson on various projects and was our wildflower expert. He also

thanked Eric who was responsible for the bird boxes around the park, and did other valuable conservation around the park on a regular basis. Our former Chairperson Kevin was also thanked for the effort he has put into the committee over the years, including his recent stint as Chairperson. Finally, Suzanne was also thanked for helping out and being a member of the committee. They will all be missed.

Andy pointed out that having lost 4 committee members recently we really need to recruit some new ones. We discussed how we can temporarily run without a Chairperson. It was felt that we can run without a formal Chairperson until the AGM, and Kev was nominated to be the acting Chairperson in the meantime.

NEXT STEPS – Brenda to advertise for new committee members in the monthly newsletter and our other media contacts

- **All current committee members to use their own contacts to see if they can find anyone who is interested**
- **Andy to ask at the next work party**
- **New Chairperson or Chairpersons to be decided at the AGM.**

iii) Overview of the ELPC Climate Group – Cllr Jason Billin

Last Year ELPC declared a climate crisis and it was agreed to go forward and develop an action plan in order for East Leake to "do our bit" in reaching the UK Carbon Plan. Jason's team consists of business people and the general public pulling information and tasks together that they can recommend to the ELPC. Re-wilding is also being looked at, along with speed limits, cycle routes etc. Any changes can only happen with the full community take up, so they will need to survey what people in the village think.

Jason wanted to understand about our grass cutting issues, as there are lots of pockets of grassland throughout the village, some managed by ELPC, and some by RBC, he needs to look at how these connect, and create species corridors. He wants to speak with experts and anyone with specialist knowledge, and we need to look at things that the entire community can do. Some of the current things being considered include battery powered vehicles and low energy light bulbs etc.

Brenda asked if there was any funding available, or a body that he could ask for help such as grant funding etc?.

Andrew stated that deciding what to do with green space was always contentious as people have conflicting opinions as to whether we should add trees or more grass and wildflower areas. We discussed that fact that we don't intend to add any significant extra trees to Meadow Park currently, and that grassland acts a slightly better carbon sink than woodland.

Trevor asked what the significance of this action really is when the UK accounts for only around 1% of the worlds carbon emissions, although it was also recognised that products consumed in the UK but produced elsewhere account for more…… (Having quickly researched this it appears that by including this the figure is more like between 2 and 3%.). Trevor added that we need to be careful with the country's money. Jason agreed that we have to be pragmatic, but we must take action, and do everything we can to mitigate the worst. He argued that there are a lot of little things we can do, such as getting rid of polystyrene packaging and replacing it with cardboard etc.

Alan gave an example of research that showed that a large number of Finnish people were shown to be dying of illnesses due to high cholesterol levels. By introducing competition between villages to try and get their cholesterol levels down, a marked reduction in deaths was found due to this. Alan suggested this "competition" principle could be applied to UK villages in a competition to reduce carbon emissions.

Andrew said that it would be wise to consider climate issues and preventative measures in the park going forwards, and ensure we have wild areas that fit in with climate considerations and to develop a new "best practise".
Ian mentioned the Biodiversity Act, and that Councils will be valuing and looking at schemes that produce net gains to biodiversity and water and air qualities. He mentioned that it was about natural capital and correctly developing plots of land. A lot of this investment will be via private developers, and if we can integrate with this it would be great. The new 2021 Environment Act enshrines better environmental concepts into law, this includes binding targets for air quality, water, biodiversity and waste production. All banks and businesses who will ultimately be responsible for new developments are committing to this new approach.

Jason gave the example of high rise developments in Thailand, which are putting more green space into the high rise structure than the original ground footprint it uses.

Natural flood management is also a hot topic, and Kev expressed concern with the Sheepwash Brook drying up, and the concern that this was due to the gravel pit workings, Ian agreed that this was likely, and Jason said that this was one of the things his group would be looking at.

iv) Grasss cutting update: (Kev)
The essence of this, is that as the biodiversity of the park has increased following the implementation of our wild flower and bee worlds several years ago, we have sought to protect the nectar sources for key pollinators such as bees and also protect the life cycles of plants and insects and the inherent benefits this adds to other invertebrates and animals through the food chain by having a later cut.

To this end the Parish council in July 2019 affirmed this with a letter stating "The Parish Council will in future years ensure that access to the park for mowing is not granted until after 1st of August except in exceptional circumstances" This confirmed what was already stated in the 2016 Management Plan, agreed by RBC, ELPC and FMPC.

So what happened……Richard Jenks the farmer contacted the Parish office to say that "He may well have to stop cutting the grass in Meadow Park". Kevin Shaw our Chairman spoke to Richard who stated that "leaving the cut so late makes the grass almost worthless to him as animal feed". Kevin at this stage felt that "an early cut was better than no cut at all" and he messaged the committee as such on Thursday 7th of July. Some of us were strongly opposed to this, some were wanting more discourse and information, and some agreed. Either way Kevin Shaw told the farmer on Friday 8th of July, and Richard did the on Monday 11th of July.

This was done at a time when many of the flowers were in full bloom, with a great display in particular of knapweed and greater burnet in particular, and the meadows were full of bees, butterflies and other insects, and of course the wildflowers had not had chance yet to set seed.

I attempted to ameliorate the impact of this, and asked the farmer if it would be possible to leave a field uncut to allow everything in that field chance to complete their life cycles and for other species to overwinter, but he told me in no uncertain terms that his contract was with the Parish Council, and that he wasn't prepared to be messed about and the cut was nothing to do with the Friends Of Meadow Park.

So that is that, there is no point crying over spilt milk as they say, we just have to move on.

On a positive side, the farmer was unable to cut the arboretum as his new machinery cannot manoeuvre around the trees, and he has also left some large margins around Gibson's field, Having spoken with Andy,

we feel that we can get the Green Climber this year, for maybe a couple of days we can cut back any encroaching thistles, nettles or scrub ourselves, and maybe even parts of the Arboretum. Alternatively we could ask Richard to do it, but this would need supervision and he doesn't appear keen on that.

So how do we move on in a balanced way that preserves our meadows and the surrounding areas in a more sympathetic way for the park users and nature,…. as we now live in a time where protecting our green spaces and biodiversity has never been more important?

It may well be that Richard will continue to cut the grass going forwards, in which case we will need to try and work together in a better way to ensure we tackle biodiversity issues, but also, if everyone is agreeable, I am happy to see if I can find some potential alternatives, that I will pass onto The Parish Council for them to compare with Richard's tender and then make their decision. We can only recommend, but after that it is an East Leake Parish Council decision.

NEXT STEPS – Kev to investigate possible grass cutting alternatives, and pass this information on to ELPC who will then decide if it should be put out to tender.

v) Arboretum and Forest School Update: (Andy)

ARBORETUM:

As you are all probably aware, 3 trees – The Downy Birch, Sweet Chestnut and Sweet Cherry have all died over the last 2.5 years. Replacement trees for these have been donated and are at present growing on in my back garden – Downy Birch, Sweet Chestnut and Wild Pear. These trees will be planted in the autumn but in different places. A Silver Birch has been planted adjacent to the dead Sweet Chestnut by year 6 from Lantern Lane Primary school as part of an RE project on the environment.

Over the last few months the Alder has also died and has been replaced by another donation from Arch Communications in recognition of the Queens Platinum Jubilee. This tree has been planted in Oak Meadow at the end of the tree line adj to the Centennial Oak.

A Silver Birch tree supplied to the Scouts by the Parish Council was also planted by the Scout Leader and Kev.

These two trees along with the replacement Juniper have been regularly watered over the last few months.

The state of the Larch is now giving concern as again it is in evident stress. It has been reported that the Larch in Dumfries and Galloway are being attacked by the 'Phytophthora Ramorum' fungus and are in the process of being totally removed to prevent the spread

I will be contacting the Rushcliffe tree surgeon to see if felling and removing is required.

NEXT STEPS – It was also suggested that the RBC tree officer (Tom Petty) could be contacted about this.

FOREST SCHOOL:

The Forest School is again up and running on the Mondays in Term time, and they have recently had two full days in the Park.

They will require some more den materials for September restart

The log circle is showing some sign of wear and tear, it will be necessary to replace them in the near future, I will sort out some costs**.**

vi) Management Plan (Trevor)

Trevor pointed out that we need to update our Management Plan. This shouldn't take too much work as the basic plan is sound, but it does need bringing up to date to reflect climate change etc. The first step is to ask Paul Phillips and ELPC to look at the plan and review / change it if necessary. After that we will review it from a FOMP perspective, and then come to a final agreement.

NEXT STEPS – Kev to request Paul and ELPC to review the plan.

– Trevor and Neil to review the plan for further discussion at our October meeting.

vii) Any other business

Trevor asked where the final copy of our constitution was. Andy confirmed that he had it and it would be forwarded to Sue and Brenda.

Neil mentioned that a new flower (Wild Parsnip) had appeared in Hall Field and it has a yellow flower, It was also mentioned that a red Gladioli has also appeared near the tunnel end.

It was also mentioned that we applied to RBC's environmental grant for new cordless equipment. We were successful in receiving over £500. We plan to share some equipment with St Mary's Church going forward. The FOMP thank them very much indeed for this.

Kev mentioned that he has asked RBC for use of the Green Climber again this year.

4) FRIENDS OF MEADOW PARK
TREASURERS REPORT 03/08/22

We are still in a very healthy state with the present balance in the Bank being:
£3321.17 – Total Balance
£2949.82 – General Funds
£371.35 – Arboretum
Outstanding Debits - £182.02
The major problem at the moment is with HSBC, along with removing the counter service they now charge for the audacity for having an account - £5 per month plus charges for cash and cheque deposits even if you use their machines – total charges to date £48.26
I am at present sorting out an account with the COOP which is the only bank remaining who do not charge community groups etc.
AED 31/7/22

5) ACTIVITIES UPDATE: (Andy)

A big thankyou to all our regular Volunteers
Obviously due to the pandemic the last 2.5 years have been somewhat fragmented, over the whole period various volunteers have been working as individuals and in pairs and when the restrictions have been lifted then teams of six have operated and over the last months teams have been restricted to a minimum number.
This has now been changed so over the last few work parties the whole membership has been notified
Work carried out has been varied to keep in line with the management plan where possible.
The one bonus has been the purchase of a set of battery power tools, this has been funded by the Parish Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council and is making our life much easier. They consist of a multi tool system comprising a hedge cutter and brush cutter along with a separate leaf blower
Total hours worked to date – 472.75 AED 31/7/22

NEXT ACTIVITIES PLANNED

- Remove Himalayan Balsam along the brook
- Litter pick brook and remove encroaching branches over the brook
- General Litter Pick and rubbish clearance

NEXT MEETING DATE

- **Weds 5th Oct 2022**