MINUTES OF THE FRIENDS OF MEADOW PARK COMMITTEE MEETING
8th March 2023

1) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Carol, Paul.
Present: Andy, Andrew, Kev, Brenda, Alan, Neil, Diana, Conrad, Mary, Ian, Mel, Trevor.

2) MINUTES OF THE FMPC MEETING OF JANUARY 2023 WERE RATIFIED.

3) MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES PLUS DEVELOPMENTS

i) Management Plan update including path widths, signage and grass cut (Kev)
I attended a meeting with ELPC and RBC to discuss this. The plan is essentially the old plan but with a few areas that have been questioned or amended (see below).

I will send out the final plan once we have had the final confirmations from ELPC, this may not be approved until June 2023 at the earliest due to the upcoming County Council elections.

Cutting grass within 1 metre of the footpath edges. (Plan ref - 8.1.1.1)
We had a discussion about this and I have now (with the help of Sue and Steve - the ELPC mower) understood the situation and issues with this, which relates to the 2 flails that Steve uses on his tractor:

a) The rotary mower that is mounted at the back is the smallest of the 2 and can cut at around a metre, however, this part of the mower is rarely used as it is easily damaged by objects on the ground such as roots, stumps and stones, and also as it "floats" it can easily get stuck into uneven ground, particularly adjacent to the path edges, and as Steve doesn't want to damage the path he rarely uses it.. If used on the path where there is a camber, it would damage the path badly as well as this part of his mower.
b) So Steve uses the flail mower on the front. It was thought this was 2.5 metres wide, but on later discussions with Steve he confirmed it is 1.5 metres wide, hence this is generally the distance of the grass cut either side of the path. The only way this could be less, would be if Steve drove along the path, but this of course risks damaging the path.

NEXT STEPS – Kev to ensure we leave 1 metre as the ideal path width in the plan, even though this is not currently achievable.
– Kev and Andy to also chat to Steve about what is achievable in other areas such as beside the tarmac path in Oak Field.

New signs. To be placed at the 6 park entrances facing people as they enter. Quote for these has been approved by RBC. (Plan ref - 8.1.5.2)
We had some debate about the sign (see below), some felt it should be friendlier in tone and others argued for more visual prohibition signs. Kev explained that these signs were very much down to RBC's decision. Subsequent to this after discussing this with Paul it became clear that these signs have already been passed to the manufacturers for production. Whilst not pleasing everybody we will now have new readable signs prominent at all of our entrances.

Also, as we discussed in our meeting, we can add additional information in connection with the signs in our plinths if we feel it is required.

If subsequently we find that there are specific issues in the park that are becoming a problem, then I'm sure we could put up more visual specific signs to address this in the appropriate place(s), but these would need to be agreed with RBC first.

1 off A4
Printed on White SAV + Gloss Laminate
Applied to Routed 3mm Dibond
Extrusion to Rear
Supplied with Clips

Further note:
In the plan meeting with RBC and ELPC we discussed the potential issue of dog walkers (particularly people who walk multiple dogs), not taking away dog mess. It appears that there is no bye law that can prevent people walking multiple dogs and creating this issue, and also the definition of "control" is vague. All that can be done is to report incidents to the RBC dog wardens. RBC will then keep a record of this, and if incidents are repeated they will speak to the Police, or take an injunction out against individuals.

Creating a wetland habitat (Plan ref - 8.3.3.1)
Kev mentioned that a potential idea for this is to create a fairly small scale "run off" from Kingston brook to create a scrape / pond area, perhaps even with some earthworks with it, in the willow area in the North West corner of Gibson's Field. This could greatly add to the interest and biodiversity of the park, providing habitat for fish, amphibians and birds etc. We would need to think carefully as to where we situate it, and how it is done to ensure it is relatively safe (sloping sides etc). The work could be done by Severn Trent when they put in the new sewer pipe next year, so this is probably a one off opportunity that we should seriously consider in terms of adding biodiversity to the park.

Neil wasn't keen about the above idea, as he is keen to not damage our existing grasslands. Kev explained that the area would be adjacent to the brook which is currently taken over with bramble.

Ian mentioned that he had trialled a MoRPh system, which analyses the quality of habitat for existing watercourses. This showed Kingston Brook to have poor conditions. He proposed therefore that we might instead seed the brook with gravel (which is a proven approach). Severn Trent could do this for us, but due to flooding concerns etc. this would require approval from the Internal Drainage Board (IDB). This would form part of a river restoration scheme. Neil also suggested we could also perhaps cut a small scallop in the river bank as part of this (in the area adjacent to the east of the willow corner).
NEXT STEPS – Kev to discuss this with Paul Phillips and find a good IDB contact to discuss this with further.

Grass Cutting Regime (Appendix 1 of the Plan)
The grass cutting tender has not yet been sent out by ELPC, so we discussed this subject further, and we are therefore still tweaking the tender document. We discussed the need to keep a wide margin at the southern edge along the arboretum and also an extra wide margin at the northern edge of Stonebridge Field on the alternate years that these 2 areas are uncut, we also discussed using the green climber to cut the arboretum. Following our plan meeting a few questions came out of the wording in the tender document and I also had a good chat with Steve who

cuts the grass for ELPC. The following points therefore will need to be built into the plan, subject to ELPC being ok with them.

a) We will use the RBC "Green Climber" to cut the arboretum on the years it needs cutting. This will enable us to assess and cut the area in a sensitive manner. Any arising's can be raked away, and placed in the nearby tree areas by those present at the cut or by a subsequent work party. We also have the back-up of using the Streetwise vehicles (as shown to us by Paul Phillips at the last meeting).

b) The firebreak margins will be cut by Steve (ELPC) when required. Steve is more than happy to do this for us and I will liaise with him on this and help guide him on the cut.

Subsequent notes on grass cutting from FOMP Meeting
Conrad thought that it would be more effective to cut the arboretum using the Streetwise collection flail, as this would make it easier to remove the grass arising's.
NEXT STEPS – Kev to speak to Paul Phillips to see if and when this could be arranged to be done.

ii) Hedge laying update (Andy)

Andy reported that the hedge between Gibson's and Bateman field has now been laid. On the next work party the remaining brash that has been cut off will be put into this hedge or placed around the arboretum copses. Kev thanked Andy and Conrad for their dedication and skill in getting this job completed, and thanked everyone else involved. It was agreed that we now need to make efforts to maintain this hedge and the one laid last year in Playfield. This will be done by re-weaving in whips in or careful pruning during one of our future winter work parties.

Andrew said that it would be useful to explain to the general public why this work has been done and it's benefits for wildlife.
NEXT STEPS – Conrad to send information about this to Brenda, for her to include a synopsis about hedge laying in the plinths at some stage.

iii) Update on the Arboretum and Forest School (Andy)

ARBORETUM:
Due to weather conditions we were unable to plant the 3 replacement trees before the New Year. Hopefully this is now planned for the January work party on January 14th
FOREST SCHOOL:
Having contacted Lisa, the Forest School lead teacher last week the Forest School will start again on the 16th of January. I will join her in the morning to see if they require any more materials.
The requirements for the log circle have been measured and it will require a total of 26metres, split into 10off logs at 2.6 metre lengths. Consultation with the teacher raised the point that the children are getting bigger so the diameter will need to be increased to 40cm.
I am still at the stage of obtaining a cost for these new logs as unfortunately the previous supply from the wild life trust is no longer available.

iv) GCR Railway Arch and line access (Kev)

During the meeting on the Management Plan, we discussed the plans for the GCR to put in a Palisade fence and gate under Bridge 309. All parties are ok with this project but the GCR cannot confirm timescales for it at this stage.

We also discussed the GCR request for access to the train line from the south west corner of Meadow Park. ELPC are ok with this and Paul has requested more detailed information from the GCR.

Alan informed us about a new development with the existing metal fencing under bridge 309. He has noticed that somebody has cut through the metal at the bottom left hand corner, presumably to gain access to the plantation. **NEXT STEPS – Kev to inform the GCR Chairman about this development, and to also ask about repair to the wire fencing in the south west corner of Gibson's field where people are now accessing the railway embankment.**

v) <u>Involving more schools in the park – information sheets (Diana and Mary)</u>

Diana and Mary showed us the butterfly word search and identification sheets that they have put together. Thanks also to Diana's daughter Bridget who has helped greatly with this. We all agreed it looked great. We discussed whether to add butterfly undersides etc, but it was felt that we shouldn't over complicate it. It was agreed to try and add flight times and a size guide, Ian suggested using a line length to indicate size, which we thought was a good idea. The question of copyright on photos would also just need to be considered.

So with the small modification of flight times and size it was felt it would be perfect. It will be specifically aimed at children and their parents. The leaflets will be aimed to help build awareness and involvement with Meadow Park. They will be placed at the Library, Mel's shop, at village events, at schools, and online. It was agreed that we would need approximately 500 leaflets producing.

Diana also talked about other ideas such as QR codes linked to birdsong around the park. This is also a good idea to be explored further.

NEXT STEPS – Brenda to speak to Thistlebank about the printing costs. Ian also offered to take Lantern Lane their leaflets.

vi) <u>Path Repairs (Andy)</u>

Andy has now received two quotes from contractors within the village:
1] for the diagonal path [Kevin's Way] - £2750 - 100m

2] a - for the diagonal path - £3260.25 - 170m
b - for the Arboretum - £3260.25 - 170m
c - for end of Arboretum to Sculpture - £2064 - 100m

for b and c together then this becomes £4974.50 - 270m

We discussed how funding might be found for this. Possible sources could be :

- British Gypsum
- ELPC Amenities Committee
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)
- East Leake extra car park funds

We also discussed the idea of buying a Whacker Plate (machine) to help us firm down the limestone chippings when we make repairs. This could cost around £500. This idea to be carried forward.

Conrad pointed out that the maintenance of the paths is stated in the plan to be the responsibility of ELPC. Alan pointed out that an ongoing provision for this ought to be in the ELPC budget and had been discussed at one stage in the past.

NEXT STEPS – Mel stated she would take this issue away to discuss with ELPC. Andy also said he would discuss this with ELPC.

vii) Tree Babies (Kev / Brenda)

Brenda received a request from this group to use the park with parents to enjoy nature and mindfulness with their babies (starting in May). RBC and ELPC are ok with this (as are we). They may use the Forest School area and Andy has checked with Lisa that timings wont clash with the Forest School. ELPC have requested safe guarding / risk assessment and insurance documents, and Brenda has passed these on to Tree Babies. Tree Babies plan to start after the Easter Break.

viii) East Leake Climate Action – Green Areas (Kev)

Cllr Jason Billin is running with this as part of various initiatives, and this will require support from a group or individuals in the village to really work effectively.

There are a number of small grassland areas around the village that are currently cut regularly. They are owned mainly by ELPC, RBC, NCC and Spirita. These could be made to look attractive as well as gaining a huge biodiversity boost. To ensure they still look neat and tidy most of them will require some amount of mowing, but carefully chosen areas could be left with long grass that could be interplanted with wild flowers. Some could also be given a bed of flowers that mix wildflowers and garden flowers that will provide nectar for pollinators and seeds for the winter whilst still maintaining an element of structure to make them also look nice in the winter. They would need obviously a bit of setting up, but after that just a small amount of maintenance.

During the plan meeting both RBC and ELPC were agreeable to initially leaving some areas of long grass and are prepared to look at ideas for the areas of grassland that they own.

The idea would be to start with a couple of small areas this year and see how it goes……
Kev suggested that the project could be owned / overseen by a group like ours or by setting up another small separate group. We could also involve another key group in the village such as the East Leake Gardeners Group. During our meeting the consensus of the Committee was that this should be taken on by a new group, not by the FOMP, but a couple of members said they would be prepared to potentially help.

ix) Adult Education (Trevor)

Trevor suggested that it would be good to have some memorable educational information about the history, development, and geology of the park, perhaps in the way of an information board or a plinth in Hall Field. Conrad felt that the principle of giving information was a good idea, and Andrew said that there were quite a lot of plaques around Rushcliffe Park. Kev said that if we do this it should not be too detailed, but should be concise, easy to read and maybe contain some visual information'

NEXT STEPS – Trevor to put some ideas together or maybe mock something up that we could review at our next meeting. We can then discuss whether we take this forward.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Brenda mentioned that Mollie Jacques was not too well at the moment and was currently spending some time in a Nursing Home. Mollie was a founding member of the FOMP, and has done a lot of important work on the Committee for many years. Brenda thought that it would be nice if we could do something for her, and we agreed that we should. Conrad suggested that a photo book would be a good idea.

NEXT STEPS – Brenda to put this together using the photo archives she has.

- We discussed the issue of a child slipping down an eroded bank area on Sheepwash Brook, and how the erosion issues can be addressed.

NEXT STEPS – Kev to speak to Paul with regards to what can be done on this issue.

- We discussed why the hedge along Gotham Road was being removed along certain sections. Kev explained that he has asked Paul about this, and it was due to parts of the hedge being old and dying, mainly due to the elm had been killed off by Dutch elm disease. Kev mentioned to Paul about the possibility of using disease resistant elm as replacement, but unfortunately these are expensive and hard to obtain. However, the hedgerow along Gotham road is being re-instated.

4) TREASURER'S REPORT - Andy

We are still in a very healthy state with balance in the Bank as at March the 4th being:
£3694.68 – Total Balance
£3291.53 – General Funds
£403.15 – Arboretum
Outstanding Debits - £11.64 - 2 off storage bins for depot, £53 – shelving kit for storing EGO kit in the Depot
Overall spend to date is £64.64
Bank charges to date:£29.54
Membership Renewals to Date: £465
Donations to Date: £318
The addition of the use of Bank Transfer for renewals has been successful – 42 of 112 renewals

5) ACTIVITIES UPDATE - Andy

WORK PARTY

A major thank you again to all our regular Volunteers.
Scheduled:
The work over January and February consisted of the removal of the Russian Vine on the Bateman Rd bank, outside and inside of the park boundary.
The hedge laying between Bateman and Gibson's field has now been completed, by adding extra work days during the week with the brash to be cleared in the March work party.
The normal litter pick
An extra thank you to our guest volunteers from LRWT who assisted us on these days
Hours worked to date: 138
Unscheduled activity has covered the following: Wild flower surveys, Prepping the hedge to be laid, partial clearance of the Russian vine, planting new trees in the Arboretum, hedge laying, limestone bank
Hours worked to date: 186.5
Total Hours to date: 324.5

ACTIVITIES PLANNED

Work Party – March 11th:
With weather permitting we hope to clear the brash created by the hedge laying, this to be used as 'dead hedging' within this hedge and also the Arboretum copses.
In addition to the above ELPC has asked us for work/hours carried out over the last year:
March 2022 to February 2023 –
Scheduled: 402.5 hrs /Un Schedule : 455.5 hrs.
Total: 858hrs

Next Meeting date 17th May 2023 – 7.30pm