MINUTES OF THE FRIENDS OF MEADOW PARK COMMITTEE MEETING

25th September 2024

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

2) MINUTES OF THE FMPC MEETING OF JULY 2024 WERE RATIFIED

3) MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES PLUS DEVELOPMENTS

i) Updates on Arboretum and Forest School (Andy)

ARBORETUM:

- All trees are doing well despite the changeable weather patterns, with the exception of the Rowan which appears to be showing signs of stress. Other recent Rowans are looking to be in the same state, they will all be monitored over the coming weeks. The small amount of remedial work mentioned in the previous report has now been completed. Unfortunately we ran out of time with the Green Climber so the cutback of Poplar suckers will now be done in the October work party.

FOREST SCHOOL:

- Both Lantern Lane Primary and Brookside Primary are continuing to enjoy themselves in the Forest School area having just started back after the summer break. The repairs to the area, the refitting of the tarp support pole and additional strengthening of a small section of the circle were carried out in the September work day. Both groups are continuing to liaise with each other re activity days.

- FOMP are also liaising with both groups re any safety concerns/materials required.

ii) Severn Trent latest / Lagoon Field (Kev)

- Mel updated us with regards to the latest news. Although work is continuing it is expected that the vast majority of the work will be pushed into next year. The current focus is as follows:

1) Completing the work to the sewage treatment works on West Leake Road.
2) Laying the new pipework from the pumping station to the treatment works.
3) Installing new increased capacity pumps in the current pumping station.
4) Creating a new larger pumping station (there is still some concern that this may not happen).

- Alan mentioned that much will depend on how effective the new pumps are. It is planned that they will run at 112 L/s compared the old pipes at 58 L/s, but it is still unclear if this will be sufficient to cope with the ever increasing local housing growth and adverse weather conditions.

- Kev stated that he felt that Severn Trent were not treating the issue in East Leake seriously with regards to the future, and were just looking to save money. However Ian stated that it was not about saving money as the work comes out of their Asset Management Plan, and they are stretched looking at non compliance at other treatment works as well.

Lagoon Field

- Following a recent period of heavy rainfall, it was noted that Lagoon Field flooded significantly. This should not be a surprise as this was designed to manage exceptional rainfall events with water feeding into this holding area from pipes from the local housing estate (Brookfields Way / Northfields). However, evidence of Lagoon Field flooding in previous similar rainfall events has been largely absent recently. We have had anecdotal information that there had been a blocked pipe that had been cleared, but Ian mentioned that it was more likely due to the fact that the speed of flooding had caused a “Hydro break valve” to work.

- We also discussed the other balancing pools around the village and it would appear that the one below the Kirk Ley estate is not working correctly.

iii) Green Climber update (Kev)

- we used the Green Climber on the north side of Kingston Brook. It cleared scrub along the north side adjacent to the housing fences. It did the usual areas in Hall Field, and some around the south and west periphery. We then did to the west and north edges of Little Meadow, cutting through the blackthorn and bramble encroachment, and finally on to Stonebridge Field along the west and north scrub and then onto the blackthorn on the north and east side of the copse. It did a great job for us, particularly in Hall Field. We didn't have enough time to use it on the south side of Kingston Brook, but the only area that needs major attention there is the sucker growth in the Arboretum, which will be dealt with by a work party.

- Neil mentioned that we perhaps need to keep some more long grass areas around the field edges going forwards and we agreed that we should leave some more areas in Gibson's Field uncut next year when the main mow cut is done.

iv) Paths update

- Andy informed us that there is no update with regards to when the work will start to upgrade the paths, as priority has been given to the picnic area on the Recreational Ground first.

- Andy has also investigated what we could do with the path around the north and west of Hall Field, which becomes very boggy in the winter. He has looked at the cost of "planings" These are quite expensive at the cost of £115.80 plus VAT to do an area of only 5 square metres (although it was mentioned that if this was done via ELPC the VAT could be claimed back).
- We also discussed using limestone chippings, which may also work, but these are expensive as well.
- It was also discussed whether we could approach British Gypsum for any spare gravel or aggregate that they may have.
- Ian suggested using gravel rejects from our local gravel pit (these would be large bits of stone), and suggested we might be able to get this for as little as £9 per ton. We could potentially utilise one of the ELPC vehicles to transport this to the intended location.
- Wood chippings could also be used, and Mel mentioned that we could find out where the Allotments get their wood chip from. However, we have been unable so far to find a reliable source of wood chippings, and these will also rot over time. Alan stated that if we were notified when the Poplars to the west of the railway line are felled we may be allowed to use some chippings from there, but we are not sure if or when this might happen.
- Finally, we also discussed that there are some benefits to leaving this path as it is, as it discourages some walkers and hence provides a quieter area for wildlife.

NEXT STEPS - Kev to speak to ELPC (Sue) to obtain contact details for the gravel pits (Cemex) and discuss if we could utilise one of Steve's vehicles to transport this to the path location.

v) Mill Stone maintenance (Kev)

- Kev stated that no special cleaning materials have been used for cleaning this to date. It was also thought that looking after this area might be a useful project for one of our local schools, however Kev stated that this would need to be carefully managed to avoid damaging the current tiles which are already eroding. There is one missing stone currently, but we don't know what this stone was originally and it could therefore be re-purposed, perhaps this could even become a "25 years of Meadow Park" stone?. We felt that the grass that is overgrowing the stones should be edged and neatened at one of our next work parties.

NEXT STEPS - Kev to speak to Sue to discuss her thoughts before we progress anything here.

vii) Any Other Business

Kingston Brook erosion (Kev)

- Kev raised the issue of erosion of the bank of Kingston brook (adjacent to Kestrel bridge) with Paul Phillips, which we feel needs repair. Paul has informed us that the RBC estates team have looked at the erosion on the streams and determined there was only one area that currently required work, (adjacent to the path next to Sheepwash brook), but they felt the erosion next to the bridges along Kingston brook was not sufficient to require work at this time.

NEXT STEPS – FOMP to monitor the situation, in case it gets worse.

Dogs on leads (Mel)

- We discussed the effectiveness of the new "dogs on leads" signs, and whether this should be extended to the tarmac path that runs through Meadow Park. This, and other considerations have been discussed extensively by ELPC, but for the time being it is not planned to be extended beyond the recreation ground.

Re-wilding book (Brenda)

- Brenda showed us a book on re-wilding, which she said was excellent and offered to lend it out to Committee members. Andy has borrowed it to read.

Wildlife recording in Meadow Park (Kev)

- We currently keep annual records for flowers and butterflies that occur in the park. It has been discussed previously whether we should keep data such as this on a database (or similar) for analysis of trends etc. We have also been made aware recently of the Notts Wildlife recording system called "Nature Counts" and have been advised that we could be set up with an account and site space for recording our records from Meadow Park. Personally I have had some experience with a system very similar to this (i-record), and whilst entering occasional records into these systems is ok, it would be time consuming to enter all records that we make. Ian mentioned that we could enter our data in one go potentially in the form of a list. This is something for us to consider, but (as Trevor mentioned in an e-mail reply) it will probably need someone to do this who is *au fait* with modern systems of record keeping, and I also feel this person will need to be prepared to commit a fair amount of time to do this. Also if we decide to include previous years records we would potentially need to re-format them, and these haven't in truth been recorded in a previously scientific manner, as they are really only casual records.
- Ian also mentioned that at some stage he might be able to organise a Bio-Blitz

NEXT STEPS – We will need to consider wildlife recording in more detail and discuss this further before committing to do anything more than we do currently.

Should we consider seeking the further designation for the park as a "Local Nature Reserve"(Kev)

- Local Nature Reserves receive even more protection against development than Local Wildlife Sites. However, it comes with a certain amount of paperwork and additional adherence to new plans that need to be established.
- During this discussion we agreed that we probably lack the manpower to establish, monitor and action this, and we were concerned about any accountability we might have for non-compliance.

Non native species in the park

- Neil mentioned that a couple of the trees we planted in Stonebridge Field appeared to be non native (Chinese Rowan). Kev argued that these trees were planted for the berries that are favoured by over wintering waxwings. It wasn't obvious from the quote we received for the trees that these were non native, but Kev felt this wasn't a major issue. Andy added that the Rowans seemed to be struggling a bit at the moment, but we hope that the majority of the trees we planted survive.

Hedge survey by Paul Phillips

- Paul has recently done a hedge survey in the park, and stated that the Gibson's Field (east hedge) is looking good. He also felt that Stonebridge Field west (adjacent to Nixon Walk) and the southern part of Play Field east (adjacent to Little Meadow) would be good to coppice and asked what the group thought

about this. The general consensus of the group was that these 2 areas would be difficult to lay as they contain some older well established growth (we have discussed this before). We also felt that it was good to have areas of high growth as a form of screening and as a good cover for wildlife out of the way of the footfall coming past, and also as a different variety of habitat. However we didn't discount the idea outright, and felt that we could see if we could (in the short term) use the hedge flail to keep these areas under some degree of control. We do already have plans to lay hedges around the Arboretum copses and Stonebridge Field copses this winter.

NEXT STEPS – Arrange with Helen Burton (farmer) to do some hedge flailing for us this winter (Kev / Andy)

Entrance area to the Park (near the millstone-Oak Meadow) – dumped tree cuttings

- Mel mentioned that this area was looking scruffy due to old branches etc dumped there. Kev also mentioned the large mound of cuttings on the north edge of Stonebridge Field

NEXT STEPS – At the next work party we will rework the area at the entrance to the park and replace this as a brash hedge. Kev suggests we add some honeysuckle into the brash hedge (as he has some). Mel has offered a small walnut tree, but we have not decided where to put this yet.

- Kev to mention the area to the north of Stonebridge Field. There are also apple trees planted there, and it appears that someone is trying to "adopt" the area.

Major Oak Clone

NEXT STEPS – We need to clear around the bottom of the oak (next work party).

Forest School area -parties

- There have been a few parties going on down there at weekend evenings. It has been mentioned to ELPC and our local Police (Kelly), who will keep a watch on this. These parties leave a lot of litter, but FOMP and kind passers by clear it up.

Carnival 2025

NEXT STEPS – Andy to book our carnival place for 2025

Increasing work party numbers

We discussed if we could increase the number of volunteers who help us do physical conservation work. Mel mentioned a local environmental company (Avenir ESG) who may be able to help us advertise and build awareness.

NEXT STEPS – Mel to speak to Kerry Bentley to see if they may be able to help.

Update – Kev and Andy will be meeting Kerry on Tuesday 8th of October to discuss.

4) TREASURER'S REPORT (Andy)

ACCOUNTS:

We are still in a very healthy state with the balance in the Bank as at September 22nd:

£1793.04 – Total Balance

£1351.89 – General Funds

£441.15 – Arboretum

Bank charges to date: £72.59

We have an addition of membership renewals/new members/donations of £1368

Outstanding debits:

Purchase of WD40 [B&Q] - £7.49

Purchase of 2x Roughneck Ground Anchors for Forest School repair [Screwfix] - £39.98

AED 22/9/24

We discussed other potential spending plans:- these are as follows:
- Limestone chippings to extend the butterfly bank.
- Cornfield Annuals (seeds) for refreshing a bee world.
- New / replacement tools.

5) ACTIVITIES UPDATE (Andy)

WORK PARTY
A major thank you again to all our regular Volunteers.
Scheduled in August: Work was carried out on the Sculpture border, tidy up of the Elm tree cluster in the Arboretum, plus removal of growth around some of the other trees. Cut back and weave growth on the willow structure. Cut back of overhanging growth on a section of the North path in Hall Field
September: Work on the Sculpture border. Refit tarp support post and strengthen 2 off bench supports in the Forest School area, rake off arisings in 2 areas of Hall Field after the visit of the Green Climber, litter pick as necessary.
Hours worked to date:332
Unscheduled activity [July – September] has covered the following: Wild flower surveys, liaise with Forest Schools, clear ragwort from fields prior to hay cut , Work on sculpture border. Brush cut around bird signs and entrance to railway tunnel, cut back of growth on various paths with the volunteer group from British Gypsum. Work on Wildflower leaflets, assist with Hay cut.
Survey park for Green Climber route plus assist with cut, liaise with both Forest Schools.
Hours worked to date: 310
Total Hours to date:642
Work Party – October 12th:
This will consist of: Cut back growth of Poplar suckers and Blackthorn in Arboretum, clear further growth around the Bateman Rd entrance to allow better access for the hay cut, coppicing of hazel in the Bateman rd copse.
Winter work – over this period we hope to work on the following: Hedge laying in the Arboretum and Stonebridge copses.
The priority will be the opening up of a section of the North path in Hall Field to hopefully help the path dry out quicker and also improve the lack of understory growth in the adjacent copses

Additional work identified during the meeting for future work parties
- Cut back scrub / dead trees etc adjacent to the houses on the north edge of Hall Field.

Next Meeting Date - AGM Weds 6th of November 2024, 7.30pm.