



FRIENDS OF RIDGE WOOD

Informal Meeting

Community Room, Tesco Extra, Yate

Start time: 7.30pm

Wednesday 23rd March 2016

PRESENT: Sarah Hardcastle Chair
Jill Hows Vice chair
Geoff Millard Treasurer
Dianne Millard
Tim Fairhead Avon Wildlife Trust
Mike Drew Yate Town Council
Pauline Wilson

Apologies: David Barlow
Emma Morrison
Richard Aston
Edward Wrighton
Emma Brunton

1. Introductions / apologies

2. Minutes from last meeting

Minutes circulated by e-mail following last meeting; agreed.

3. Matters arising

- Lockup roof repair: This was inspected at the February work morning. The lockup roof now appears to be watertight although it will take time for the area to dry out completely.
- Update on Waitrose support: JH confirmed that we are due to be included in the green token scheme within the next few weeks. Waitrose have not yet been approached re: photo competition prizes – JH will do this. If unsuccessful, another idea is to approach new businesses at Yate riverside.
- Training: SH informed the group that no more relevant training courses were included in the recent SGC newsletter, therefore to await further training opportunities.
- Annual newsletter: 600 copies were produced and distributed to streets surrounding the woodland as well as locations such as the tourist information centre. As a result we have had 2 new contacts requesting to join the group; we are hoping that further new volunteers may turn up to future workdays as a result of newsletter publicity. GM will arrange to reimburse DB for printing costs from the FORW account (around £20).

Actions: JH, DB, GM (arrange reimbursement once receipts received from DB)

4. Tool purchase

We were successful in our application for an Area Forum Grant and have been awarded £569.26 to spend on new tools. Although this was the full amount applied for, SH explained that unfortunately there is now a shortfall due to some tool prices increasing in the meantime, and also the fact that SGC are no longer able to purchase the tools on behalf of the group so VAT is now payable. This has changed since the costings were put together.

SGC usually ask for 3 quotes prior to authorising release of funds. Our original pricing was using Tudor Environmental (SGC's usual supplier). Therefore SH has approached Murray tool hire for an additional quote – this may be cheaper but need to ensure the tools they can supply are like-for-like - SH is liaising with RA about this. The TCV shop has now closed down therefore it is likely to be difficult to obtain any further quotes.

The likely shortfall in funds is estimated to be around £200 using the prices from Tudor Environmental. All present agreed that it would be reasonable to pay this additional cost from the FORW account (current balance around £1100 excluding funds received from Hanson's for Forest Fun Time).

Whether or not gloves need to be included in the purchase was discussed – it may be possible to obtain these direct from SGC in line with other local groups – SH will discuss with RA.

PW advised that it may be possible to get funds released from SGC at the time of purchase (contact Rachel Williams-Locke), although another option would be to pay from the FORW account and then be reimbursed.

Once we have the tools we will seek some publicity in local press / publications such as Yate and Sodbury voice, with photos. This will be a good opportunity to promote our work and attract new volunteers to our workdays.

Actions: SH, RA

5. Events

- Our next event will be the Evening Chorus Walk with Ed Drewitt on Wed 4th May at 7pm. Posters for this event are now being distributed, and the event has been publicised in several local publications and online (thanks to EM). SH advised that she is unlikely to be able to attend due to the timing (DH will attend instead), therefore JH will do safety briefing on the night. SH will forward a poster to the local Hawk and Owl trust group as this attracted several attendees last year; to also send to Bristol ornithological club and Avon Wildlife trust. This year we will ask for a voluntary donation of £2 adults and £1 children therefore we will need collecting tins on the night (SH will arrange). Ed will bring an invoice on the night as before, GM to arrange payment after this (agreed fee £100).
- Forest fun time date confirmed as Thurs 18th August. Forest schools practitioners are booked (all day); cost to be covered by sponsorship obtained from Hanson's again this year (£400). We will have a designated planning meeting for this event nearer the time, but please could everyone have a think about ideas on how to vary the trail from last year, and which forest schools

activities we may wish to include. Need to ensure this event is publicised to local schools prior to the summer holidays.

- Autumn event as part of SGC Discover festival: 2 possible events discussed at last meeting (bat walk and fungi foray). SH has contacted both Avon bat group and Lee Hayward from Cotswold fungus group. Avon bat group are able to provide a walk for £50 during September to tie in with Discover – apart from 2 walks at 3 Brooks nature reserve they have not yet received any other local bookings. Unfortunately Lee Hayward is unavailable during October half term and weekends during October, therefore it was agreed to defer this event until next year. SH will circulate doodle poll to find some potential bat walk dates, once Discover dates checked with RA (TF has advised that the festival will be shorter this year due to limited funding).

Additional places to publicise events were discussed. MD suggested “Streetlife” website. We also discussed starting a facebook page / facebook group for the FORW, as well as the possibility of a Twitter feed linking in to other local organisations such as Avon wildlife trust. This could potentially be a longer term project for our publicity officer.

Action: SH, EM, All (attending events where possible)

6. Woodland work programme

Our next workday is on Sunday 24th April for bluebell conservation work. Unfortunately RA is unable to attend, but TF and PW can attend and lead on this day (SH will also attend and can do safety briefing / risk assessment). Equipment required will be spades (all to bring if possible) and loppers for cutting back brambles etc. (SH will collect from lockup in advance of the day). SH will arrange to bring copies of information leaflet to display at woodland entrances and to distribute to passers by if needed. PW and TF may arrange to survey the bluebells in advance of this date and will let the group know by email in case anyone else is free to go along.

The possibility of additional summer workdays was discussed as RA has advised that Hanson’s can supply bags of stone chippings to resurface steps on paths within the woodland – this is a task best undertaken in good weather. An additional work morning in either July or September was felt to be a good idea and SH will circulate a doodle poll to find a suitable date.

As we did last year, we will also aim to carry out a litter pick in advance of the Forest Fun Time event; a potential date for this is Sunday 14th August (TBC).

Action: SH, TF, PW

7. Feedback from recent woodland walkabout with Alexandra Pick from Hanson’s

RA and JH recently went on a walkabout with Alexandra Pick, who is Hanson’s senior landscape architect. Help has been offered in a number of ways, including supplying stone chippings to resurface paths (see above), and also supplying trees for planting (and possibly labour). Trees would need to be supplied by them, rather than purchased by the FORW, however planting could be undertaken by us as part of winter work programme. Need to consider how many trees might be appropriate to plant and where to locate them. It was suggested that one good place would be to fill

in the gap in cover behind the chemicals factory where a fallen tree was recently cleared.

Action: RA, JH (to liaise with Hanson's once date for summer work morning (s) finalised).

8. Feedback from SGC Environment Forum Meeting

TF attended this and reported back to us. As part of the meeting, lists of environmentally important sites for preservation within Yate and Chipping Sodbury were identified. TF will check whether Ridge Wood was included within this list – one issue is the location of the wood in between Yate and Sodbury as it is sometimes unclear under which heading it should be included.

Action: TF.

9. AOB

- Feedback from RA: Works to trees within woodland completed by SGC tree officers including cutting back trees overhanging residents' gardens. Also, 5 year woodland management plan will hopefully be renewed this year at the same time as plans for a number of other SGC sites.
- MD raised issue of litter bins within the woodland and all agreed it would be a very good idea to have some to help address the problem of litter within the woodland. SH will ask RA about this – everyone recalled this being discussed before and the key issue appears to be who would empty them. One way forward might be to email Yate town council, CS council and SGC to enquire about this.
- PW drew our attention to the clearance of an area of trees close to the Hanson's social club. Confirmed that we were aware of this as the area has been designated for new houses.
- SH reminded everyone that our next meeting in May will be the AGM. Committee positions will all be open for re-election. As stated last year, SH had hoped to stand down as chair due to returning to work and other commitments but concerned that this may once again leave the group without a chair; if anyone would like to consider taking on this role then this would be welcome. Attracting and retaining new active members remains a key priority for the group.

Action: SH, all

10. Next meeting date

As several committee members were absent this evening, this will be set via doodle-poll and then circulated to the wider membership by email.