



FRIENDS OF RIDGE WOOD

Informal Meeting

Community Room, Tesco Extra, Yate

Start time: 7.30pm

Wednesday 14th September 2016

PRESENT:	Sarah Hardcastle	Chair
	Richard Aston	South Glos Council
	David Barlow	Secretary / webmaster
	Geoff Millard	Treasurer
	Dianne Millard	
	Emma Morrison	Publicity
	Tim Fairhead	Avon Wildlife Trust
	Pauline Wilson	
	Mike Drew	Yate Town Council

Apologies: Jill Hows

1. **Introductions / apologies**
2. **Minutes from last meeting**

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

3. **Matters arising**

- Tool purchase: SH informed the group that the new tools have now been purchased and are in the lockup. The total cost was £670.74, of which £569.26 was funded from our SGC area forum grant, and £101.48 from group funds. The grant money has been reclaimed from SGC and should now be in our account. SH will email the list of tools purchased to DB for adding to the lockup inventory. SH also noticed on a recent workday that we do not own any rakes – all agreed it would be a good idea to purchase 2 rakes and SH will organise this (to be reimbursed from the group account).
Publicity for the tool purchase / grant award was discussed – EM advised that she has a new contact at the Gazette (Aaron Simms) who she will approach about a possible feature; another option is the Yate and Sodbury voice. It was agreed that it is probably best to take our own photograph and send this on to possible publications who may be happy to feature the group – we will aim to organise this for the next workday.
- Quarry Rd entrance housing development: RA informed the group that he recently met with Tim Shepherd from Newland Homes who have purchased some land at the Quarry Rd end of the woodland. Trees along the boundary and land ownership were discussed. 4 trees on Newland land will be removed along with 2 on the boundary; a further 4 Poplar trees will be monolithed which should create some new habitat. The work will open up the area and let

in more light. The wildflower area previously planted by the group will sadly be lost, but the standing stone will remain. As a group we remain disappointed about the loss of this land; however it is felt that, even had we been aware of these plans in advance, there would have been little point in raising an objection.

- Tree planting: This remains an aim for the winter / spring work season and will be looked at on the next workday. In particular the possibility of planting some trees along the path by the chemical works to fill in the gap here was felt to be a good idea.
- Facebook page: This is now up and running (thanks to EM) and looks great. Need more likes and shares. DB has put a link to the page on the group website.

Actions: SH, DB, EM, All

4. Events

Forest Fun Time was held on 18th August and again was felt to be a success with 65 children and 43 adults attending. Everyone seemed to have a good time and the format again worked well. Forest Schools raised a concern about an odour of dog faeces around the glade – unfortunately dog mess remains a significant problem in the wood despite the provision of bins / notices. RA will ask the SGC dog wardens to include the wood on their patrols. Another negative aspect of the day was the theft of 2 garden chairs brought along by DM and GM. GM confirmed that Forest Schools have now been paid, and additional spending on the event came to about £100. This was funded entirely from donations made by Hanson's and the Waitrose Green token scheme. Photographs of the event are now on our website and the facebook page.

The next event is our bat walk next Wednesday 21st September. RA will attend and do the safety briefing as SH will be late; DM will be first-aider. Attendance will be limited to 40 as requested by Stewart from Avon bat group – SH reminded all group members planning to attend to register via EventBrite.

Action: RA, All

5. Winter work programme

The following provisional dates for workdays for this season were agreed:

- Sunday 16th October
- Sunday 20th November
- Sunday 15th January
- Sunday 19th February
- Sunday 19th March

Another workday will be scheduled for April in due course to carry out annual survey / clearance of Spanish bluebells.

Work schedule for this year is yet to be finalised but will include coppicing, clearance of scrub at rear of Dorset Way and hopefully some tree planting.

Work mornings will be publicised via a poster and through the usual avenues (local publications, FORW website, other local websites and our facebook page)

Action: All (attending workdays where possible)

6. Photo competition

This has now closed. The numbers of entrants were: adult (10), 10-16 (2), under 10 (8). Several people entered more than one photo. SH's husband who is a keen photographer has been through and shortlisted the best images in each category. The committee viewed these images and agreed on winners and runners up in each category. Prizes were also discussed – winners and runners up will all receive books and all younger entrants will receive certificates. The total cost of funding prizes is expected to be around £80 and will be funded from monies left over from our Forest Fun Time grants. SH will purchase prizes and DB will produce certificates. DB will post winning images on FORW website and they will also go on our facebook page. All entrants will be emailed and directed to a web link where the winning photos can be viewed.

Action: SH, DB, EM

7. Annual newsletter

All agreed it would be a good idea to produce another annual newsletter, however it was suggested that this year there is a more limited distribution of paper copies to local houses as only a few new members signed up as a result of last year's campaign. The newsletter can appear on our website and copies can be left at the tourist info centre / libraries etc. It was agreed that distributing copies to the new houses at the Waitrose end of the wood and the Peg Hill development might be worthwhile. PW suggested sending a copy of the newsletter to CS town council. The Yate town council noticeboards were also discussed but a single A4 poster advertising the work of the FORW was felt to be more suitable for this. EM is happy to produce an initial draft – SH will help after this.

Action: EM, SH, DB, all (distribution)

8. Training opportunities / insurance policy

SH asked whether SGC are planning to run any further safe use of tools training sessions – RA was unsure and TF suggested contacting Miles Harris about this. All agreed that we are still not in a position to sign volunteers agreement with SGC due to lack of anyone with expertise in woodland management, therefore our TCV insurance policy should be renewed again for the coming year – SH will arrange this.

Action: SH

9. AOB

- Access to the FORW lockup was discussed after several recent instances where the gate to the Hanson's access road has been locked including on the most recent work morning. This means that time has to be spent collecting tools from the lockup and returning them afterwards on foot. RA will contact Louise Pullen at Hanson's about this.
- MD advised that there is now a new system for administering SGC area forum grants – money to be divided between councillors who can then make awards to specific projects. Yate councillors are likely to pool their money and

have a single round of applications for the year. YTC also make grant awards to community groups. Ideas that were put forward of specific projects that might be suitable for grant funding included some bespoke training on woodland management by TCV, and maintaining / replacing the nestboxes in the woodland, although this would also require some training in monitoring the boxes. If bird boxes are to be purchased in future, PW suggested the “men in sheds” project based in Patchway who may be able to supply them at low cost.

- EM raised the previously discussed 5-year woodland management plan – RA advised that this will hopefully be renewed at the same time as management plans for some other local sites – SGC will fund this.
- PW raised the issue of the Policies, Site and Places Consultation being undertaken by SGC. This covers protected green spaces in Yate, CS and Dodington parish, however Ridge Wood is not mentioned within any of the local submissions. This is felt to be because of the location of the woodland between Yate and CS. PW will raise this with the clerk in CS as it is felt important to include Ridge Wood within the plans as this will afford it protected status in the future.
- PW raised the issue of creating another official entrance to the wood near to the Quarry club as residents of the new houses may access it that way. RA advised that Hanson’s have previously not wanted to have an access point at this location.
- DM advised that she has recently restocked the group first aid kit replacing out of date items: vote of thanks.
- The group received £448 as a result of the Waitrose Green token scheme: this was used in part to fund Forest Fun Time – the remainder will go towards the photo competition and insurance policy renewal.

Action: RA, PW

10. Date of next meeting

This was provisionally agreed as Wednesday 18th January, 7.30pm.