



# FRIENDS OF RIDGE WOOD

## Informal Meeting

Community Room, Tesco Extra, Yate

Start time: 7.30pm

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2016

PRESENT:	Sarah Hardcastle	Chair
	Jill Hows	Vice Chair
	Richard Aston	South Glos Council
	David Barlow	Secretary / webmaster
	Geoff Millard	Treasurer
	Dianne Millard	
	Emma Morrison	Publicity
	Tim Fairhead	Avon Wildlife Trust

Apologies: Pauline Wilson

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

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

### 3. **Matters arising**

- Tool purchase: the group tool inventory has now been updated to include all recently purchased tools. SH still needs to purchase 2 rakes as previously agreed. We still intend to publicise our grant award, but feel this would now be best done in combination with another upcoming event e.g. woodland management training or tree planting – we will aim to take a good photograph at the work morning this weekend to circulate to local publications.
- SH informed the group that she has requested a pack of trees for planting via the TCV “I Dig Trees” giveaway. A hedgerow pack, containing approx. 40 trees, has been ordered to arrive 2 days prior to the February work morning. No confirmation has been received and SH will chase this up. The aim is for these trees to be placed towards the Quarry Rd entrance to fill in the gap in front of the chemical works.
- Insurance: SH confirmed that our TCV policy has been renewed until mid November 2017.
- Recent issues with accessing the group lockup were again discussed. We are no longer able to take a vehicle onto Hanson’s land without prior arrangement, and even access on foot could be problematic at weekends (and is time consuming). It is felt that the best option would be to re-site the container, preferably just inside the Hanson’s car park gate above the woodland glade. We would have to measure up first to ensure there is

sufficient space. There is likely to be a substantial cost involved both in preparing the new site (i.e. levelling it), and moving the container which would require a crane. RA will look into the details of getting this done.

- RA confirmed that it is now too late for Ridge Wood to be included within the council's "Policies, Sites and Places" planning document. However, the site is on a local register of conservation sites for the council's biodiversity planning group for both Yate and Chipping Sodbury (as confirmed by TF).
- RA confirmed that survey work has recently taken place in the woodland in preparation for drafting of a new 5-year management plan, which will be done this spring and will then be available to view and for posting on our website.

Actions: SH, RA, EM

#### **4. Events**

The bat walk was held on 21<sup>st</sup> September and was felt to be a success – the leader, Stewart Rowden, was felt to be interesting and engaging. Bats were detected and briefly seen, although numbers were fewer than last year. SH will email Stuart for an update on the final list of species detected on the night.

Events for the coming year were discussed. As DM and GM will not be available at all in August, it was felt that we will not have enough volunteers to run Forest Fun Time. Therefore, this year, we will concentrate on other events. The best options were felt to be a wildflower walk in the spring / summer (approach Rupert Higgins and ask him to suggest the best time), an owl prowl in the early Autumn if tawny owls are again resident in the wood (to check with Ian McGuire), and a fungi foray during Autumn half term at the end of October. The latter 2 events could potentially be included within Discover. SH will make some enquiries regarding the above, including costs. We will then consider approaching Hanson's for some sponsorship.

Action: SH

#### **5. Winter work programme**

Dates for upcoming work days are as follows:

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> January (to incorporate woodland management training)

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> February (to include tree planting)

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> March

Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> April (to include Spanish bluebell work)

Work schedule will include tree planting and Spanish bluebell clearance as above, but also other tasks to be decided later. Further useful work to do may be identified at our upcoming woodland management training.

SH confirmed that she met with Anna Brunton from the Forest of Avon trust last week who will be running this Sunday's training. She is going to cover tree planting, coppicing, scrub clearance and basic tree identification with us as well as safe use of tools. The meeting point for Sunday was confirmed as the Greenways Rd entrance, and a reminder email has gone out to core members.

Work mornings will be publicised via the usual avenues and local publications. DB will kindly arrange posters for display at the woodland entrances. Only limited

publicity is planned for the woodland management training as Anna feels this works best with a smaller group.

Action: DB, EM, All (attending workdays where possible)

## **6. AOB**

- We have been approached by a local school regarding possible donation of bat boxes to be put up in the woodland. It was felt best to politely decline this as without proper maintenance boxes tend to fall into disrepair. Rectangular bat boxes also tend to be associated with poor occupancy rates.
- SH informed the group that the new SGC grant scheme "Member Awarded funding" is now open, the closing date is the end of March. The minimum award size is £250, and the decision on who to award funding to will be made by local councillors. RA suggested current indications are that the scheme is likely to be undersubscribed. All agreed that this would be a good way to fund the re-siting of the lockup if we can get a quote together in time. SH and RA will liaise about this.
- TF informed the group that Ash Dieback is spreading in South Gloucestershire, and is now known to be present in Lower Woods. This may require removal of diseased limbs overhanging paths etc. in the future (SGC would manage and fund this if necessary). Most woodland organisations have now stopped planting new Ash trees in favour of other species that are likely to take over in the future. This will also be covered as part of our Woodland Management training on Sunday.

Action: SH, RA, all.

## **7. Date of next meeting**

This was provisionally agreed as Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2017, to include the AGM.