



The Friends of Horton Country Park

Minutes

For the meeting held on the 07/06/2011

Present: Brendan Kilby (BK), Terry Summerfield (TS), Mo Pearcey (MO), Pam Pearcey (PP), Ian Tilbury (IT), Sarah Clift (SC)

Absent: Anne Cheshire, Alan Cheshire

Matters Arising

The last minutes unfortunately have not been written up.

SC to check progress with Stewart Cocker.

Publicity and Membership

Peter Tomlin has agreed to update the membership leaflet and design the layout for a roller blind display. After a meeting with Peter, Stewart and Brendan, Stewart has forwarded photographs for Peter to use.

SC to email Peter to check on progress.

New members were recruited from attending the Herald of Spring and Alan and Anne drummed up support at the Clarendon Park Residents Association meeting. Anne is going to send out reminders for subs to be paid when she returns from holiday.

It was agreed that a newsletter of some sort should be written to email round to all current members considering that we now have all members' email addresses.

BK to arrange a meeting with SC to write newsletter.

Anti-social behaviour

People have been camping out and having fires in the local area such as Castle Hill and Ashted Common. All members were asked to be vigilant and report any problems to the police (non-emergency number is **0845 125 2222**) and Ranger Service (**07803 831199**).

Please pass these numbers on to as many people who you know use the site as possible.

(The Countryside Team office number is 01372 745224, but remember we don't have a vehicle all the time so cannot respond to immediate problems).

A car was seen in Butcher's Grove by neighbours of TS.

Litter was noted as a problem around the park, particularly at the northern end and around the entrances. It was agreed to have a task to tackle the problem.

Events

The Surbiton and District Bird Watching Society went well. BK attended to try and increase membership to the Friends of HCP.

It is confirmed that there are Peregrine Falcons nesting on West Park water tower as they did last year. The developers have put an exclusion zone around the tower to try and limit any disturbance to the birds.

West Park Development

BK had a 3hr meeting with John Childs (who is overseeing the development), a water consultant, Mark Berry (Head of Planning Department for Epsom and Ewell Borough Council), Ruth Hanniffy (Environment Agency) and Stewart Cocker, to discuss the creation of a wetland where the development borders Horton Country Park.

The wetland creation has been agreed and this meeting was to discuss in finer detail exactly where the ponds would go, the shape of them and vegetation that should be planted.

There will be three wetland/pond areas which will be at the bottom of the event field, one area nearest Emmett's Mead and one nearest Withy Bed Lane (the old railway line). Then there will also be an area in Upper Norris's, which is the field that used to be grazed by horses and has the stream running along it.

It was thought that the work would be starting imminently and Stewart has chased John Childs regarding this but hasn't heard back yet. Hopefully there will be more news by the next meeting.

Work has begun however on removing the old steam pipe which ran along FP26 and some leylandii on the hospital side.

Lower Mole Countryside Management Project

As part of the Public Value Review paper presented to the Surrey Council Cabinet it has been proposed that, from April 2012, SCC should cease to host the 3 Countryside Management Projects, the Lower Mole Project, the Downlands Project and the Heathland Project. This means SCC would no longer employ project staff, provide HR and IT support, payroll services or insurance. SCC is suggesting the projects are hosted by charitable trusts.

BK has sent a response on behalf of the Friends of Horton Country Park against this proposal highlighting his concerns, including the lack of consultation with other partners and short timescale for a trust to be created. He also praised the huge value of the Lower Mole Project including not only their contribution to improving the conservation of HCP but also the education of our visitors and the sense of community that they help to create by harnessing local people to support their local environment.

Update from Countryside Team (SC)

Sarah Clift is now back working part time on Tuesdays 8:30-12:30 and Wednesdays and Thursdays 9:00-17:00.

As SC is working part time her role has been focused on the monitoring and surveying of habitats and species across the three Local Nature Reserves in Epsom and Ewell including Horton Country Park.

Progress to report in this area is that a butterfly survey is being carried out for a second year this year. Local volunteer, Timothy Tomkins, is continuing to send in bird records regularly and has been since 2009. Since returning these records have been collated in to a spread sheet ready to be uploaded in to our database.

At a residents association meeting a complaint was made to Cllr Jean Steer about the lack of Ranger presence, litter, and fishing problems, essentially backing up what the Friends have been seeing. Progress to report on this is that one of the Rangers, Michael Sinclair has given keys for the gates on HCP to the local Neighbourhood Specialist Officer. They along with a PCSO are planning to do evening patrols of HCP twice a week, taking in meadow pond particularly.

The logs in the Piggery are left over from the thinning work carried out in Lambert's Wood last winter. This will be collected soon and the contractor, Richard Manners, will return in the autumn to carry on with the work in Lambert's Wood, before the ground conditions get too muddy.

Stewart Cocker is negotiating with David Anderson from the Equestrian Centre as to when he can cut the meadows for hay. David would like to cut earlier this year to ensure a better crop. We are asking for guidance from Natural England as in our Higher Level Stewardship agreement it is stated that cutting should take place after 15th July in order to allow flowers to set seed.

One of Lindsay's targets this year will be to organise a large volunteer task to tackle the vegetation along the Green Man Stream, where the Friends historically have worked, to try and improve the habitat for water voles. It is thought that there are no longer water voles present so a large scale task can be undertaken. If we can improve the habitat significantly along with the wetland creation further up-stream then there is the potential to encourage water voles back or request HCP to be a release site.

Tasks

It was agreed to revert back to organising tasks as and when issues arise through discussion in the committee meetings.

The main issue at the moment is the amount of litter so a litter picking task will take place on Sunday 10th July. Meet at 10 am at the Golf Club entrance.

When tasks happen we must ensure that we/contractors tidy up, particularly concerning old fire sites. Task information panels should also be monitored and when signs are vandalised, they must be repaired/replaced.

Information Centre

Stewart had some ideas about revamping the display for the Friends in the Information Centre for example; moving the display to the notice board you see when you first walk in. The display itself is very out of date.

SC to ask Stewart about his further ideas for a revamp, perhaps needing Ray and Alan's help.

****All Friends to think of what they feel the display in the information centre should focus on and what message they want to get across to other visitors.****

Date of Next Meeting:-

Tuesday 2nd August 2011 7:30 pm in the Farmhouse.