

Minutes of Econet Meeting

Monday, 23rd February 2015 at 7:30pm

RBC Parks Department Offices, Prospect Park

PRESENT

Helena Barker, Kit Browlee, Judith Oliver, John Lerpiniere, Alan Stevens, Peter Scudamore, Steve Ayres, Tricia Marcouse

APOLOGIES

Anne Latto, Chris Cliburn, Tina Gower, Mike Turton,

MINUTES of PREVIOUS MEETING

Accepted.

MATTERS ARISING

Seat has been installed at Clayfield Copse.

NEWS AND UPDATES

CROW (Conserve Reading on Wednesdays)

Good attendance. Infill task in Christmas week with West Berkshire Countryside Society had 19 people.

FRIENDS OF CLAYFIELD COPSE

Andy Noyes no longer running tasks and '*Friends*' need to set up a basic tool store north of the river with additional equipment coming from the main tool store as required. Possible options include splitting basic tools amongst regular supporters and asking CROW to bring any additional tools needed to Wednesday task and picking them up from there. Further discussion required within the group but no problem for Econet to purchase additional tools if required.

Alan emailed Andy Gillespie (Reading Council replacement contact for Dave Booth) to enquire about possible tool store north of the river but not had a reply.

First aider required, once candidate(s) found Econet will arrange training.

Question about whether task leader training is essential? NO, but very useful. TCV is running course for Green Gym at the Discovery Centre in Thatcham in May, places available if candidate(s) identified.

Questions raised about the implementation of the management plan for Clayfield Copse by the council and volunteers: volunteers are supposed to work to a plan, but haven't had guidance from RBC on this.

FRIENDS OF CEMETERY JUNCTION

Problems with muntjac being attacked by dogs (with TV coverage).

They would like to do litter pick for RESCUE but currently no leader identified.

Possibility has been raised regarding establishing a separate website on the history of the site. General feeling was that this should be under the Econet website and that there is no difficulty in providing space for this. It should however cover the ecology of the area as well as local history as this is the purpose of Econet.

FRIENDS OF MAPLEDURHAM PLAYING FIELDS

Winter tasks mainly keeping paths open and continuing to thin out some of the 15 year old planting.

Threat to the Playing Fields from proposed free school, Steve has given input to user representatives on the important ecological areas of the site. Surveys of Playing Fields last done in 2001/2002; new surveys might be needed at the consultation stage. The Playing Fields were bequeathed to RBC and is a charitable piece of land.

Alternative school site is Bugs Bottom; Steve suggested that an ecological survey should be done of that site. A further potential school site in south Oxfordshire is already scheduled for development.

FRIENDS OF McILROY PARK

Number attending has improved with 9 volunteers for January task.

FRIENDS OF WATERLOO MEADOWS

No news

NEWBURY AND THATCHAM GREEN GYM

Mainly working at three sites, Snelsmore, Thatcham Discovery Centre and Burghclere Common; good support from increasing number of volunteers.

Will become independent group on 1st April and thanked Econet for support since 2013. Around £1,250 pounds to be transferred from Econet to Green Gym once account set up. Hosting for Green Gym website still to be decided, it will then be disconnection from Econet site.

Alan asked whether Green Gym would consider making Econet a beneficiary of a portion of any remaining funds under their constitution should Green Gym cease, in recognition of the support we have given.

RUWG

Archiving materials on group set up and activities at the local archive office, they are interested to have details of local community groups and it reduces RUWG storage requirements. Trying to archive data records with TVERC.

TCV

Getting good number of volunteers with a predominance of gardening tasks. Intend to start a Tuesday group (in addition to Thursday and Saturday groups) focused on canal work.

FRIENDS OF FOBNEY ISLAND

Dave Booth will still take an interest in Fobney Island. Good attendance at meetings.

Problems with willow regrowth, intention to control by weed wipe.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Six people renewed their three year first aid certificates at the Earley Centre. The trainer was extremely good and recommended for future courses.

All first aid kits being replaced.

ACCOUNTS

Around £8,000 in the account including £170 remaining from grant for Cemetery Junction and £620 for Green Gym.

Income since last April has been around £4,500 including £400 (net) from Bean Pole Day, £1,700 (net) from Christmas Sale, £1,000 task charges and £360 from willow and other sales. Expenditure for same period amounts to similar sum, main items being insurance, tools, PPE, first aid training, volunteer expenses and refreshments; £1,800 from Cemetery Junction grant money was spent on signage for Reading Old cemetery.

Pending income approx. £1,400 and expenditure £100. At end financial year account balance should be about £9,500 of which £1,250 is for Green Gym and £170 from Cemetery Junction grant.

Tools insurance is creeping up year on year. We are now insured for £12,500. Tools insurance is now in bands of £2,500 (previously it had been in steps of £10,000 for sums assured exceeding £10,000).

TCV made a contribution of approx. £160 towards insurance costs from funding they receive from the Earley Charity to support local groups. £79.50 of the tools insurance premium was offset against Green Gym's funds since it related to an increase in the sum assured of £2,500 to cover tools acquired by them. The net cost of insurance was approx. £500.

GROUP REVIEW

A condition of TCV making a contribution towards insurance costs is a Group Review by TCV. Alan met with Monique van Assouw, TCV Community Project Officer, in early November and as a result has written to 'Friends of' concerning various issues including review of risk assessments, collection of emergency contact details for volunteers, safe transport of tools, contact phone number for task late comers and volunteer recruitment. Positive feedback received and additional tool bags obtained.

PUBLICITY & EVENTS

Recruitment

Recruitment Fair at Old Town Hall on 19th March, Econet will share a stall (and costs) with TCV.

Christmas Tree Sale 2014 - Review

Christmas tree sale was a great success. Only complaint was that the best trees went too early but we cannot control this; will try changing the time to 9.30-13.30 but constrained by opening time of the Gardens at Caversham Court.

It was helpful having a Christmas Fair at St Peters on the same day.

Positive response from Army and agreement to let us cut again this year. Joint cutting with Wildlife Trust arranged for 4th December to reduce the need for key collections. Trish to get permission from Reading Council for use of Caversham Court for sale on 5th December.

NTGG had a very good first sale at Discovery Centre raising £300 (£150 of which was donated to BBOWT for their support).

Bean Pole Day 2015

Pretty much organised except for publicity. Judith to contact Caversham Bridge (she has done this and got an advert sponsored by estate agent plus an article). Trish to do radio; Alan to do Freegle

Need a meeting with Luke Lloyd (RBC) to confirm final arrangements.

Trish to contact WI and SPICE to see whether they want to come.

TOOLS

See above

AOB

May not be able to meet at Prospect Park in future as Parks Department moving to Bennet Road and Council is vacating Pavilion. Query over main tool store location as well.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

14th September 2015 at 19:30 (AGM). Venue needs confirmation.