

Meeting of ECONET

25th September 2006
Environment Centre, Prospect Park 7:30pm

Present

Ben Stanesby, RBC	David Booth, RBC
Judith Oliver, CROW, FoCC, FoMPF	John Lerpiniere (Minutes), CROW
Alan Stevens (Treasurer), CROW	Jenny Cottee, Tilehurst GLOBE
Philip Allen, CROW, FoMP	Mike Cox, FoWM
Paul Fincher (Webmaster), CROW	Kit Brownlee (Chair), RUWG

Apologies: Margaret Jordan, Anne Latto, Tricia Marcouse

As no minutes were available there were no matters arising from the last meeting.

News from Groups

CROW (Conserve Reading on Wednesdays)

Have continued a solid programme with many tasks on West Berks sites a number of which bring some income helping to cover costs.

Friends of Waterloo Meadows (FoWM)

Have been busy including occasional meetings on summer evenings. Their activities will appear on the ECONET calendar in future.

Friends of McIlroys Park (FoMP)

Have been active and are gaining support for projects with RBC help and input from CROW and possibly Tilehurst GLOBE.

Friends of Mapledurham Playing Fields (FoMPF)

Start monthly activity after the cricket season.

Friends of Clayfield Copse (FoCC)

Are busy with tasks including sowing expensive Yellow Rattle to control grass in meadow patches, and events such as a Fungus Foray. These will also appear on the ECONET calendar.

Judith to talk to Dave Booth regarding publicity for the Fungus Foray which is being held on the Monday of half term week (23rd October) with the intention of getting children involved.

Reading Urban Wildlife Group (RUWG)

Busy with monitoring planning applications. Are currently looking at a development at Winnersh and at the huge Prudential application for a Kennet Valley mini town on the edge of Reading.

At this point Ben Stanesby gave details of the proposal to build at Mapledurham Playing Fields which will also affect Clayfield Copse. Letters of comment will have an impact.

Change of Use for Environment Centre

Ben Stanesby explained the plan and answered questions. There was some detailed discussion as it will mean new meeting and storage facilities. More staff presence and longer opening times should ensure better use of facilities. On balance it should bring some improvement for ECONET.

Website

Kit Brownlee was impressed with the website and Paul Fincher was congratulated on his efforts.

Alan Stevens had also had recent input into the website and has incorporated the calendar based on CROW activities but which now has begun to include activities and events of other groups. It is envisaged that this will eventually be a 'one stop' programme for all groups.

Health and Safety

Generic H&S guidelines from BTCV are available on the website. It was felt that H&S advice should be available for each of the Reading sites, complete with maps, to warn people what to expect. Kit will write these with some input from Dave Booth as regards maps.

The question of First Aid provision pointed to the fact that all activities should have a qualified first-aider present. Several of those present are qualified, qualification needs renewal every three years. Courses are run, BTCV was suggested as first enquiry, and participants would be supported free of cost to themselves. First aid kits should be checked regularly and updated or replaced. An accident book should be kept or at least a notepad included in the first aid kit and a note made of any accident or treatment.

See also 'Insurance' below.

Accounts

Are reasonably healthy with a balance of over £2,800. The only expenditure so far this year has been £27 on tools. Insurance due for renewal in December, is likely to be around £400. Last year £130 was spent on tools and £500 publicity. The next round of publicity is due now.

Grant

Grant application is more or less complete and just awaiting input from Dave Booth. Alan's 'awful lot of work' was much appreciated.

ECONET Role & Insurance

ECONET will in future operate as an independent conservation volunteer group as per the constitution. It will run tasks, events, etc. at present organised by the 'Friends of' groups with members of the groups participating as ECONET members. All document, publicity, etc. must refer to ECONET but can include text such as 'on behalf of the Friends of ...'.

'Friends of' groups will continue to exist and retain their bank accounts. They will retain their monitoring/management role and can undertake activities such as

obtaining grants for improvements to their sites. They will not be able to undertake activities which require insurance unless they acquire the appropriate cover.

Can insurance cover GLOBE who currently obtain a grant to pay BTCV for the same sort of activities? GLOBE groups can request ECONET to undertake tasks as do the 'Friends of' groups with GLOBE group members joining in such tasks as ECONET members.

'Man days' worked must be recorded for all tasks and sent to treasurer preferable on completion of task. This information is required to monitor that we have adequate insurance cover and for grant application and insurance renewal purposes.

To fall in line with this, CROW will merge with ECONET, its bank account will be closed and the balance transferred to ECONET. It was agreed that CROW's financial arrangements such as task charges and transport payments would continue - in the last financial year CROW's income covered its expenditure leaving a small surplus.

There should be no need for change to other group accounts. FoCC has changed its constitution so that any balance is transferred to ECONET should the group cease to exist.

Tools & Tools Insurance

Currently only tools stored at Waterloo Meadows covered. Philip Allen stated the value of the tools stored at Prospect Park is around £10,000.

FoWM have a large tipping wheelbarrow superfluous to requirements which can be rehoused or borrowed.

A tools maintenance day was suggested for December, they are in need of overhaul but a trickle is purchased as necessary and when the tool store is changed may be a more suitable time to reassess.

Recommended to include a review of tools and tools insurance at the next meeting before the insurance is renewed in December.

The Constitution

Amendments to the constitution which had not been included in the published version have been applied. Updated version will be circulated with these minutes and added to website.

Christmas Sale

Too late to organise, no great wish, no great need. An interesting suggestion to sell bits at the farmers' market met with a similar response.

Other Business

Publicity needs some thinking about and should be on the next agenda. Alan was congratulated (to a round of applause) once more for his huge efforts.

Next meeting

Environment Centre Thursday 23rd November 7.30

Meeting closed at 9.55pm