

MINUTES OF ECONET MEETING AND AGM

8th SEPTEMBER 2014

RBC Parks Department, Prospect Park

PRESENT

Dave Kenny, Helena Barker, Kit Browlee, Mike Cox, Judith Oliver, John Lerpiniere, Alan Stevens, Barry Franklin, Peter Scudamore

APOLOGIES

Dave Booth, Tina Gower, Denise Howarth, Steve Ayres, Tricia Marcouse

MINUTES of Previous Meeting

Accepted

MATTERS ARISING

The planted orchard trees at Mapledurham Playing Fields may be suffering as burrows have been dug among the roots, probably due to rats.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The current officers were elected unanimously. Chair Kit Brownlee, Treasurer Alan Stevens.

NEWS AND UPDATES

CROW (Conserve Reading on Wednesdays)

Good attendance with an average of ten each Wednesday. The number is expected to increase slightly in autumn and winter. A winter programme up until April is almost complete, it is difficult to fit in all the tasks they wish to do.

The question was raised could CROW do more tasks in Reading?

CROW have been approached by a primary school in Tilehurst who wish to visit a task, preferably at Blundells Copse, to use as a teaching resource.

FRIENDS OF CLAYFIELD COPSE

Volunteer numbers slightly down over the summer.

Brian has built a seat, could CROW fix it in position when they next have a task at the site?

Tree disease is a current issue which may have implications for the group. Ash die-back could kill 90% of Ash in a few years. Sudden Oak Death was reported to be at Clayfield. Question was raised as to whether RBC's management plan for the site should be revised in view of these risks.

Following contact made on Bean Pole Day, local guide group will be invited to November task to collect wood for 'gadget work' and then join *Friends* at bonfire for a baked potato lunch.

FRIENDS OF CEMETERY JUNCTION

A successful Dawn Chorus walk in spring, judging from feedback on Facebook, was led by Adrian Lawson. However a walk about the site's geology planned for July was cancelled.

New signage has been obtained but no news on promised 'grand opening' event.

FRIENDS OF MAPLEDURHAM PLAYING FIELDS

Winter tasks begin in late October.

There is a threat that building of new free school will impinge on the site. Other sites ECONET members' value are also under threat from the same initiative.

FRIENDS OF McILROY PARK

Average turnout of six volunteers a task, a healthy number.

FRIENDS OF WATERLOO MEADOWS

Numbers fluctuate but there are usually only two or three present at the evening tasks. Saturday numbers boosted by the presence of university students.

A pruning workshop by Reading Local Food Group is being organised, probably for February.

An area of new flower meadow created with help from CROW is looking very good in its first year. The pond is back to good condition and a Stag Beetle loggery has been built.

CROW will start to lay the hedge by the allotments this winter.

NEWBURY AND THATCHAM GREEN GYM

From June until April of next year, TCV are providing support to help develop the group using funding they have raised for the purpose. However the group have expressed the wish to remain part of ECONET at least for the time being.

Have good attendance with some new people and are diversifying their tasks with visits to a community orchard and sites recommended by TCV. A successful tree identification session took place.

Storage for tools has been offered by BBOWT at Snelsmore Common. BBOWT has also offered payment for work at their sites, at present Thatcham Reedbeds and Snelsmore Common, details to be finalised. Treasurer voiced opinion that the provision of tool storage should be taken into consideration when requesting payment from BBOWT.

ECONET current holds approximately £430 for Green Gym's benefit should they become an independent group.

RUWG (Reading Urban Wildlife Group)

There is little activity at the moment with planning issues mostly relating to building on brownfield sites and office conversions.

TCV (The Conservation Volunteers)

Good attendance with some work in Reading. Have provided support for CROW with summer programme, i.e. additional tools and occasional transport.

FRIENDS OF FOBNEY ISLAND

A plant survey has been carried out with about 120 species found including one rarity, Nodding Bur-marigold.

Considerable willow growth particularly around the scrapes in the western half is causing some concern. Methods to control it are not yet decided.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

It was asked if the task leader should know if a volunteer has a medical condition. It is considered best practise to tell new volunteers that if they have a condition they think relevant they should mention it to the leader just in case of mishap.

Keeping an accident book is also normal practice. CROW have one but there has never been occasion to enter anything.

ACCOUNTS

Bank balance currently £7587 with a further £385 in task charges pending.

All outstanding task changes from last year (£540) now received together with £300 from Bracknell Forest Council for willow. Bean Pole day raised £424 before expenses (£20).

£240 has been spent on PPE and tools (hard hats, gloves, safety glasses and pruning saws), £60 on seed for Waterloo Meadows wildflower meadow, £170 task expenses, and £100 on publicity. The expenditure on publicity includes £60 for web hosting, the issues around which having finally been resolved, the group now owning the ECONET domain name.

Estimated expenditure for rest of year: tasks expenses £400, insurance £550, domain name renewal £40 (for 10 years), and £360 for First Aid course half of which should be recovered from TCV.

Newbury and Thatcham Green Gym raised £180 from sponsored walk and £25 task charges. £390 has been received from TCV to compensate for expenditure on tools (this is from a grant TCV has received to support the group). As a result ECONET current holds approximately £430 for Green Gym's benefit should they become independent.

Friends of Cemetery Junction has spent £1830 on signage for the site, this leaves ECONET holding £170 of the £2,000 grant received to set up the group.

PUBLICITY AND EVENTS

Bean Pole Day was a great success. The real excitement came when wind blew a gazebo away. No one was hurt. The next is planned for Saturday 25th April 2015 at Caversham Court and CROW will collect poles from Clayfield Copse on 15th April.

Christmas Tree Sale is planned for Saturday 6th December from 10am until 3pm at Caversham Court. ECONET plan to collect trees on Friday 28th November, once again from Wishmoor Heath, hiring a truck to transport the trees to Caversham. Storage may be a problem as the garages are being renovated, and building work may impact location of sale, i.e. the yard may not be available. Meeting to be arranged with RBC for mid to late October, to discuss issues.

Possibility was raised of trees being sold at Thatcham Discovery Centre with Green Gym taking the lead. Group had discussed this but felt it was more than they could currently undertake however they were not aware that BBOWT had offered help should they proceed with such an enterprise.

TOOLS

Nothing to report.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 23rd February 7.30 Parks Department Offices at Prospect Park.