

FRIENDS OF PARKWOOD SPRINGS AGM and OPEN MEETING

Minutes of the Meeting Thursday 4 May 2017, 7:00pm, at St Catherine's School, Firshill Crescent Sheffield, S4 7BX.

Present: Neill Schofield (Chair), Ray Swift (Vice Chair), Peter Bull (Treasurer), Sue Harris (Secretary), Robert Almond, Catherine Brown, Louise Bull, Judith Heafield, Saleema Imam, John Marrison, Carol Schofield, John Robinson, Anne Robinson, Sigrid Hehl-Lange, Eckart Lange, Jean Armstrong, Howard Bayley, Steve Hardcastle, Jon Dallow, Tom Broadhead, and Cllr. Talib Hussain.

1 Introduction and welcome

Neill Schofield welcomed everyone, saying that although there was the formal business of the AGM, we also wanted to make the meeting a celebration of all the things that are happening on Parkwood Springs. A number of people spoke about what makes Parkwood Springs important to them:

John Robinson of the RSPB spoke about its importance for birds and for people interested in them. He has led a number of successful bird walks, and some 40 species of birds have been recorded on the site. There is a good variety of habitats, and the potential to attract an even greater variety of birds.

Steven Hardcastle of Ride Sheffield said that the mountain bike trail on Parkwood Springs was very popular amongst mountain-bikers, particularly in winter because of its all-weather characteristics. People travel long distances to it, from places as far afield as Lincoln and Hull. At present Parkwood Springs is seen by many people as good for getting started, but there are possibilities for more trails if the Ski Village site is redeveloped.

Judith Heafield described how the Firshill Health Walkers regularly walk on Parkwood Springs. People from different backgrounds enjoy the views and the varied wildlife. She is also one of the many people who regularly walk their dogs on the site. She enjoys the peace and quiet of the early morning.

Howard Bayley from the Friends of Wardsend Cemetery spoke about this particular part of Parkwood Springs, and the work of the Friends of Wardsend Cemetery. He described it as a magical, hidden gem, with scope for considerable sustainable improvement. Much progress is being made, for example in raising its profile and visibility. 37 people came on the most recent guided tour.

Eckart Lange, Professor in the Department of Landscape at the University of Sheffield spoke about 6 week projects carried out by MA students, researching and developing designs for the site. The module is very popular – over 40 students took it last year, from all over the world. They found it exciting, and valued the 'real-world' contact with the Friends Group.

Tom Broadhead of the Council's Ranger Service described the work the Rangers carry out on the site. A particular focus is the work (paid for by Natural England's High Level Stewardship Programme) to manage the rare habitat of the heathland. This programme is very difficult to get into, and it shows how much this part of the site is valued.

Tim Shortland, Community Forester with the City Council, spoke of how varied the trees are on Parkwood Springs. With the possible exception of the Botanical Gardens there is no other site in the city with such a wide range.

He also described the work he has led to develop a Forest Garden on Parkwood Springs. This is based on a permaculture model, with plants chosen and planted to grow symbiotically. Although the garden was started 8 years ago, it is still

establishing. Nevertheless trees and bushes are producing good harvests. People are welcome to join in, every 2nd Saturday in the month from 11am.

In the wide-ranging discussion that followed it was noted that there is wide range of other uses that we didn't hear about, such as football, cross-country, orienteering, the Sea Cadets, schools, and all sorts of informal use. Despite frustrations there is great progress. Councillor Talib Hussain said that people were doing a wonderful job, and that we needed to make what is being achieved more widely known.

People also raised the following issues:

- the Amey compound on the car park, that still had not been cleared;
- parking on the verges, where bulbs had been planted. For some time we had asked for bollards to prevent this
- progress on the restoration of the Landfill site. Neill noted that the previous evening there had been the first meeting of a new Landfill Access Group about public access to the site. It was important that the City Council Planners were involved. There are also issues about communication with the wider community.
- redevelopment of the old Ski Village site. Jon Dallow outlined the process the City Council had set in hand. There had been a lot of interest, and there seemed to be two viable possible developers. However it was still possible that the eventual decision would be that no plans met all the criteria, and therefore that the site would be allowed to green over.

2 Minutes of the Previous AGM

The minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting held on 3rd May 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

3 Chair's Report

In a brief report, Neill noted that the Friends Group is in good health, with growing membership and good numbers of followers on Facebook. We have had a full programme of activities over the year, with a number of group walks on the site, conservation sessions and forest gardening days. In October we hosted a very successful Beacons Lantern Procession, enjoyed once more by large numbers of families and individuals. We have had meetings to hear about and contribute to key developments, including the redevelopment of the old Ski Village site and the restoration of the Landfill site.

Our reputation with the Council and other partners is good, and we have links with a growing number of other organisations – some of which were represented at the meeting. We are now active members of the Sheffield Greenspaces Forum, which brings together many of the Friends Groups across the city.

He thanked many people for their work and support over the year – the committee as well as the many members and supporters who had helped with activities such as the Lanterns Procession, conservation work and the Forest Garden. He thanked Talib and the other Burngreave Ward Councillors for their support, and Council officers such as Jon Dallow, the Rangers and Tim Shortland for their work. They play a vital part in what has been achieved on Parkwood Springs.

4 Treasurers Report

Peter Bull reported that the accounts were in a good state. The current balance at the bank stands at £2338.38, which means that we have ample funds to put on our biggest event of the year, the Beacons Lantern Procession, and still have some left over. He expressed appreciation for the funds received from the City Council, which

represents the largest element of our income, but noted that the committee hoped to raise more from other sources.
The accounts had not so far been verified, and Jean Armstrong agreed to do that. Subject to her verification, the accounts were accepted.

5 Election of officers and the committee

Neill noted that nominations were possible from the floor. He also said that if anyone wished to come onto the committee after the meeting, it was possible for co-options to be made.

The meeting elected the following

Chair - Neill Schofield

Vice Chair – Ray Swift

Secretary – Sue Harris

Treasurer – Peter Bull

Committee members – Catherine Brown, John Marrison, Louise Bull, Carol Schofield, Bob Almond

6 Any other business.

A number of up-coming events were noted:

- the launch of Barbara Warsop's book of memories of Parkwood Springs village
- the mammals walk
- the visit to the Landfill site.

Talib requested that in fixing our meetings we try to avoid clashes with Councillors' regular commitments, so that they were able to attend our meetings.