



Pershore's Community Wetland & Local Nature Reserve
www.avonmeadows.org.uk

Minutes of AGM held on Tuesday 5th June 2018

at 6.30 pm in the Committee Room, Wychavon Civic Centre

Present: Committee: R. Stott (chair), J. Burgin, B. Gillmor, K. Pomfret, H. Greenhalgh, F. Round, T. Hutton, L. Etheridge, C. Tucker

Friends: Mr. & Mrs. R. Edwards, Mr. & Mrs. F. Freund, D. Wilson, P. Jenkins, A. Cother, C. Whittall, Mr. & Mrs. P. Chippendale, Mrs G. Pomfret.

- 1) **Apologies:** J. Andrews, W.Carter, S. Chandler, S. Comley, S. Clasen, K. Corrigan, Mr. & Mrs. Devos.
- 2) **Minutes of last AGM:** The minutes of the AGM held on 16th May 2017 agreed as a true record.
- 3) **Matters arising not on agenda:** None.
- 4) **Chairman's Report:** as per attached.
- 5) **Treasurer's Report:** as per attached together with independently examined accounts showing a total of restricted and unrestricted funds of £1,884.61 in hand.
 - a) Letter of thanks to be sent to Peter Dann of Clifton-Crick Sharp & Co.
 - b) Accounts presented agreed as a true record by unanimous vote.
 - c) Tim Hutton, Membership Secretary, announced that the membership year had been rationalised and would run from 30 September. Anyone paying today would have their membership run until 30 Sep 2019. Payment can be accepted by Standing Order.
- 6) **Election of the Committee**
 - a) Election of Officers: Chairman (currently Richard Stott), Secretary (currently Val Wood), Treasurer (currently Bob Gillmor).
Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer in the absence of other nominations re-elected en bloc by unanimous vote.
 - b) Election of the Committee: All current committee members: A. Conway, H. Greenhalgh, K. Pomfret, F. Round, C. Tucker, L.Etheridge plus T, Hutton (co-opted during the year) in the absence of other nominations re-elected en bloc by unanimous vote.

7) **Date of Next Committee Meeting:** Mon 18 June 2.30pm.

8) **AOB:**

- a) Update on Bioblitz Day and 10th Anniversary: arrangements are in hand for Sat 16th June.
- b) Liz Etheridge: was congratulated on her new appointment with WDC and welcomed back into the FoAM fold as Wychavon's representative with Jim Burgin remaining a trustee.
- c) Severn Waste were thanked for their donation of a new bench with 2 more to follow.
- d) Chairman, Richard Stott, was thanked for producing the excellent Newsletters.

Meeting closed at 7.15pm.

Light refreshments were followed by:

An illustrated talk given by Caroline Corsie from Worcs. Wildlife Trust on the potential future of farming and conservation post Brexit.

Chairman's Report for 2018 AGM

Presented to the AGM held on 5 June 2018

Welcome to the 8th Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Avon Meadows.

Introduction: The year, since our last AGM, has been one of ups and downs. The winter seemed never to end, and we began to wonder if we might lose some species. At present the position of Cetti's Warbler as a breeding species is uncertain.

That said cold weather puts a brake on the persistent pathogens which affect a wide range of wildlife and the warm weather since has led to a surge of growth.

We said goodbye to Liz Etheridge in early March with sadness and good wishes for her new career. Things did not work out and we are all delighted to announce that, as of yesterday, she is to re-join Wychavon on a permanent basis!

Our Mute Swans did not produce any young last year whereas, as most of you know, they have 8 cygnets this year!

Thanks: As ever I must thank the Committee members for their support and hard work during the year and particularly to welcome Tim Hutton to the Committee. The work load falls most heavily on Bob Gillmor, our Treasurer, Val Wood, our Secretary, Ken Pomfret, our Work Party Coordinator and Tim Hutton our Membership Secretary, so particular thanks to them. Support from Wychavon DC and Pershore TC, the landowners, and particularly their representatives who sit on the Committee, Jim Burgin and Liz Etheridge is greatly appreciated and thanks to them too.

Ken has organised all the work parties this year and once again the volunteers have done a fantastic job clearing reed beds and keeping the main paths clear, all of which were completed in a timely manner. These are the big obvious things but there are dozens of smaller things that have to be followed up from comparatively simple actions like ensuring we have fuel for our equipment to more time-consuming machine maintenance and the purchase of spare parts.

Funding: Last year we announced that Wychavon DC has been awarded a Higher Tier Stewardship Grant for its part of Avon Meadows which will run for 5 years specifically for carrying out tasks defined in the new Management Plan. Now I am pleased to announce Pershore TC has been awarded a similar Higher Tier Stewardship Grant for the southern part of our Wetland. Liz and Ken have worked hard to ensure that the two management plans coordinate efficiently.

Site Management and Development: We are really benefitting from having our HQ close at hand to store equipment. This allows work parties to operate much more efficiently, materially improving the progress with the various work party activities.

The scrape continues to develop as invertebrates continue to invade the mud providing food for birds. It will continue to need maintenance as we work to control plant growth generally in the area. We plan to put pebbles onto some of the islands to encourage Little Ringed Plovers in the future. 4 islands have been prepared for pebbles and it just remains for the

birds to complete their breeding activities and the ground to dry out so that this work can be completed.

The artificial Sand Martin Bank is now complete, and we wait anxiously for Sand Martins to take a shine to it. We are prepared for a wait, as experience from elsewhere shows, that it may take several years for the birds to realise that a desirable residence awaits them.

Green hay has been strewn and wild flower seed has been sown as planned last year (thanks to Liz and Ken). We await the appearance of some new wild flowers on our middle meadow. Once they are established we would hope to repeat the process elsewhere on the Wetland.

The Higher Tier Stewardship Schemes provided funding for contractors to undertake work that is beyond the scope of volunteers. Last autumn about half the brambles behind Cherry Orchard were cleared, the remainder will be cleared once the cleared areas have regrown so as to maintain nesting places for birds.

Records: The total species count for Avon Meadows presently stands at 1042 breaking the 1000 barrier!

Paul Jenkins and Kirstie Chippendale continue with the dragonfly and butterfly transects respectively and thanks to them for this valuable work.

This year is proving to be a good one for birds as we have logged 100 species already, something that we only managed in the whole of last year. We have seen 3 new species so far this year, Egyptian Goose, Iceland Gull and Hawfinch bringing the Avon Meadows total to 127 species.

The moth count continues to climb, presently at 367 species, and the plant species count currently stands at 249. Of course, as time passes it becomes more and more difficult to find new things.

We are planning to start a tree survey this year so that we can follow the progress of trees on Avon Meadows. We used to think that trees went on for ever but first we had Dutch Elm disease and Ash Die-back is moving slowly across the country. International trade in exotic species always introduces the risk of importing diseases which indigenous species have no defences against.

Since last year we have purchased a drone which allows us to monitor development work from the air. This will be a very useful tool particularly once we have accumulated a collection of photographs over several years.

Management: As expected last year, FoAM has now become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. You will have noticed that we have had to regularise our membership so that there are now Full Members (who pay a small subscription and are allowed to vote at general meetings such as this) and Associate Members who do not have to pay anything and are not allowed to vote. These subscriptions form a very valuable part of our basic funding and I would like to thank all Full Members very much for their support.

The General Data Protection Regulations have fallen upon tiny organisations such as us as all of you will know. Many thanks to all of you who have found time to reply to say we can hold onto such personal information as we need in order to provide you with the benefits of membership of the FoAM.

In some cases, we need a surprising amount of information, particularly for work party volunteers. When you look at what is involved, we need telephone numbers to cancel work parties at short notice; in case of accident we need a contact number and some information about any medical conditions or medication that may effect any emergency treatment that has to be provided. All we can really undertake to do is not to provide your data to third parties and should you wish not to be a member of FoAM then we will delete all your data from our database. Our Privacy Policy is on the website.

We are in the process of putting together a Volunteer Handbook to provide guidance to all our volunteers about what we are trying to do and how best to do it.

As to future work, the main path has sunk and is puddling in places, so we are looking to raise funds to have this put right.

Events: We ran a very successful All-day Birdwatch in April for the first time in several years. Those who attended can attest to the fact that the weather was distinctly chilly, but this did not deter the birds and we had a count of 63 species on the day, 10 more than our previous best. The Bioblitz 2018 is coming up in a couple of weeks' time, Saturday 16 June 2018. If the weather is OK it will be an excellent event. A detailed programme will be put up on the website. Do come along!

The Thursday Bird Count continues to attract new people and we are finding more and more birds. I believe there really are more birds to be seen although as observer numbers and skill levels increase, this helps to record more of what is present.

We have had 3 fortnightly Moth Counts this year and moth numbers begin to build, 53 species last Friday.

We have an eMail Bird Group and Moth Group which are circulated with reminders about the events, and news about what has been seen. We are really trying to be as inclusive as possible and we never turn anybody away. You should note that both events are weather dependent and may be cancelled at short notice.

However, the stoical Bird Group had one count in driving sleet this winter and have been known to struggle through flood water!

Moths are altogether more sensitive creatures and need rather better weather conditions so are not so demanding on the observers! We need it to be mainly dry as we run 240-volt electrical equipment in the open.

The Past and the Future: It has been 10 years since a group of local residents met for the first time forming what eventually became the Friends of Avon Meadows. I take it as a pointer that things are not going too badly, as well as to the dedication of the individuals involved, that the Committee has remained substantially unchanged over that period.

During this period a total of almost £450,000 has been raised (and spent!) in creating what we have today. It often occurs to me that if we had been given that sum (or more) up front we would have spent it alright but not had as good a result, nor the benefits in terms of knowledge and experience to the Friends who have been involved in creating it. Proceeding as we do, step by step, is a good thing for us all.

Looking back, it is surprising to see what has been done, starting from the main pool with surrounding ponds and the boardwalk, reed beds have been planted, we have disabled access, a collection of machinery for maintaining the area and a tool shed to keep it in, the wader scrape and bird screen, a wealth of biological data about the creatures that inhabit Avon Meadows and we are a registered charity.

As to the future there are so many possibilities it can be difficult to choose. At one extreme there has been talk of an education centre and a tower hide, perhaps enhancing disabled access facilities, more sophisticated machinery for reed cutting and various sorts of training for volunteers. All these require funding and separate justification; the Committee must be convinced that they are worthy of pursuing. What I would like to see particularly, is people to take on surveying less usual species groups, for example spiders or beetles, fungi or mosses.

If you have good ideas we are interested to hear, but be warned, you may be asked to help make the ideas happen!!!

Now, if anyone has any questions I will do my best to answer them.

It is your Wetland to use and enjoy and our goal is to help you do that.

Richard Stott
Chairman
5 June 2018

Treasurer's Report for 2018 AGM

Presented to the AGM held on 5 June 2018

Highlights on accounts for the year ending 31st March 2018

I would first highlight the end of year deficit of £2930.82 – don't worry, we haven't really lost almost £3000! It results from timing issues – we spent the Tesco/ Groundwork grant in the year under review (£4,750) but received the first 75% in the previous year. Our current bank balance is a healthy £3143 (of which £900 is restricted) and we have set annual budgets for the different categories of expenditure.

The water supply grant of £3,500 was both received and spent in the year and the rest of income and expenditure are routine. We were pleased to be registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation by the Charity Commission last August which has caused a couple of changes in how we report the accounts but our low annual turnover mean that it is fairly simple.

This would be a good time to ask for any questions on the accounts.

Since year-end we have been fortunate to secure grants from Pershore Town Council to support our insurance premium and other administrative expenses and from Welcome to our Future/Severn Waste Services with the first half of funding to stone the path up to the container which will improve access for work parties.

As a result of my appeal last year, I am pleased to say that Tim Hutton agreed to take on the membership officer role. Thanks Tim! We have simplified the renewal procedure by settling on one single renewal date – 30th September – so any memberships renewed now will be valid until September 2019. GDPR has also caused us, particularly Richard, a lot of work to ensure we comply with the new requirements which obviously affect the membership administration. I am happy to recommend that we keep minimum subscriptions to the current level.

TSB's much publicised computer problems and the failure of their website did delay a couple of small reimbursements but we did not suffer any major problems.

We must record our gratitude to Pershore Town Council and Welcome to Our Future for their support with grants and my very grateful thanks go to Peter Dann of Clifton-Crick, Sharp & Co. for his thorough examination of the accounts.

Robert Gillmor
Treasurer
5 June 2018