

## **Fordingbridge Conservation Group**

### **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 28th September 2021 at the United Reformed Church Hall, Fordingbridge**

**Attendance:** Sue Bennett, Jan Brian, Edward Hale, Jane Ward, Richard White

The meeting began at 19:35.

#### **1. Welcome and Apologies for absence**

**Apologies for absence:** Judith & John Dowsett, Helen Tague, Marion Wingrove

Jane chaired the meeting and welcomed members to the AGM.

#### **2. Minutes of the 2019 Annual General Meeting**

The version of the Minutes of the AGM held on 10th September 2019 and circulated on 22nd September 2021 was a draft. The corrected Minutes which had been circulated on 27th November 2019 were agreed.

There were no other matters arising from the Minutes of the 2019 AGM.

#### **3. Vice-chair's Report**

Jane noted that it had been two years since the previous AGM, because of the Covid situation. She tabled a report on developments at Bishop's Pond during that period. Work had been halted in Spring 2020 but restarted with appropriate precautions in Summer 2020. She said that the enthusiasm, expertise and hard work of Graham Long, who founded the present group in 2009 and sadly died in September 2020, will be greatly missed.

The Pond continues with its recent pattern of drying out in summer, but we are taking steps to provide refuges for aquatic organisms during the dry periods, and to encourage native marginal flora around the pond. The wildflower bank near the gate is now flourishing with many species, and following the path further round clockwise, the "steep" or "bluebell" bank bordering Normandy Way has benefitted from the continuing clearance of vegetation, with the bluebells spreading out. Hazel coppicing is continuing on the raised bank on the western side of the pond, but the bees in the hive did not survive and will be replaced in due course. One of the ash trees was partially cut down by the New Forest District Council because of ash die-back, and three willows felled (we do not yet know when the NFDC will carry out their next tree inspection). Most of the hedge planted further along Normandy Way has survived. A few bird boxes have been installed and more are planned.

We had a successful Open Day on Saturday 18th September, with 15 visitors, some of whom may become volunteer members. Jane thanked all the volunteers for their hard work, and especially Sue and Richard who also assisted with the organisational activities.

Jane's full Report is available on the web site<sup>1</sup> and by request.

#### **4. Future plans for the pond**

No action has been taken so far on the idea of installing a pond liner in a small area, but this should be costed first. It would require rubble clearing and sand or old carpet or both underneath the liner. A fair amount of labour would be required, and we discussed the possibility of obtaining advice or a grant.

Given that the removal of some of the grass from the dry pond bed in summer might help reduce excessive eutrophication of the water, we discussed how this excess vegetation might be removed. The

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<sup>1</sup> [https://fordingbridgeconservation.uk/\\_media/fcg/agm/fcg\\_annual\\_report\\_2021.pdf](https://fordingbridgeconservation.uk/_media/fcg/agm/fcg_annual_report_2021.pdf)

NFDC “green bag” garden waste disposal scheme was discussed, as was the idea to compost the material properly and give it away to local people. It was decided to construct additional compost bays to make it easier to turn the compost, to cut large twigs and branches into smaller pieces, and to use a compost accelerator. Using a shredder was mentioned but is probably impractical. There are also a large number of logs starting to rot now or in the future.

Sue emphasised that we need more people to volunteer. In order to encourage more volunteers, we decided we need to continue to attend local shows such as Frogham and Damerham as and when they take place. Jane restated our previous decision not to attend the Fordingbridge Christmas lights/late night shopping event, because of a lack of interest from shoppers, but we should perhaps consider taking part in any event which might be staged in Avonway or the Town Hall for the purpose of publicising local organisations.

Ideas considered included links to Fordingbridge Greener Living and other local groups, delivering leaflets to nearby houses, and returning to our pre-Covid practice of sharing tea and biscuits after working sessions. Richard offered the use of his front “verandah” area for tea and biscuits, Sue proposed a biscuit rota, and Jan suggested we could bring our own drink and mugs.

## **5. Treasurer’s Report**

Edward reported on the last two years’ financial events, summarised in a brief balance sheet. The current balance of £728.69 represented an increase of about £55. Richard felt this would allow us to undertake minor projects with relatively low costs.

## **6. Appointment of the Management Team**

The appointment of Jane as Chairman was proposed by Edward, seconded by Richard, and carried unanimously. The members of the Management Team were therefore confirmed as Jane Ward (Chair), Edward Hale (who agreed to take over as Treasurer), Richard White (Minutes Secretary) and Sue Bennett (who agreed to carry on with Publicity). Jane reserved the right to co-opt other people to carry out specific tasks, and Sue agreed that we could benefit from contacts with people with specific expertise; previously we had received advice from people Graham knew, including contacts at the Hampshire & I.O.W. Naturalists Trust., which we should seek to regain. Sue also asked whether there might be pond-related groups we could approach. Possible channels for their discovery might include Bournemouth University, Burgate School and the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award scheme. Jane will ask Robert Aquilina whether he knows who could give us advice, for example about lining a part of the pond.

We need more younger people to become interested, and it was agreed to put suitable encouragement on the web-site and Facebook, and working party dates on noticeboards in Fordingbridge.

## **7. Working Party Frequency and Schedule**

It was agreed to continue with the pattern of three meetings per month on the first Tuesday of the month followed by the Saturday 11 days later and the Sunday 8 days after that. The following dates were agreed (all from 2 to 4 p.m.): Tuesday 2nd, Saturday 13th, Sunday 21st November; Tuesday 7th, Saturday 18th December 2021; Tuesday 4th, Saturday 15th, Sunday 23rd January 2022; Tuesday 1st, Saturday 12th, Sunday 20th February. Further dates will be confirmed at the next Team meeting due on 8th February 2022.

## **8. Any Other Business**

Sue noted that Peter Tullett, who lived at no. 14 Cottage Mews and was involved with pond activities from the outset, kept a photographic record and a file of correspondence. Sue is hoping that one of his daughters will be able to provide access to these.

The meeting closed at 20:50. Minuted by Richard White.