

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Rugby Group AGM 20th February 2012

Minutes

Present:-

Steve Batt, SB; Phil Parr, PP; Cyril Cleaver, CC; Jan Elliott, JE; Frank Ollerenshaw, FO; Amanda Evans, AE; Tony Landless, TL; Gerry Allen, GA; Steve Trotter, ST; Chris Godding, CG; Neville Weston, NW; Margaret Richards, MR.

1. SB welcomed everyone and opened the meeting.
2. Apologies from Derek Lill & Christine Rundle.
3. Matters arising from last year's minutes:-

JE reported on the Rugby Wildlife website www.rugbywildlife.info

Ref: Hand-out leaflet

The leaflet, printed by the Trust, went out with the magazines, in December courtesy of my deliverers. Many thanks to them. Not sure if we had any volunteer response from that. We have lost the other Magazine co-ordinator and need to search for a replacement. Can anyone help? Either to do or to find. [reply: Amanda to request in e-Newsletter](#)

Ref: Website

Current

The WEBSITE has been up and running for 12 months now with contributions from a limited number of people.

It includes a couple of reports from last years AGM.

A BLOG to give a history of activities on the various reserves, currently only Ashlawn/Draycote.

A CALENDAR, which if you hover over highlighted dates leads to the Blog.

A list of forthcoming work parties currently only Ashlawn, with reference to Steve & Phil's phone number.

The COMMENTS we have received so far have been mostly irrelevant and difficult to tell if local persons are visiting. You wonder what [Rugby & wildlife](#) conjure up for them.

Recently we have added two sorts of COUNTS of visitors to the site. Today's figures show on one count for about 2 weeks - 885, the other is showing 579 for a similar period, with 78 for last 24 hours. So, not sure of accuracy, but it is an indication.

Future

I would like more people to contribute, either themselves or by emailing me details to add. For each work party two or 3 sentences and a few pictures would be good.

It would perhaps be more help to add details for each forthcoming work party as to the nature of the work to be carried out, to encourage would be volunteers.

Could the minutes of the AGM's be added? **Yes but after removal of sensitive items**

Where else can we advertise the w/site? **The Observer, WWT's e-newsletter (Amanda)**

Any other requirements? **Swift to go on, Chris Godding"**

Treasurer's report... FO gave out copies of the statement of accounts for the Group y/e 2011. He said that the bulk of the money comes from Rugby Borough Council (RBC) Section 106. £1500 spent on contractors for Pytchley Marsh clearance and another £500 on brash shredding. A request was made for a silky saw.

The Ashlawn group is hoping to get another £500 from RBC. SB says that CG should liase with FO and talk directly to Brandon about the availability of funds for Swift Valley. AE said she could help CG apply for "small pots of money" available for small groups through the Trust.

SB thanked FO for his work. FO gave notice of forthcoming surgery. TL wished him well, as do we all.

Ashlawn Cutting.... There is still tidying up to be done at Pytchley Marsh. SB wants to leave the brash and let RBC in the form of Steve Cook (SC) decide about the fire risk. The newly opened up marsh is fantastic and definitely worth a look.

Work continues on maintaining the grassland, woody growth a continuing problem which needs to be dealt with.

Fires at Ashlawn other than at the site well south of Ashlawn Bridge are not recommended. ST contacted RBC and found that fires are legal but it was deemed prudent not to upset anyone. Houses would be at risk if one of the grassy slopes caught fire and access for fire engines on the cutting is impossible. The fire service control centre at Leamington is always informed when there is to be a fire on the Cutting, but fire crews must attend if members of the public report a fire regardless of this prior information.

Malpass Site... The building of the new Climafuel plant has been delayed, but it is hoped mitigation ideas put forward with the planning application to compensate for the loss of important areas will be started so species under threat will have time to find a new home. Butterfly Conservation-Warwickshire is liaising with CEMEX on this.

Kilsby Lane Meadow... This site has just been granted recognition by status of Local Wildlife Site.

Almost on the same day Rugby Junior Football Club released details for the development of their site which will encroach on the meadow. See attached. ST said that the Trust is lodging an objection. RBC who own this site do not want to publicise the existence of the meadow yet as it has no public access and no formal paths. Uncontrolled access would be detrimental to the wildlife at this stage. This potential reserve has exciting possibilities, not only for wildlife but to introduce the children playing football to what is happening in the real world.

Allan's Meadow - Lower Hillmorton... A privately owned wet meadow with exceptional flora has been put forward as a LWS and was accepted as such a few days after this meeting.

Hillmorton Ballast Pits... This is another LWS now under threat of development, WWT Rugby & Brandon have commented on this plan and many locals are against the development. The site has been noted for its wildlife for years but successive owners have not taken an interest and discouraged visits. It has partly scrubbed over but has potential if management could be undertaken. Official public consultation now closed.

Newbold Quarry... Richard Wright is the volunteer warden and has been the warden at Swift Valley.

Surveyors say that the canal by the quarry is silted up. It is believed all the crayfish in the canal are signal crayfish, at the moment there are only native white-clawed crayfish in the old quarry – a last refuge? It was once used as an overflow from the canal through a pipe. As the canal and quarry are only yards apart we need to monitor this.

Swift Valley... CG and NW have been volunteering at Swift Valley for 15 months and are part of a membership of 4. More helpers needed – use the website and the Rugby Observer to attract more volunteers. Much time is spent removing plastic coverings left from tree planting and thinning out trees. CG made a request for one of the group to be sent on a chainsaw training course. It was decided that this would be too expensive, the alternative is to get a Nature Force (NF) session or to get Ian Drummond with help with chain-sawing. CG to speak to SB to arrange this.

Footpaths are in bad shape and dangerous in places ever since the cows got out of the pasture. ST said that the paths are the responsibility of RBC and that he would take the problem up with them.

CG expressed disappointment that he had no-one to liaise with now that Michael Drummond (MD) had left and TL asked if MD would be replaced. ST said that MD would be replaced eventually but he, ST, would stand in for MD in the meantime.

The new farmer who has the grazing rights is using the correct rotation on the meadows and the next 2-3 years should show a marked improvement.

Someone is using a pellet gun at the site, SB said that it was impossible to police every aspect of site use, all that can be done is to report any problems to the relevant authority.

NW said that in the last 18 months 3 swans have been found dead below the electricity pylons and asked if the Trust could approach the electricity company about fitting some sort of distraction device.

A disabled group found the site very good.

CG and NW are doing bird surveys.

CG has asked Mark Pawsey if better direction signs could be put up for Swift Valley because an increase in visitor numbers would be beneficial.

Ponds need to be dug out – Mr Boyes the farmer to be asked to use his digger?

CG expressed a wish to know exactly what wildlife there was at Swift. AE said she and Caroline Temple would like to set up a group starting in April on Mondays every other week to do Identification Surveys in order to build up a database of wildlife in Warwickshire.

SB thanked CG and NW for their work on the site and asked CG if he would take on the role of Volunteer Warden at Swift Valley.

CG's acceptance prompted a round of applause.

Cock Robin Wood... Positive feed back from visitors to the site. Volunteers continue to thin out the trees and litter pick. Damaged gates have been mended by RBC. Many thanks were expressed to Derek Lill and his Monday group

Stockton Cutting...Worth a visit. Kidney vetch planting has taken and the small blue butterfly project is going well. There are plans with Butterfly Conservation to buy an adjacent field currently owned by CEMEX.

Rugby Natural History Society... TL is now Chairman of the Society and the Group congratulated him. He said that since the 2011 exhibition they had won 16 new members including some younger people so the future looks good. There is a link to the RNHS from our wildlife website.

SB congratulated TL for his sterling work in the tool store at Brandon. What a difference!

Chief Executive of Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, Steve Trotter.

We were very pleased to welcome Steve to our AGM.

He spoke of the Trust's involvement in Living Landscapes.

The bid for Nature Improvement funding was unsuccessful but had been good experience.

Tame Valley is trying to get local people involved.

Landfill tax from Princethorpe generated £90,000 CITA money. Steve Falk (ex museum employee) has been taken on to get a team together to exploit this funding.

Local Nature Partnership is a government initiative giving funds for nature conservation which Karl Curtis (Ian Jelley's replacement at Brandon) has been charged with implementing.

Grazing at Draycote Meadow has made a big improvement.

200 water voles have been released at the new area at Brandon. A new hide will be built here costing about £35,000.

New graziers are needed at Ufton and Harbury which will require fencing.

The Environment Agency has had to provide £35million to comply with the EU Water Framework Directive. The river at Swift Valley has been programmed to benefit this year.

Richard Wheat from the Trust has argued for compensation from the new housing development at Swift for what is known "Diffuse Pollution".

Rugby has the most planning applications submitted in Warwickshire, 13,000 houses.

There is much to object about:- Rugby Mast site, Rugby Ballast Pits, Gateway site Swift Valley, Quarrying at Wolston, wind farms, HS2 and Coventry airport.

Rugby is a hotspot for otters near the Avon Mill.

AOB.

NW is to put Swift Valley photos and information on the Rugby Wildlife website.

MR is to circulate the contact list.

AE to send the Volunteer Plan gained from consultation (World Café held at Brandon last year) to MR to circulate to anyone interested in looking at it. Please let her know if you would like to have a copy.

SB reminded us of the Gold Rugby in Bloom environmental award achieved in summer 2011

SB thanked those who work at the Cutting, particularly Cyril, Diana and Phil. The Rugby School sessions on Thursday afternoons and the input from Nature Force are having a big positive impact on restoring the grasslands to Ashlawn Cutting and are greatly appreciated.

4. There have been no nominations for new committee members and so the existing members will continue as before.

PP thanked our Chairman SB for his continuing commitment and hard work for the group. Hear, hear from us all!

Those present thanked JE for hosting the meeting.

As there was no further business the meeting was closed.

Margaret Richards,
Secretary