

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Rugby Group AGM 30th January 2017

Minutes

Present: -

Steve Batt, SB; Phil Parr, PP; Jan Elliott, JE; Karl Curtis, KC; Derek Lill, DL; Margaret Richards, MR; Chris Godding, CG; Steve Wright, SW; Cyril Cleaver, CC; Carl Jones, CJ; Ken Monk, KM; Matt Clements, MC; Richard Beswick, RB.

SB welcomed everyone and opened the meeting.

Apologies were received from Jon Bourne, Neville Weston, Ray Hodges and Gerry Allen

Treasurer's Report

Please see attached Statement of accounts.

The donations were:-

£500 from Chris Worman at Rugby Borough Council (RBC)

£110 from Paul Raddan, Baker, from his sponsored run

£50 from SB's talk for Hillmorton Allotment Association

Jon Bourne, Treasurer, and Steve Hammond, Auditor, the group expressed their thanks for keeping the accounts in order.

Cock Robin Wood (CRW). Volunteer Warden - Derek Lill. Report from DL attached.

Modifying tin cans to make squirrel defences on bird boxes continues successfully and saves money. Some residents of Montague Road are complaining about trees. Council needs to get involved. The EDNA newt survey was carried out, KC was asked to follow up results.

Swift Valley (SV). See attached the report from Volunteer Warden – Chris Godding and Neville Weston

CG has yet to do ladder training. Building at Eden Park has stopped at the moment. The problem of flooding from canal overspill continues to get worse. The paths are in need of attention. Perhaps the council could help, Karl to pursue.

Ashlawn Cutting. Volunteer Warden - Cyril Cleaver. Ashlawn Cutting 2016 Species Summary by PP. See attached.

This has been a spectacular year for new volunteers joining our group.

Searches were made for the Forester Moth using a pheromone lure but with no success

Better numbers of frogs this year, an increase on 10 years ago.

Coppicing willow has improved conditions for frogs on the Pytchley Marsh by allowing more sunlight on to the water making it warmer. Not many frogs in the station pools, more in the Station Marsh just to the south of the old platform. SW said it will be interesting to see what a difference the new path will make as measures taken to drain it may provide improved habitats for them.

Azolla pondweed, a water fern from somebody's fish tank, needs eliminating as it forms a thick mat in the summer. We have plans to address this and dragonfly numbers should increase as a result.

Stuart, our local police Wildlife Liaison Officer and Ruth, Rugby Town East PCO are planning to visit us to learn more about the cutting.

RBC is trying to implement the banning of horses, as per the Great Central Walk (GCW) byelaws, on H&S grounds.

SB, SW & PP have had meetings with RBC's Colin Horton and he has arranged for signs with byelaws to be placed in prominent positions. PP said it is good to have someone on the council fighting our corner with quick responses to our emails.

There are signs of fresh digging by badgers and we have concerns they may be preying on hedgehogs in the cutting as searches by WWT's Hedgehog Officer over a week failed to find any.

Foxes are often seen or reported but there are concerns of possible poisoning as one was found dead. It has been sent for autopsy.

CC reported encroachment from Percival Road gardens near Ashlawn Road Bridge, this needs to be taken up with the land owner RBC. The first Hornet's nest on the reserve was found in an ant hill on grasslands south of Ashlawn Bridge. Mrs Allen, does a moth trap survey adjacent the cutting above the Healthy Living Walk, (HLW), and this draws moths from the reserve that can be added to our records.

We are grateful to RBC for helping us by cutting Tennis Meadow near the HLW, for topping the laid hedge and for their annual cut along the verges of the GCW.

WWT's Nature Force teams did a great job coppicing willow in Pytchley Marsh, the stumps will be treated to prevent regrowth.

A contractor will be needed to remove willow from the Station Pools.

Hawthorn has been thinned out on HLW.

Our volunteer hedge-layers have been at work at the bottom of the zigzag path near the Ashlawn Bridge and have done a great job.

We were pleased to be able to get all the key grasslands we wanted cut before Christmas. The future plan is to do them on a rotational basis. This provides areas of different ages, and a shorter sward later in the season helps third generation of insects as the ground is less shaded and therefore warmer.

An area on the other side of Onley Lane has been cleared to create a glade by Community Payback. PP said the Silver Washed Fritillary Butterfly should do well there. The Rugby School group led by SW has made a big contribution working on the "school scallop" by the Pytchley Bridge.

Along with RBC and Sustrans, Rugby Branch of WWT applied for a grant from Veolia, <http://www.veolia.co.uk/Flooding> this has resulted in a new path being laid between Abbey St. and Pytchley Bridge.

Paul Mernagh, Engineer for RBC, has been directing work south of Pytchley Bridge where sewage has been leaking on to the site causing a “sewer bloom” problem. For some years there has been seepage of sewage in several places in the cutting causing a health risk. Severn Trent investigated but the problems persist. RBC Engineer Paul Mernagh has been reinvestigating and any future problems should be photographed and sent to him. PP sent a map of the sewer route in the Cutting to the council but got no response.

We had successes in the Britain in Bloom Competition! We achieved First Prize and a Gold award for Ashlawn and Swift Valley. The presentation Evening was attended by several of our volunteers at the Benn Hall. A good reward for all the hard work of our volunteers, Congratulations!

LWS (Local Wildlife Sites).

Newton Cutting

SB said that this site was looking good having been returned to grassland by the collaboration between Butterfly Conservation (BC) and RBC. 8 domestic rabbits were dumped at the Cutting; CG took them to the RSPCA. WWT has strong links with BC. 70 volunteer hours worked.

Malpass Site

Contractors have done a 5 year plan, two meadows have been seeded with butterfly friendly wild flowers and the horses have been taken off the field by the river. PP said it was the best local site for biodiversity. The number of grasslands in the area is creating a corridor between Malpass and Newbold Quarry, and many surrounding wildlife areas.

Newbold Quarry 322 volunteer hours worked.

Cawston Greenway

Paul Haydon Hart continues improving and extending

PP reported on **Kilsby Lane LWS** below the Rugby Junior Football Club field. We believe the site has not been managed for about 5 years. It is the responsibility of RBC to do this. PP is concerned that if it appears neglected, the planners who may visit regarding current development applications which encroach on to the LWS will not be impressed. This site should be developed to introduce children to the natural world. We plan to visit with Scott Ballard from RBC to review the situation. Short eared owls have been seen there.

PP reported that an application for future housing developments at the top of Barby Lane encroach into the Rainsbrook valley. The site has been shown to be important for feeding bats.

RBC planners have turned the application down but now the developer is appealing to the Secretary of State. This is more unwelcome encroachment into the Rainsbrook Valley. . Contact PP in order to object.

Rugby Wildlife Website and WWT Magazines.

JE reported that WWT magazines now come through the post. Deliverers have been stood down. A suggestion was made for workparty schedules to be colour coded for different reserves and different days. SB said a big thank you to JE. Please keep the contributions to the website coming! SB said that all that is required is a picture or two and a couple of sentences.

Future Activities.

Karl suggested that we might get some ideas from the website of the Friends of Oakley Wood.

Community Payback has had a change of staff so will have to set up fresh links and hopefully get more support in future. It is now their policy to charge so opportunities may be limited.

In Ashlawn Cutting we need to manage amount of reed mace in the marsh. There are plans for a pond improvement scheme the cost to be negotiated between Trust and RBC £2500? American Weevils to eradicate azolla researched and approved by Natural England and used by Canal and Rivers Trust among others to cost about £720 +VAT.

CC has nettles behind his house which backs on to the Cutting. They are opposite section 9 and Small Tortoise shell butterflies are breeding on them. Over hanging branches and scrub needs cutting back to let more light in to improve conditions for the butterflies. A fresh scallop cut each year with a 10 year rotation at present but should we consider more scallops and a longer cycle??

KC said that Debbie and Simon, Hedgehog Officers from WkWT are developing the hedgehog conservation survey, JE to put it on the website.

KC is writing an article about the Rugby Group and asked for photos. Faye Irvine's initiative has produced a pleasing number of new volunteers. Could a new group be started on Newbold Quarry because of this? Some Swift Valley volunteers live in Newbold.

We discussed the volunteer process; KC explained the rationale and the amount of work it created at the Trust.

KC thanked all the volunteers for their continued efforts throughout the year. He was thanked for attending the meeting. His presence is much appreciated.

AOB

Our volunteers have clocked up 5700 hours in 2016, that's 900 hours up on 2015!

KC thanked all the volunteers for managing the reserves.

MC said that the Forest School that he worked for has sadly been axed. He suggested a Photographic Competition to increase public awareness of our local reserves. KM said that many of the members of Dunchurch Photographic Society did not know that Ashlawn Cutting existed. A competition could be of interest.

DL and his volunteers took the opportunity in the summer when there was less work to do to visit another reserve. They enjoyed the experience. Ashlawn Cutting Volunteers have guided walks with anyone interested coming along and Butterfly Walks organised at Malpass and Newton Cutting.

CJ took the Rugby in Bloom Trophy and took the Heart of England glass award home.

5k park runs are in Winfield Cemetery.

The same committee members were nominated by PP and MR and seconded by those present and so will continue for the next year.

MR was thanked for hosting the meeting. Many thanks to JE and SB's Belinda for the excellent cakes!

There was no other business and the meeting was closed.

After the meeting PP sent the following via email :-

"Thanks so much for agreeing to stay on as chairman of our group for another year. Your input has been an inspiration and has had a very great deal to do with the success of the group and the wonderful progress on Ashlawn."

This was a feeling shared by the rest of the Group.