

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook Annual General Meeting 2015

Monday June 15 19.30

St Martins Church Hall, Suez Road, Cambridge

Present: Committee:

Sue Wells (Chair), Monica Frisch (Treasurer) , Jón Fairbairn (Webmaster), Shona Douglas, Darren Gillings, Nicola Fawcett, Stuart Newbold, Emmy Smart, Holly Anderson (Secretary), Wilbert Van Vliet.

Veronica Greenwood
Karl Briggs
Darren Gillings
David Brooks
Chris Whellams
Isabelle de Wouters
Guy Belcher
Anna Smith
Jane Phillips
Glyn Phillips
Robert Martyr
M Foley
Dave Baigent

Apologies: Nicole Robertson (membership secretary), Lisa Buchholz of Friends if Stourbridge

Minutes of the last AGM, and this year's accounts and chair's report were circulated

Sue Wells welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The meeting agreed that the order of events could diverge from the agenda in order to allow Dave Baigent to report on progress on the Cambridge Lakes proposals.

1. Councillor Dave Baigent: Status of the Cambridge Lakes proposal

Dave Baigent told the meeting that the project had stalled over the election period, but that another meeting is being set up with the city council officers, to walk around the lakes, by invitation only, this coming Monday. There is also the "Next Steps" meeting to which stakeholders should have been invited, the next week. This should include a report on the Health and Safety study, an update on the ecology report, and feedback from the Anderson consultation results. The council will be hoping to set a date for the opening of the lakes, in a controlled way. Initially this will be to the middle lake only and will allow people to walk alongside the lake.

The City Plan, which has been held up for revision to the housing policy, won't be approved for 6 months or a year, but Dave is hopeful this should not hold up any opening of the lakes, which

will be dependent on the Health and Safety report and consultation with Anderson. Obviously, if the H&S report throws up serious problems, the whole issue is likely to be shelved again for decades, but otherwise Dave sees no reason why the area should not be open to local residents.

Dave had to leave early, and was thanked for the very useful information he had provided.

2. AGM Minutes from 2014

Approved. It was noted that we have had limited success in our stated intention to foster a relationship with St Bede's School, though we have had some useful contacts with The Spinney School. The problems with membership contact lists appear to have been resolved.

It was noted that John McGill's Report on the Lakes as part of the Mill Road History Project, on which he gave a talk at last year's AGM, is ready and will be made available on the History Project website in due course.

3. Chair's Report

See attached at end of minutes. Sue Wells presented highlights from the year's activities, which have notably included the receipt of a grant from Natural England for the installation of flow deflectors and bird nest boxes as well as our usual litter picks, wildlife monitoring, and profile raising.

Monica Frisch gave a quick report on the various wildlife monitoring activities that have been undertaken, particularly the voles, and now also with Cambridge Bird Club. She pointed out that we have an email address for wildlife sightings: wildlife@friendsofcherryintonbrook.org.uk.

4. Treasurer's Report

See separate sheet. Monica Frisch outlined the organisation's modest but healthy financial position, describing how the grant we received from Natural England was administered by them rather than going through our books. She also thanked the Committee for the substantial amount of unpaid services provided.

5. Election of officers and committee members

All the current officers and committee members being willing to serve again, this was agreed by the meeting. The committee thus comprises:

Sue Wells (Chair)
Holly Anderson (Secretary)
Monica Frisch (Treasurer)
Nicole Robertson (Membership Secretary)
Jon Fairbairn (Webmaster)
Nicola Fawcett
Darren Gillings

Wilbert Van Vliet (Co-opted in the course of the year)
Shona Douglas
Emmy Smart
Stewart Newbold

6. Date of next AGM

This will held on Monday 16th June 2016 (after the Cambridge Natural History Society Conversazione which will be on the 13th/14th June).

The AGM business being over, we then had two talks from speakers who have been working closely with us in the course of the year.

7. Guy Belcher (Cambridge City Council Biodiversity Officer)

Guy gave an informative overview of his and the Council's relationship with the Brook, the joint work done this year in installing the 12 flow deflectors, and the potential for future collaborative work to improve the brook. We are very lucky to have him at the City Council, and look forward to working with him even more in future.

He told us that he has been approached by the Biodiversity Partnership and there is a grant of about £5000 that we can jointly apply for to do further work on restoration of the brook, using volunteers. This would get matched funding from drainage engineers.

Action: Guy is drafting the proposal for which the submission date is end of June. He will liaise with Sue

8. Robert Martyr (River Care)

Rob's talk focussed on the importance of wildlife and plant monitoring in assessing water quality, and encouraged everyone to engage with surveying whatever interests them: plants, animals, insects, even the built environment. He also described the importance of national surveys and shared methodologies, and the menace of invasive species. He is keen to create a river habitat survey that could be done by volunteers.

He said we should approach River Care for help with costs like hall hire and display materials.

Actions:

- Try to get hold of "Delivering Benefits through Evidence" (an Environment Agency publication)
- Investigate Plant Tracker app and www.nonnativespecies.org/elearning
- Action: Seek funding from River Care
- Action: Organise a bat walk with Rob

The meeting's programme being completed, the evening continued with refreshments and conversation.

FCHB Chair's Report AGM June 2015

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook have again had a busy year. Activities that we have undertaken are briefly itemised below. We would like to say a big thank you to all our supporters:

- The many volunteers who take part in the brook clean-ups and, this year, in the installation of the flow deflectors
- RiverCare, who provide the equipment, insurance and moral support for the clean-up, particularly Rob Martyr and Andrew Walters
- Sainsbury's Coldhams Lane store, particularly Steven Denson
- The Cambridge Wildlife Trust, particularly Ruth Hawksley
- The City Council, and particularly Guy Belcher
- Last but not least, FCHB's very active Committee!

2015 Activities

Maintaining the attractive appearance of the brook

- Two FCHB brook clean ups – 9 November 2014 and 1 March 2015; and one 28 September 2014 led by Sainsbury's to celebrate World Rivers Day. Thanks to Nicola Fawcett
- Liaison with RiverCare to ensure adequate equipment, insurance, and appropriate risk assessment, and to get general advice
- Continued supported to City Council regular maintenance activities on the brook (removal of bull rushes, clearing vegetation to let light in etc)

Raising public awareness about the importance of the brook for wildlife

- Newsletter: 6 issues (numbers 38-43) – water vole “special issue” no 39 – thanks to Monica Frisch, editor
- Displays at Cambridge Natural History Conversazione, June 2014 and 2015
- Maintenance of website and Facebook page – thanks to Jon Fairbairn

Improving the brook as a home for wildlife;

Natural England Innovation Grant:

- Flow deflectors
- New interpretation board
- Nest box workshop

Thanks to Emmy Smart and Wilbert for co-ordination work

Sainsbury's: as part of their refurbishment and following the encouragement of FCHB, the store made various improvements to the brook area adjacent to the store in summer 2014: preventing litter from the loading bay area ...; clearing litter from the area around the store; installing an interpretation board (using the design of the other two) by store; installing bird and bat nest boxes and an “insect hotel” - thank to Holly Anderson for liaison work

Monitoring the wildlife of the brook

Water voles: Regular sightings of the water vole have continued and the recording system is working well; two committee members participated in the workshop on voles run by xx in April; the RiverCare video camera provided a wealth of fascinating clips of vole activity, which were complemented by Darren's photos.

Cambridge Mammal Society survey in May 2015 -

Report on wildlife: In addition to our reports on birds and other wildlife in the newsletter, we produced a report collating this information which was distributed Thanks to Monica Frisch

Osprey sighting over lake
Invasive American Signal Crayfish
Swift boxes not yet occupied

Liaison and co-operation with other organisations

Local Plan Consultation – East Cambridge Urban Country Park – attended meetings in Guildhall Sept 2014 and Jan 2015; public consultation Anderson Group – provided response (website); tour of lakes with ecologist hired by AG

Mill Road Local History Project

– talk at June 2014 AGM, completion of report – full of fascination, maps, illustration and information including this quote from a 1906 description of Mill Road:

“... and down the slope you come into a region of quite a different character: a greyish region where a whizzing sound disturbs the heavy atmosphere. There are great lime and cement works on your left, and where the houses end abruptly at the foot of the hill you look across a bare field to an irregular stack of buildings piled high with tall chimneys – more cement works. The whole place seems enmeshed in railway lines, and the puffing of trains and screaming of engines break in upon the vibrating hum of the works. The brook is still there; a rather dirty ditch with tins and fragments of pottery amongst its weeds, and with a large notice on its bank prohibiting rubbish from being thrown in. The houses near it are of course called Brook Terrace and Brookfield Cottages; the houses along its edge Brookside, the post office, Brookfields, and one of the inns Brookfield House. And beyond the ditch the footpath still leads up the hill, but it is confined now between two high black palisades.”