

Notes of an Ordinary Meeting of the Friends of Badock's Wood

held on Tuesday 24th September 2013

Present: Tony West (Chair) Geoff Perrett (Treasurer), Frances Robertson (Secretary), Linda Wilson (Management Plan lead), Sian Parry, Eddie Lewis, Jim O'Shaughnessy

Apologies: Alan Aburrow, Alex Kittow, David Parke, Sheila Quinn, Nicola Ramsden

1. Supporting Change – Big Lottery Grant

a. Report from Jim O'Shaughnessy on Evaluation and Engagement project

Jim outlined the work he had done so far on the evaluation of what FOBW had been doing and ways in which we could further engage with the local community in future. He explained how the ladder of participation works in terms of engaging more members of the community. Linda noted that there were other influencing factors which were catalysts for change, and in the case of the wood, this had been the problems that had been experienced there in the past. Jim was going to focus on the Badock's Woodland Party, held in June of this year, in his case study. He suggested that to keep up the momentum an event such as a picnic could be held in future that would not require so much money and input from everyone. Tony agreed and he and Eddie would be interested in a folk sing-a-long.

b. Update from Frances Robertson

Frances presented the financial position to date on the Supporting Change grant. More money had been spent on the event than originally budgeted, it had been moved from some of the other parts and this had in part contributed to the success of the event. There was enough money for 2 woodland management training days and also for doing more work on the design and printing of the QR trail. If we do not do all these things there will be an underspend which we would have to return to the Lottery. The deadline for spend is the end of 2013.

Action: Frances

2. Community Input Management Plan update from Linda Wilson

Linda provided a written report on her work to take the Management Plan forward. Her report is attached. It was noted that she and Tony had met with the Council and the details are in the report. The meeting discussed various aspects of the report and considered a recommendation that a bench and a sculpture/ welcome sign be provided in the wood from existing FOBW reserves at an anticipated cost of £640 each. The group agreed in principle and Linda is to follow this up.

Action: Linda

FOBW had received an email from Mark Owen, Area Environmental Officer at the City Council re access to Badock's Wood. Frances provided hard copies and Tony or Linda would look at it more closely and contact him.

Action: Tony/Linda

3. Woodland Management Training days

Linda has liaised with Jason at The Conservation Volunteers and the first training day will be held on Saturday 23rd November and a second one will be arranged if we have enough interest. Frances to send out details and booking form.

Action: Frances

4. Other Events / Activities in the Wood

There was a question about what the proposed tree survey would do additional to what is already in the Management Plan. Frances to ask Nicola for more details. **Action: Frances**

A Tree Dressing event was proposed and it was agreed that Frances would look into this and apply to the Lottery's Celebrating Your Space fund if it looked viable in the time allowed (by end 2013).

Action: Frances

5. Fundraising

It was agreed to apply to the Celebrating Your Space Lottery fund for a Tree Dressing event as above.

Other funding sources for taking forward activities and work in the wood might include:

- Greenway Community Practice GP Fund – a fund for small amounts of money – e.g. £50/£100 from the GP practice next to the Greenway Centre. Frances to bring details to next meeting.
- Awards for All – another Lottery fund to which FOBW can apply.

Members are asked to find out about any other funds which we might apply to for woodland work and activities.

Action: all FOBW

6. Parks Forum report back and delegate for 5th October meeting

It was agreed that Tony West would attend the meeting on 5th October and Sian Parry would attend on 12th October.

Action: Tony and Sian

7. Approval of Notes of Previous Meeting

It was noted that the Agenda said 30th April but in fact the previous meeting was 25th June and the notes of 25th June were agreed and approved.

8. Matters arising from the minutes not already covered on the agenda

None

9. Any other business

Website

Graham Mullan had looked at the website software. He would rather build a website from scratch and transfer over the pages. If anyone wanted to see an example of one he has previously built see Pen Park Hole <http://www.penparkhole.org.uk>

Hosting of the FOBW website was discussed and it was suggested that contact with Chris Hammond be made.

Biting Dog

It was reported that Jo West had been bitten on her leg in an unprovoked attack by a small black and white Jack Russell in the wood.

10. Items for future meetings

Management Plan (standing item)

Community Engagement Plan

Woodland Management training

Events / Activities

Fundraising

AGM

11. Agree dates for 2014

The following dates were agreed.

March 25th, June 24th, September 23rd, December 2nd

Noted that the March meeting is also the AGM

12. Next Meeting Tuesday 3rd December 2013 at 7.30 p.m.

Mince pies may be provided.

NOTE: this date has been changed from 10th due to member availability.

Management Plan Coordinator's Report to the Friends of Badock's Wood

Introduction

I started in the post at the AGM earlier this year. My initial objectives were to familiarise myself with the Management Plan and the various documents that issue out of it, such as the management plans for the pond and the grassland and to meet Jerry Cole, the Bristol City Council Assistant Parks Manager for our area. Both of these objectives have been achieved.

We are currently in the second year of a five year management plan that runs from April 2012 to March 2017. To summarise, no major changes in management are planned during that period and the stated aim in the plan is for the woods to look much the same at the end of the period as they do now. The major ongoing action from the point of view of the woods is the removal of the sycamore and ash that is starting to dominate the area.

Our overall objectives are to ensure that the woods are maintained as a nature reserve of benefit to both wildlife and people and it is important to keep the balance between these two objectives. I see my role as keeping an over-view of the various activities that the group plans to ensure that we are achieving that balance.

To be more specific about our objectives as a group as set out in the plan, our wildlife objectives are to restore and maintain the area as semi-natural broadleaved woodland with the retention of selected exotic species (such as the bamboo) and to encourage wildflower diversity. Our people objectives are to maintain suitable facilities for quiet recreation and to encourage community use and active involvement in management.

The main plan sets out certain objectives and ongoing responsibilities each year. For the current year, the objectives as set out in the plan are to: create a wildflower meadow, make more rustic style benches, make entrances more welcoming, improve the style access at the Greenway Centre and to have a Natural England Woodland condition survey in spring.

In addition to the above, we have separate plans for the management of the pond and the wildflower meadows. I'll deal with each of these in turn later in this report.

It is clear that not all these objectives are achievable. In particular, we will not be creating a new wildflower meadow this year. There is no funding available for this work, and at the moment, we have enough on our hands in managing the three meadows we do have. As a longer term objective, a new meadow will require both careful thought and funding. We have a similar problem with regard to the creation of new benches, but hopefully funds can be found for this and I'll come back to this point.

Meeting with Jerry Cole

Tony West and I had a very productive meeting with Jerry on 28 July 2013. We spent an hour walking the entire area of the woods, discussing the management plan and BCC's commitment to the woods. Mark Newport is our park keeper, he is a full-time employee of BCC and covers our area. Tony and I expressed our appreciation for all Mark's hard work in the woods. He does an excellent job, much appreciated by FOBW and the users of the local nature reserve.

A suggestion had been made that FOBW should explore the idea of having an additional hay cut on the wildflower meadows done by volunteers using scythes who would be given training in this by The Conservation Volunteers (TCV). After consideration of this, Jerry felt that this was not

something BCC could agree to, after taking into account health and safety considerations for other users of the woods and their dogs. In addition, the three wildflower meadows take up a considerable area of ground and in reality volunteers could only scratch the surface of what is needed. The meadows had their annual hay cut and removal of cuttings the following week. In future years, there is a possibility of volunteer engagement by arranging for a rake-off of the areas after the hay cut. There is also a possibility that Mark might be able to do an extra cut with a flail in certain areas.

We were asked to raise with Jerry the question of leaving an un-mown six metre strip around the football field. Jerry is unable to agree to this, as it would represent a significant encroachment on the area used under licence by the footballs. He stressed that this area does not form part of the local nature reserve, and any mention of such a strip around the edges entered the management plan at a time when it was believed that the use of the area by the footballers had ceased, which is not now the case. Some tree-planting has taken place at the far end of this field, and this is the maximum encroachment that BCC can agree to.

Concerns were raised about the amount of rubbish left behind by the footballers and their supporters. Jerry asked for specific instances to be referred to him, with photos if possible, and he will take this up with the club.

The management plan for Year 3 mentions the need for renewal of the various flights of steps in the woods. It's unlikely that BCC would be able to fund this, but Jerry said that TCV have done good work on steps in other areas, so this is possibly something FOBW would be able to work on with them, and BCC would be happy for this work to be carried out if a proper proposal can be put together. I am hopefully meeting Jason Leck from TCV on site tomorrow to see if he is able to obtain some funds for some of this work. I think as an activity, this is likely to prove popular with FOBW members, and a step restoration day several years ago did bring a good turn out.

Entrance improvement works are particularly needed around the area of the small footpath at the northern end of the woods that comes in from Lake Road. This is a particularly grim area. Tony is putting together a plan to improve the small triangular area on the left as the woods are entered and it would be good if funding could be obtained for a wooden, 'welcome to the woods' structure as part of those works. BCC will assist by arranging to cut back some of the overhanging branches to lighten the area.

The question of additional benches was discussed. One is particularly needed on the path that enters the woods from Lakewood Road as that is used by the residents of the sheltered housing, and it is one of the longest sections in the woods without a bench. Jerry would support that idea and BCC might well be able to supply the wood. Our challenge is to obtain sufficient funding for this work. I have spoken at length to Andy O'Neill who created the large and very beautiful redwood bench on the way across the meadows from the main Doncaster Road entrance. It takes Andy two days to create a bench like that, at a cost of £320 per day, so for the finished object we are looking at finding funds of £640.

Other Matters

The Pond is an area of particular concern. As things stand at present, it is an eyesore, being referred to by many users of the woods as the 'bomb crater'. It is unfortunate that the pond has been subjected to systematic vandalism from the start, but flaws in the design have also contributed to the problems, with the inner liner having served all summer to constantly wick out water, leading to very low water levels. Goldfish have also been introduced to the pond, which is an unfortunate development. The management plan itself is going to prove almost impossible to implement and seems more geared to the needs of a domestic pond, as it refers to refilling it from a non-existent water butt! Tony West has some ideas for its improvement by way of softening the edges and forming a bog garden in one corner, with the introduction of yellow flag iris.

Concerns were raised by many people over the summer about the disappearance of the Trym into the stream bed about half way between the adventure playground and the triangle. Investigations with the sewerage authority and the Environment Agency have established that the water is not leaking into a sewer, as had been thought, and that the fact that water is sinking in the stream bed is a natural process as the stream is in a limestone area. Heavy rain will ensure that water will flow along its length, but in summer we might well have to resign ourselves to the fact that in this area, the Trym is now seasonal. However, it's also possible that more changes will occur, and that this sink will fill in as naturally as it has arisen.

A very successful wildflower was led by Mary Woods, followed by some training in wildflower meadow condition surveys attended by Sian Parry, Nicola Ramsden and Tony West. It is hoped that Nicola and Sian will be able to take the lead in the ongoing monitoring needed under the relevant management plans.

Woodland Training

Funding exists for some training in woodland matters. I've spoken at length to Jason Leck of TCV who can design and deliver training covering general risk assessments, coppicing and removal of invasive species. He can put on a one day course for £300 pounds, and can repeat the same day if necessary. A group of up to ten people is considered idea. More would be difficult to work with. It was originally hoped to hold this in September, but matters did not progress quickly enough for that, so the intention now is to aim for a date in November. The 23rd has been suggested. This will give us time to circulate the membership and see who is interested.

Conclusions

There is plenty to do under the plan, some things are simply a matter of providing labour (rake-off after grass cuts), whereas other projects (benches, welcome structures and steps) will require some funding to be obtained, which is problematic, as many sources of funding seem to prefer to spend the money on ephemeral events rather than tangible objects that will benefit users of the woods for many years to come. If we want to be able to meet some of our management objectives, we will need to explore what funds can be obtained for objects like benches.

There are many things in the management plans that will be relatively easy to stay on top of, but in other areas, such as the creation of a new wildflower meadow, I think that we will need to accept that this is an unattainable objective. We have three large wildflower meadows at the moment and simply don't have the resources to manage a fourth.

To take matters further, I think the best way of working is for members with specific interests, such as the wildflower meadows, the pond, and work on the entrance areas, to come together for further discussion, with members agreeing to take responsibility for specific areas such as the monitoring of the wildflower meadows or specific projects such as the restoration of the pond. I will continue to act as liaison with BCC on the contents of the plan, and will do my best to oversee the implementation of specific areas of the plan. If members of FOBW, after relevant training, are able to take on the organisation of work-days in the wood for example to work on the removal of invasive species as defined by the management plan, this will enable us to move matters forwards.

Before finishing this report, I would like to offer a special vote of thanks to Jo West, who has done a fantastic job litter-picking in the woods. Her efforts really have made a huge difference.

Linda Wilson
Management Plan Coordinator
24.9.13