



# FRIENDS OF RIDGE WOOD

## Informal Meeting

Community Meeting Room, Tesco Extra store, Yate

Start time: 7.30pm

Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018

**PRESENT:**

Sarah Hardcastle (chair)  
Jill Hows (vice chair)  
Geoff Millard (treasurer)  
Dianne Millard  
Richard Aston (South Glos council)  
Emma Morrison (publicity)  
Roger McLean

**APOLOGIES:**

David Barlow  
Tim Fairhead  
Pauline Wilson  
Edward Wrighton  
Bob Evans

**1. Introductions / apologies**

**2. Minutes from last meeting**

Minutes circulated by email, agreed

**3. Matters arising**

- Lockup relocation: this remains a priority. SH did not hear back about a contractor to approach for a quote. RA will discuss with John Morris and get back to us. May need to apply for a grant to fund this.
- Gazette article regarding the group was published at the end of September. Article was good but a very old photograph was used.
- Woodland management training: this took place last Sunday, and was kindly fully funded by Hanson's. Topics covered included coppicing, dead hedging, tree identification and safe use of tools. Some practical work was completed on the day. All agreed that this was a really good and useful session.
- Insurance: SH confirmed that this has been renewed with TCV for another year to mid November 2018. We will look at signing the SGC volunteers' agreement to avoid having to pay for this again next year.

SH has also re-joined TCV on behalf of the group so will need to arrange reimbursement.

- SGC volunteers' celebration event: SH attended this and gave feedback to the group on the event and the talks given. RA confirmed that this event is expected to take place again this year.
- Corporate volunteering opportunities: this was discussed again as a way to undertake more substantial / physical tasks within the woodland (e.g. replacing / resurfacing steps). GM / DM have tried to get a contact name but this is difficult – the firm (Environment agency) tend to look for volunteering opportunities that are already set up. Agreed that we could look into obtaining materials for work on the steps (RA advised steps themselves would need to be purchased, probably through [and funded by] SGC, and Hanson's may be able to supply gravel). GM / DM to find out size of group that would be available and to let them know of our interest as a first step.
- First aid training: JH needs to renew her training but unable to attend forthcoming dates. DM's training remains current until the end of the year. RA advised that more dates will be arranged for later in the year.

Actions: RA, GM, DM, SH

#### **4. Events**

- Owl prowl held in September: all agreed that this was a really good event once again. Disappointing not to see / hear any owls, particularly as we know they did nest in the woodland last year. We will look to run this event again, possibly on a biannual basis.
- Various ideas for 2018 events discussed including evening chorus, moth discovery, fungi foray, forest fun time and others. SH now has a contact for a fungi foray, which is probably best suited to be an autumn event. Agreed that we will aim to run 3 events this year: forest fun time (provisional date set – 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2018), a spring evening chorus event and an autumn fungi foray. SH will contact Ed Drewitt, forest schools and Rich Wright (fungi) to confirm their availability.

Actions: SH

#### **5. Winter work programme**

- The remaining winter / spring work morning dates will remain Sun 11<sup>th</sup> Feb, Sun 11<sup>th</sup> March, Sun 22<sup>nd</sup> April. Work to be completed will include more coppicing and cutting back some of the overgrown footpaths, plus litter picking as needed. RA suggests that the coppice stools are tackled in batches to avoid too sudden an impact on residents' privacy e.g. cut back every 2<sup>nd</sup> hazel stool along the rear of Dorset way. In the long run, coppicing will improve privacy for residents as regrowth will be denser; this work also prevents the trees from growing too large and posing a threat to sheds / fences / greenhouses. Any work the Friends are unable to complete (e.g. requiring power tools), SGC can arrange to finish.

Actions: All (attending work mornings where possible)

## **6. SGC volunteers' agreement**

- RA brought a copy of this along for discussion. Agreements usually run from the 1<sup>st</sup> April and last for one year. Over 20 Friends groups now have these agreements in place with SGC. The agreement lists tasks that SGC are happy for each group to undertake, and this can be modified according to our wishes and level of experience. The agreement requires the presence of at least one "competent volunteer" to oversee each activity. This person (s) should be "experienced conservation volunteers with sound knowledge of health and safety issues and safe handling of tools." All agreed that the 2 sessions of woodland management training already undertaken, plus our experience on work mornings, would mean that several core FORW volunteers could now meet this requirement. SH and RA will work on drafting an agreement specific to FORW, and will circulate for comments in advance of the deadline. Once the agreement is signed, SGC insurance cover will be in place when the group undertakes activities.
- RA will check that the SGC insurance would be appropriate to cover forest fun time, however this will be covered by the TCV policy this year
- SH enquired as to whether the "safe use of tools" course by SGC will be running again as it would be good to have some officially recognised training provided by SGC on this so we can be sure we meet the required standards – RA will look into this and advise.

Actions: RA, SH

## **7. AOB**

- Signs of Ash dieback were detected in Ridge Wood at our recent woodland work morning as advised by Anna Brunton. RA has advised the tree officers of this. Anna suggested "haloing" other species within the wood, which entails removing young ash saplings close to other species to allow the alternative species the best chance of survival. We can add this to our work schedule for future work mornings.
- GM reminded the group of recent discussions around the purchase of pruning saws which can be useful for coppicing. Agreed it would be appropriate to purchase 2-3 of these for use on work mornings. GM will source if able.
- JH raised concerns about new unofficial routes that cyclists are using to ride down the woodland slopes at the Chipping Sodbury end. This is destructive and potentially dangerous. Discussed trying to block off these routes, either with dead hedges or large stones. EM suggested could approach Newland homes for help if large stones needed to be moved. RA will have a look at the area and advise.
- RA advised that a local resident Jill Brierly has been working on getting recycling bins installed at the far end of the wood. Hanson's have

agreed to fund purchase of the bins, but SGC were unable to empty them, however Waitrose have now agreed to do this.

- GM advised that there is now only around £500 remaining in the group account. We will aim to make all events going forward cost-neutral, through small charges to attend / voluntary contributions. We will aim to obtain some additional funding for Forest Fun Time – JH will approach Hanson's for this (noting they may wish to give a smaller contribution this year having already funding the woodland management training), and we can also apply for the Waitrose Green token scheme again (JH to enquire)
- Anna Brunton mentioned at the weekend that she is able to arrange charcoal burning events for woodland groups. The current cost of this is around £150, and charcoal is then available for group members to use / sell. She will send more details to SH: all agreed this may be a good event for the future.

Actions: GM, RA, JH

## **8. Date of Next meeting**

Provisionally agreed as Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> May

Actions: GM (to book room)