



# FRIENDS OF RIDGE WOOD

## Informal Meeting and AGM

Community Meeting Room, Tesco Extra, Yate

Start time: 7.30pm

Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2019

|          |                  |                       |
|----------|------------------|-----------------------|
| PRESENT: | Sarah Hardcastle | Chair                 |
|          | Jill Hows        | Vice chair            |
|          | David Barlow     | Secretary / webmaster |
|          | Geoff Millard    | Treasurer             |
|          | Dianne Millard   |                       |
|          | Emma Morrison    | Publicity             |
|          | Richard Aston    | South Glos Council    |

|            |                           |
|------------|---------------------------|
| Apologies: | Tim Fairhead              |
|            | Pauline Wilson            |
|            | Edward & Janette Wrighton |
|            | Dai Edwards               |
|            | Bob Evans                 |

- 1. Introductions / apologies**
- 2. Minutes from last meeting**

Minutes circulated, agreed.

### **3. Annual General Meeting**

#### **Chair's report 2018-19**

Sarah summarised the group's activities over the past year. The committee structure has remained the same.

Public events during the year have included an evening chorus walk (held prior to the 2018 AGM), forest fun time and a fungi foray. Forest fun time was well attended by 94 children and adults and was successful once again. The fungi foray was a good event, but did not attract the same number of people as owl prowls / bat walks have in the past. Financially, forest fun time broke even due to donations, but other events made a loss once leaders had been paid – all agreed that running cost neutral events should be our aim going forward.

Workdays were held in September, October, November, January, February, March and April. January to March work mornings focussed on cutting back vegetation from the main path at the Quarry Rd end to create a ride edge habitat. Other tasks have

included litter picking, vegetation clearance, coppicing, dead hedging and clearing Spanish bluebells from the woodland. There was another excellent display of bluebells this year, but still a few Spanish bluebells present which we will continue to control. There has been generally very good attendance at work mornings with a good core of regular volunteers and some new faces this year.

Richard reported that little work has been undertaken in the woodland this year by South Gloucestershire council mainly due to lack of funds. The arboricultural survey recently undertaken by Hanson's has identified some work needed on various trees in the woodland, but this will now not be done this year other than dealing with any immediate risks to the public. RA confirmed that SGC retain overall responsibility for managing the woodland.

Thanks to all committee members for their hard work over the past year.

### **Treasurer's report (GM)**

The current balance of the group account is £285.55, which is the lowest year-end total for some time. The largest expenditure items have been the website hosting cost, the group insurance policy (now contents only) and paying event leaders. In future we will aim to secure funds for events at the planning stage, however there are various other expenses which arise from time to time which do need to be paid for. Future fundraising ideas were discussed. Large purchases / specific projects can potentially be funded by applying for grants. JH will approach her contact at Sodbury Town Council who may have ideas re: how to raise funds more generally. JH will also approach Waitrose again regarding their green token scheme. RA advised that we could apply for council member awarded funding to cover our insurance. The Co-op / Gregg's bakery were suggested as companies who may be able to provide funding to local groups. SH also suggested asking Tesco if we could do some tin-shaking e.g. on a Saturday morning, as other local groups have done this – GM will ask about this when re-booking the community room.

### **Secretary's report (DB)**

Following the GDPR process of seeking permission to retain members' details, the number of members on our mailing list has reduced compared with last year. We now have 40 members, having lost 2 and gained 1 since this process was completed. The website continues to be accessed regularly, with the news and events page receiving approximately 240 hits per month.

### **Nominations for committee posts**

**Chair** – Sarah Hardcastle has indicated her intention to step down as chair, however no nominations for the position of chair have so far been received. Therefore it was agreed that Sarah will remain in post at least until 1<sup>st</sup> June in order to allow a further appeal for nominations to take place. If no single individual wishes to be chair, it was agreed that having two co-chairs would be acceptable to all. We discussed the implications for the group of having no chair in place – RA advised that without a

chair the group would become unconstituted, which would invalidate our volunteer agreement with SGC. This would require the group to take out a full insurance policy to cover any future events / work mornings. In practical terms, we would also need to nominate an individual to take charge of each event / work morning, and to chair future committee meetings. Therefore, appointing a new chair / two co-chairs remains extremely desirable. DB will draft an email to the mailing list, for circulation to the committee in the first instance.

DB proposed a vote of thanks to Sarah for her excellent time in office and this was unanimously agreed by all present.

**Vice-chair** – Jill Hows has indicated that she would be willing to continue in this post, however we agreed to await the outcome of the further appeal for chair nominations prior to finalising this (as if two co-chairs were appointed, this may remove the need for a vice-chair).

**Treasurer** – nomination to continue Geoff Millard; proposed by Sarah, seconded by Emma – all agreed

**Webmaster** – nomination to continue David Barlow; proposed by Emma, seconded by Jill – all agreed (NB: future meeting minutes will be taken by Jill)

**Publicity** – nomination to continue Emma Morrison; proposed by Geoff, seconded by David – all agreed

### **Regular Friends of Ridge Wood Meeting – chaired by Sarah**

#### **4. Matters Arising**

- SH confirmed that our volunteer agreement with SGC has now been renewed up until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020
- At the last meeting we decided not to renew our membership of TCV (The Conservation Volunteers) due to the associated cost. However, SH informed the group that we were subsequently offered a year's free membership, which we have taken up (free memberships are being offered to celebrate TCV's 60<sup>th</sup> year).
- SH is still not receiving community spaces newsletters from SGC despite updating our email contact details; RA will look in to this. DM's first aid training has now expired, therefore currently the group's only qualified first aiders are JH and RA (although SH also has some relevant training). RA informed the group that Bristol city council have now appointed a volunteer groups coordinator, who will work with the team at SGC. The volunteer support network is due to undergo a major overhaul over the next few months which will likely result in some changes.
- The draft 5 year woodland management plan has now been produced and circulated; all agreed that this will be helpful particularly when planning work mornings. EM enquired about removal of holm oak seedlings which was highlighted in the plan – we will have a look at how to identify these and seek further advice if needed. Hedge laying was also mentioned in the plan, but this would require training. EM suggested that we could approach Sally Pattison regarding this, and we could ask her to provide some training to group members in case this is required again in the future. RA confirmed that this would be a winter job.

Actions: RA, EM

#### **5. Events**

- Our next event will be the bird chorus walk on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> May led by Alan Daniells. The start time will be 7.15pm at the Quarry Rd entrance. Although Alan has said that he does not require a fee, we agreed to charge £2 for adults and £1 for children attending this walk, in order to boost group funds. SH will double check with Alan that he has no objection to this. DB will produce a poster, and we will publicise as widely as possible prior to the date. DM/GM will bring along the first aid kit and collecting tins on the night.
- Sarah has tried to contact the Avon bat group regarding organising a bat walk in the Autumn, however so far has received no reply. RA suggested contacting Richard and Michelle Cook who live locally and may be able to lead this event; bat detectors could be borrowed from SGC if needed.
- Forest fun time will not take place this year. SH wondered about running another photography competition in place of this, however all agreed that the time and expense involved would be impractical at this stage. EM suggested posting some informal challenges on Facebook over the summer e.g. relating to geocaching / locating specific features within the woodland.

Action: SH, DB, RA, EM

## **6. Work programme**

- It was decided not to run a summer work morning this year – in previous years this has been used for a litter pick to prepare for Forest fun time which is not taking place this summer
- Provisional dates were agreed for our winter work programme for the rest of 2019 as follows:  
Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> September  
Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> October  
Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> November

A work schedule will be agreed nearer to the time, based around the 5 year management plan.

Fire lighting in the woodland was highlighted as a current issue, which tends to be the case once the weather improves. DM and GM have challenged young people seen doing this in the woodland, but this is often ineffective. All agreed that vigilance is needed, and to challenge individuals doing this where possible pointing out that lighting fires in Ridge Wood is prohibited.

Actions: All (attending work mornings where possible)

## **7. Website issues**

- DB informed the group that recently there have been issues with the Friends of Ridge Wood website, which at one point stopped working completely so that DB was unable to access it and pages were not displaying correctly. This problem has been temporarily resolved, but DB is unable to alter content as previously. The problem is that the website script was written some time ago, and is no longer compatible with changes in the hosting server / software. A permanent solution would involve rewriting the script, requiring external help which is likely to be costly

- Different options were discussed, including maintaining the website as a static page only, redirecting users to Facebook for up to date information. However several committee members felt that this would be likely to exclude many individuals who are not comfortable using facebook; event information can also be more difficult to locate here than on a website.
- It was agreed that a rewrite of the website would be our preferred option. DB will look into costings, and we will aim to fund this via a grant application (possible to rotary, or via member awarded funding).

Action: DB

## **8. AOB**

- The gate at the Quarry Rd entrance is broken. RA is aware of this and may have a gate from another site that can be used to replace it. He confirmed that replacing the gate is the responsibility of SGC rather than our group. RA will also look into the possibility of replacing the fencing along by the field by the main path at the same time.
- GM and DM pointed out that the Tourist Information centre in Chipping Sodbury still have outdated copies of our newsletter with old dates on it – these have now been removed
- EM suggested we could distribute some Ridge Wood information leaflets to the new houses on the Quarry Site – there are plenty of these remaining in the lockup. Tim Fairhead has also requested some leaflets to help publicise the woodland which SH has supplied.

Action: RA, EM

## **8. Date of next meeting**

- This was provisionally agreed as Wednesday 11th September 2019; GM will check if the meeting room is available on this date.

Action: GM