

Friends of Pontesford Hill Committee Meeting 18th May 2015

19:30 Pontesbury Congregational Church

Minutes

Present: M Mortimer (MM), D Morgan (DM), D Taplin (DT), B Simmonds (BS), V Whittall (VW), C Lawrie (CL), S King (SK), K Day (KD), A Donnelly (AD), C Cooke (CC), plus Sara Pearce (SP), Beth Williams (BE) and Carl Pickup (CP) from Shropshire Wildlife Trust.

1. **Appologies** – none.

2. **Minutes of Meeting held on 27th April 2015**

- At the request of SK, paras 7a and 7b were read out. There was some discussion about adding additional phrases to 7a but the majority present felt that they were a reasonable summary of the discussions that had taken place with Colin Preston and of the position that had been reached.
- At the request of CL the words “*and Chrstine*” were removed from 7a.
- At the request of CL para 8b will be deleted as this was a reference to a private request from her and not a committee suggestion.
- It was agreed that 8c should read “Mike had announced at the Nick Owen dinner, and emphasised again, that no further fund raising projects were to be started, as with existing planned events and receipt of monies from past events we should reach our target, but existing projects should be supported.” He mentioned that so far the Mary Webb Walk had raised £6500.”
- Continuing with para. 8c, CL asked that the next sentences be amended as follows: “*On 1st April, Christine was put in an awkward position re the Sibbercote Open Evening (for which she had been assisting with the posters and entry passes) when Veronica Schoter queried the need to maximise the revenue from the event by claiming gift Aid, as, at around £250,000 the target had nearly been reached anyway without the addition of Gift Aid. Christine hadn’t been given this information and could not respond openly and honestly, which she was not happy about*”. The committee agreed this change. They felt that the implied criticism was not justified as, right from the outset, all references to the figures quoted in relation to the appeal had made it clear that money was required for maintenance in addition the purchase funds.

3. Matters Arising from the last Minutes

Colin Preston's letter dated 17th April 2015 (but not generally received until 11th May 2015 – **action SP** to e-mail out a definitive final version) was discussed and was acceptable to most members present. CL said that it did not answer her concerns and she had separately contacted Colin. She felt his response was positive, though long term concerns were still an issue.

At this point the committee discussed the potential security afforded by holding the SWT funds for Pontesford Hill as "Restricted" rather than "Designated". It was mentioned that in the unlikely event that SWT was unable to continue to manage the Hill and/or became insolvent, in law creditors' rights extend to claims on Designated funds whereas Restricted funds could not be touched.. SK wanted to examine this possibility further. MM commented that whilst this might seem attractive at first sight, it might introduce problems of its own. For example, it was conceivable that in future Simon Hutchen might agree to sell all or part of the retained land to SWT. This would require more than the original £265k target and any funds held as "Restricted" could be unavailable to us so necessitating a fresh appeal. It was agreed that the money should remain as "designated" within SWT funds.

DM proposed and KD seconded the following proposal: "The committee has considered Colin Preston's letter dated xx May 2015 regarding safeguarding the long term future of the Hill and the funds associated with it. The committee is satisfied with the assurances given thus far". The committee voted on this resolution with the following result:

For 8. Against 0. Abstentions 2.

CL wished it to be recorded that SWT was the best owner for the Hill. DM said that he would like it recorded that he would not have contributed to the appeal if the proposed owner was anyone other than SWT.

CP said that perhaps the committee now needed to clarify how the money should be spent. It was agreed that this will happen after the consultation process has been completed.

MM said that whilst it was right for there to be unrestricted discussion within the group before decisions are made, the whole committee as a group and individually should now be supportive of the Constitution and our relationship with SWT. This would be as for all collective decisions in any business board. Anyone unable to abide by this and wishing to argue against it should do so from outside the committee. In saying this he emphasized that he was not addressing any particular individual.

At this point, CL stated that she wished to withdraw from the committee and withdrew. She was thanked for her strenuous efforts on behalf of the appeal by all.

4. Financial Position - Summary:

	Income	Expenditure
Money from collection boxes	£656.47	
Money from Nick Owen dinner	£2,472.60	
Down to Earth grant	£3,794.00	
Expenditure for Nick Owen dinner		£1,162.11
Expenditure from Down to Earth Grant		£1,961.00
Totals	£6,923.07	£3,123.11
Bank Balance	£3,799.96	

Sum available to be donated to SWT £1,966.96

Currently 105 memberships (Nb. Includes family memberships so not total nos. of members)

Appeal fund total to date (SWT) £261,173.30

Grand draw. Only 75 books sold and returned so far. FoPH to be reminded that further books are available. Purchase of tickets by committee members is allowed and is a matter of personal choice.

5. General Meeting 12th June.

Agenda has been sent to members and this will include:

Introduction, including Chair report – MM

The way forward from here, ecological survey update and brief reference to the consultation plan – DM

SWT report – Colin Preston

Further details on Consultation to date and proposed plan of action – BW

Endorsement / election of officers, committee members and the Friends constitution

Promotion of Grand Draw.

The bar will then be open and there will be an opportunity for chatting and networking.

6. Individual responsibilities and sub committees.

DM explained that he and BW had had meetings with stakeholders and had discussed plans for the consultation. He was also involved in and interested in the ecological surveys that had taken place and/or were planned. He wished therefore to continue in these roles but would welcome others to participate. Jan Purcell had agreed to lead on the co-ordination of and communications with those members who indicated their interest in ecological surveying. David had asked her to do this as she has the necessary experience being the former Conservation officer with SWT.

DM and BW had also had a meeting on the hill with Andy. Wigley of Shropshire Council Archaeology ,and Alison McDonald of Historic England (plus Joe. Penfold of the LPS) to look at the protection of the Lower Camp and Earl's Hill Fort ancient monuments. We are awaiting a written report on that meeting from A Wigley.

It was suggested that areas of work should be identified that could then be put to the full membership as more may wish to join in and assist. Such areas could include publicity, public awareness, future fund raising and community/school liaison. It was recognised that these often overlap and will change as the role of the FoPH changes over time. It was felt that one nominated person as a point of liaison or link was all that was required as events and activities are developed. SK explained that her reasons for suggesting teams were to ensure the full involvement by FoPH members rather than reliance on, and control by SWT alone.

- MM informed the committee that a possible website manager had been identified.
- AD said he would be the link for practical activities.
- BW explained that her research should help identify those who can assist in future activities. The meeting on June 12th should also provide an opportunity to encourage such links, as well as a chance to check membership details, all of which can be added to the data base.

7. Consultation.

SP, JP, DM and MM have been working on a proposal to allocate £1800 from the Down to Earth grant to allow Beth to work on the consultation project during the summer. This will allow her to develop paper surveys, group focus meetings and on-line survey monkey questions and to undertake a variety of face to face interviews with users of the Hill. DM, JP and SP will provide oversight and line management.

8. Ecological surveys.

The purpose of these is to monitor the position as it is today before any improvements have been made. The results will act as a baseline for the future. So far, two botanical surveys have been carried out. A mammal camera trapping exercise has been done (results to be shown in Pontsbury Youth Building soon) and a moth trapping evening is planned as are bird walks.

9. Geo-Survey.

J. Walton has offered to use his software and skills to produce a 3D map of the Hill for future use. This will use data already available from LIDAR surveys, OS digital mapping and aerial photographs. Some costs will be involved.

10. Celebratory Picnic.

11th July 2015. As yet, nothing has been arranged but attractions could include a Storyteller, music (Community Uke?, Hill Remembered Blue? [Val to contact], Brass band?) . A wild cooking demonstration / forage was suggested . Various people agreed to look out for a large 'Tombola tumbler' for the draw.

11. AOB.

Little and Large presentation. MM will check numbers of tickets sold. MM, VW, BS, DT will assist from 6.00pm. DT will bring Draw tickets for sale. VW to purchase tea and coffee.

- **Roy Evans Music Afternoon.** 30th May. Help was requested assisting serving Tea and coffee but no committee members were currently available on this date. Any help by members would be appreciated. It was explained that a receipt for poster costs would be funded or else event organisers can take costs from proceeds and make a donation to the appeal.
- **Schools Walk.** This produced an amazing £10,800 and all organisers and participants are to be congratulated.
- **Web address.** It was agreed that a new web address will be implemented in due course. This will be Pontesford Hill Friends.co.uk and will eventually replace the current appeal site.

Sue King.

Sue announced that she would be leaving the committee as she had originally planned for her membership to be short term and now felt her other commitments should take priority. She was thanked by Mike and committee members for all her contributions and work throughout the appeal.

Next Meeting.

Will be on 29th June, at 19:30 at the Congregational Hall (Tbc)

The meeting closed at 9.27pm.