

Friends of Pontesford Hill

Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 23rd November 2015

at Pontesbury Congregational Church

Present: David Morgan (DM Vice Chair), Brian Simmonds (BS Treasurer), Val Whittall (VW), Jan Prestwood, Christopher Cooke (CC), Clive Dean (CD SWT), Joe Penfold (JP LPS) and Eleanor Healey (EH SWT). John Bielstein (JB LPS) was present for the first items discussed.

Joe introduced John who is the LPS education officer and has expertise with bird boxes etc. following the Resting Hill scheme in 2015.

David chaired the meeting. Christopher took the minutes.

It was agreed to take item 9 early so that John could then leave.

1. **Apologies** were received from Mike Mortimer (Chair), Ken Day, Dave Taplin, Adrian Donnelly, and Jan Pursaill.
2. **Minutes of the Meeting of 19th October 2015** were accepted as a true record.
3. **Matters arising from the last Minutes.** None.

9. **ECO Surveys.**

National Nest Box Scheme.

Adrian is reported to be keen to get the Scouts going on the bird boxes. A site meeting had been held with Jan Pursaill in attendance and the Lower Camp on Pontesford Hill and the woodlands by the Habberley Brook on the east side of Earl's Hill were identified as suitable areas for nest boxes. Clive also wondered whether the mixed woodland above the Eastern Bridleway might also be suitable. John as Education Officer is happy to encourage the Scouts. David thought the Mary Webb School might also be involved and he would contact Kirsten Mould. Jonathan Groom has offered a day's training. Non-tanalised wood would be needed and John said that a timber mill in Bishops Castle supplied the Resting Hill scheme earlier this year. It was agreed the Friends would buy the timber. John will contact David about the timber mill and David will liaise with Adrian. The boxes should go up in late February. The surveys will be taken during the breeding season. The boxes should not be situated too high up trees if children are going to check them. Jan Pursaill may be able to send out an email to see who else would be interested in surveying. Joe will contact Jonathan Groom. Val asked how expensive the bird boxes will be. John said that the most expensive part was the metal that goes round the hole to prevent woodpeckers or squirrels enlarging it. A ballpark figure might be £150 for fifty boxes and this was not felt to be a problem. **Actions DM, JB, JP**

Dormouse Survey.

Clive said that we would use Kate Thorne who is very experienced but a full survey would cost £1,200. £200 of this would cover an initial Nut Survey. A discussion followed about how £1,200 could be raised. It was suggested that it could be divided three ways between the Friends, SWT and the LPS.

The Nut Survey needs to be done now. There was a discussion on whether, if Dormice were found, there could be a conflict between preserving the archaeological features of the hill fort and the habitat of the dormouse. Christopher suggested that we proceed with the Nut Survey and see where that leaves us. It was agreed that the Nut Search would go ahead and the cost would be shared between SWT and the LPS. It was suggested Kate's expertise might be passed down to Clive and others so that surveys could extend further on to Pontesford Hill. **Action – CD to contact Kate.**

Earthworm Survey.

David will advise Clive about the Preston Montford Field Centre earthworm survey and the possibility of a comparative survey on Earl's and Pontesford Hills. **Action - DM**

4. Current Financial Position.

Brian had sent out an email. He reported that the Bank Account Balance at today's date was a credit of £10,080.52. There was £76.90 cash in hand. The £1,800 set aside for SWT as a contribution towards Beth's costs remains in the above figure and is available for potential 'match funding' opportunities in the future as discussed at previous meetings. The November Celebration Event resulted in costs of £71.50 for food and £2 for the electric meter. There was £68 in the collection pots. The evening also facilitated the collection of £35 in outstanding membership fees. Movements in monies since the last meeting are as follows. Receipts come to £104.82 which is accounted for by the Celebration Event plus interest of £1.82. Payments are £825.68. In addition to the Celebration Event, £350 was paid for chainsaw training and £282.18 for chainsaw equipment as agreed at the last meeting. £120 was spent on aerial maps of the hill.

5. November Celebration Event.

It was agreed that this was a very successful and enjoyable evening. There were one or two small caveats. David was disappointed that more people did not circulate round the boards and Clive and Joe were disappointed that they were asked no questions. David wondered if there was too much seating but Jan pointed out that at least people stayed and if there had been less seating many would have left sooner. Christopher had heard some complaints about the music and wondered whether we could have had some quiet periods and whether Mike could have introduced Clive and Joe and they could have referred to their boards.

8. New Website.

Val said that Sue King had commented that you could only access the website if you typed in the exact name. It was agreed that this needs investigating as we could be excluding people who want to be informed. Mike is consulting his son on this issue.

Mike and Val are doing most of the updating. Val wondered if we needed a sub-group to edit the website. It was agreed for the time being that she would be the main contact and that she would consult the Chairman or Vice Chairman if she had something submitted that she was uncertain about. This would remain on the agenda and we need a policy on photographs.

It was agreed that the information on the Display Boards for the

Celebration Event should go on the website as a matter of urgency. Christopher said he would send David the shortened version of last meeting's minutes. David would assess what of these should go on the website as well as of the minutes of this meeting. **Actions – MM, VW**

6. Management Plan (SWT).

Clive Dean said that the next stage is the detail about what to do in specific areas and he would circulate his proposals in due course. Once the display material has been up on the website for a while, we can assume that informed people are broadly alongside the objectives of the Management Plan. However, the wider community might be more sceptical of any change. Clive said that the Management Plan initiatives would be available to the wider public as we move from consultation to information.

It was reported that Mike had some misgivings about the management of the coupes above the Bulldozer Track. Clive said that the work on different coupes might be done by different groups, but there would be an overall consistent management policy for them all.

David asked whether Clive had a timescale for producing his detailed proposals. Our next opportunity to present something to a wider public might be our A.G.M. in the spring of 2016. Clive said he may have some ideas by then but it would take him six to eight months to formulate his ideas in detail.

7. Access Improvements and SITA Grant Application; Date for Interpretation Meeting.

Joe asked how much money we were prepared to dedicate to this. The LPS has £7,500 of which £3,000 is for interpretation. We would be looking to match fund the SITA Grant. The minimum would be £3,000 and the maximum £6,000.

Joe said it was a question of how much we wanted to do in the way of interpretation. He would be happy to meet on site. Nigel McDonald of Shropshire Hills AOB could offer a day of training. A sub-group or focus group could investigate. One theme might be "A Changing Hill".

David stressed that we are talking about the whole reserve: Pontesford and Earl's Hill. David and Clive thought a walk around the reserve would be appropriate to assess what was out of date as well as what might be of interest. Clive and Eleanor thought we should establish a vision of what we wanted and then worry about where to get the money from. Clive thought we should use the £500 to employ Nigel. Sarah Gibson of SWT may also be interested. **Action – JP to contact Nigel and fix a date.**

10. Practical Work on Saturday 12th December at 10.00am meeting in the Car Park.

Clive had initially thought about birch and undergrowth clearance on the Lower Fort. However, this might get in the way of the proposed Nut Search.

He therefore proposed that we attend to the **Eastern Bridleway**. There is vehicular access for quite a way but then bracken, bramble and other vegetation, as it heads towards the first gate into the field, needs clearance. Clive will prepare notices, some of which will be laminated, and deliver them to Val's home. Val volunteered to put them up around the village and

hill. **Actions CD, VW**

11. Any Other Business.

Joe raised the possibility of us applying for the Tesco Grant. It was agreed we should not worry about this at present. We need to wait for the result of the SITA Grant first.

12. Date of the next meeting was agreed as 7.30pm on 18th January 2016 following a discussion in which the need for monthly meetings was questioned. It was felt that bi-monthly would normally suffice.