

# Friends of Pontesford Hill

Minutes of the Committee Meeting held at 7.30 p.m. on Monday 14 September, 2015 at the Congregational Church, Pontesbury

**Present:** Mike Mortimer (Chair), David Morgan (Vice Chair), Brian Simmonds (Treasurer), Jan Prestwood (Sec), Jan Pursaill, Christopher Cooke, Dave Taplin, Beth Williams (SWT), Sara Pearce (SWT), Joe Penfold (LPS), Clive Dee (SWT) Carl Pickup (SWT)

## **Apologies for Absence**

Ken Day, Adrian Donnelly and Val Whittall

## **Minutes of last meeting**

It was agreed that the minutes issued for the meeting held on 14 August, 2015 are true and correct.

## **Matters arising**

None

## **Current financial position**

These were provided by the Treasurer (see statement below).

## **Management Options Survey – Report on Analysis**

- Beth Williams thanked all those who had helped during the research process and gave a Power Point presentation of her work (email copies were previously circulated by Beth) on the survey and results. Discussion followed each slide.
- David Morgan noted that there may have been some misinterpretation on the Forestry Commission policy for tree replanting and concerning the removal of mature Oaks from Lower Camp which had never been proposed. The removal of trees (conifer as well as broadleaf) in particular was a sensitive subject.
- Attracting more wildlife was considered to be important by many who had commented.
- The improvement of existing and alternative car parking arrangements was a concern to some. Mike Mortimer proposed that for future discussion on the subject of car parking, the emphasis should be made for the work to be called “maintenance for work that has not been done for 40 years”. Also the wording “re-stoned” should be used instead of “re-surfaced”. Samples of available stone types to be obtained for comparison before any work is carried out.
- There was no great support for new paths. Joe Penfold stated that the current paths network is an issue. Good maps are needed at the points of entry. It was noted that the map with a surveyed new

route which had been promised by Jonathan Walton is still required and Mike Mortimer will follow up on this.

- It was agreed that an information sheet is required to advise the general public of what and what not to do on the Reserve. It was also agreed that laminated information sheets would be prepared and ready for display at the public meeting on 13 November, 2015.
- Results of the survey show that signage needs improvement but not increasing.
- With regard to View Points, it was generally agreed that unsafe trees may be removed. A nearby Hill resident would be happy for trees to be removed from the rear of their property to prevent any risk of falling tree damage to the property – currently a high risk.
- Joe Penfold highlighted the importance placed by LPS on the need for county-wide sites of historical significance to fit together culturally and to take advantage of view-points to view the other areas and provide an interpretive theme to see a connectivity of landscape.
- Beth reported that one of the major issues under the “Comments” section was the matter of dog-fouling. Possible solutions suggested were dedicated dog-waste bins, bag and take home and “stick and flick”. Waste bins would create a collection problem with Shropshire Council. It was generally agreed that the dog-owning public should be informed and reminded of their obligations to other Hill users and that “stick and flick” was by far the best option for this site.
- Shropshire Council is responsible for maintaining the surface of the bridleway to bridleway standards.
- Beth is still trying to obtain more responses to the Motivation Survey.

#### **Access Improvements and SITA Grant Application**

- The general plan is to restore existing tracks and improve drainage to make the paths all-weather and hence the reserve more accessible. A digger may be required to resolve the drainage problems in some places. Joe, Carl and David Morgan have had site meetings with contractors Phil Goddard and Paul Butter of Shropshire Council. Quotes on costs should be received by 21 September 2015. There is a great amount of maintenance work to be done – blocked culverts, general restorative work, etc., with much new stone being required. Any work that runs through historic monuments will require special permission to proceed. Cost estimate is £15,000 to £20,000. LPS may be able to match fund.
- SITA application deadline date is 28 September, 2015 for a final outcome expected to be sometime in February, 2016.
- SITA will not fund the car park or any tree safety work. They will want to see more people accessing the Reserve as a result of their funding.

### **Down To Earth**

Beth reported that she has had difficulty in contacting the owner of Plough Garage regarding historical local photographs. Mike Mortimer said that he would issue a general appeal for photographs in his next newsletter. David Morgan is still working on obtaining digital images of important photographs.

### **New Website**

Mike Mortimer advised that some committee members already have editorial rights to the webpage but will in any event be unable to alter the basic structure of the site. It was agreed that the minutes of the monthly Committee Meeting should not be included on the website but a summary of those minutes could be useful. Mike Mortimer is still trying to arrange some website maintenance training with Andy May but if that fails then he may be able to arrange training through Pontesbury Broadplace run at the Village Hall by Robert Pither.

### **ECO Surveys**

- Joe Penfold reminded the Committee of the national nest box scheme and that this would be something for next year. Jan Pursaill will try to arrange for local school involvement
- Collection of data was discussed and Jan Pursaill confirmed that she has a full species list which she will forward to Mike to go on the website.
- Joe Penfold agreed that he would deal with bookings for the “Plants with a Purpose” event.
- A dormouse survey was suggested as being important before work starts on the hill fort. To this end a site visit to look for possible habitats was agreed to take place at 17.30 hours on 22 September, 2015 starting at the car park.

### **Practical Work**

- Mike Mortimer reported that the Ragwort removal event had been completed with some success. The limiting factor was the number and strength of the bags that were provided. He asked that in future larger and stronger bags be provided.
- With regard to future practical work activities, David Morgan asked if the “Wild Team” and the P3 group could assist. SWT advised that with 40 sites to cover they are thinly spread. P3 are all volunteers who have expressed interest in helping on the hill. It was agreed that a list of work to be done and a timeline should be prepared and then an effort made to create a core of volunteers that could be called upon to assist where and when necessary.

### **November Celebration Event**

- The event has been booked for 13 November, 2015 starting at 19.30 hours. There will be live background music. There was concern expressed over numbers that could be expected to attend so it was agreed that the event would be by ticket invitation. Val Whittall is organising the event. Mike

Mortimer is to arrange invitations and print ticketing. It was agreed that a donation box to assist with the cost of refreshments would be suitably placed to receive any monies offered. The Committee agreed a budget of £500 for the event.

- A sub-committee is to organise all display arrangements for SWT and other relevant material.

**Any Other Business**

David Morgan said that the collection of information about the Hill may be a long-term project involving the Shropshire Archives. Also he suggested we approach the Shropshire Geological Society to see if someone could write a short précis about the geology of the Hill. Mike said he knew Peter Toghill (Prof. of Geology at Birmingham) who would be ideal to write something to be included on the website.

**The next meeting will be held on Monday 19 October, 2015 at 7.30 p.m. at the Congregational Church, Pontesbury.**



**Treasurer's Report**

Bank Account:	£10,322.39	
Cash/Cheques in hand:	£ 52.40	<b><u>Total = £10,374.79</u></b>

No outgoings since our last meeting and I am not aware of any other pending costs.

Beth William's costs (£1,800.00) may need to be accounted from this.