**Friends of Pontesford Hill**

**Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 25th January 2016**

**at Pontesbury Congregational Church**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Present:** Mike Mortimer (Chair), David Morgan (Vice Chair), Christopher Cooke (Minute Secretary), Clive Dean (SWT), Joe Penfold (LPS), Adrian Donnelly, Jan Prestwood, Jan Pursaill and Dave Taplin. | |
|  |  |
| **1.** | **Apologies** were received from Ken Day, Brian Simmonds (Treasurer) and Val Whittall. |
|  |  |
| **2.** | **Minutes of the Meeting of 23rd November 2015** were accepted as a true record. |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| **3.** | **Current Financial Position.**.  Our bank balance is £9,985.73 and we have £76.90 cash in hand Financial movements since the last meeting were outgoings for the November Event: £28.50 to Hignetts for food and £68 for the hire of Pontesbury Public Hall. £1.71 had been received in interest. Including an outstanding cheque,  At this meeting, the Chair and Vice Chair signed a cheque for £1,871 to SITA UK Ltd. This is our 3rd party contribution in anticipation of the grant we are promised from them.  It was also agreed that the Friends would pay £175 towards Chris Gethin’s chainsaw training. |
|  |  |
| **5.** | **Reserve Manager’s Report:**  **Working Parties.**  Clive reported there had been two work parties so far. These had been held on the second Saturday of the month in December and January. These will continue and be augmented by ones to held on the fourth Friday of the month beginning this month. Mike said he would email P3 Members before each work party. Clive reported that there have been small numbers of helpers so far. In December, they cleared the top end of the bridleway to allow vehicle access. In January, they worked on a big sycamore that had fallen into the first field. There is still part of this tree to be cleared away in future work parties as well as clearing rhododendrons and scrub around the Lower Camp. In April, following a planning meeting with Paul Butter of SC we can begin on the access improvement project work.  **Management Plan.**  Carl Pickup (SWT) had asked for this for the end of the month but Clive said that he expected it to be ready by the end of March. |
| **(9)** | **Dormouse Survey.**  This had taken place led by Kate Thorn with five participants. Kate had said it was unlikely that there were many dormice at Lower Camp but it is hoped they may be encouraged to move in as they are present on Earl’s Hill. Some trees were also identified as possible for encouraging **bats.** |
|  | **Hoverfly Survey.**  A rare hoverfly has been found breeding on the Navelwort/Pennywort at the far end of the bulldozer track. A full mapping survey of the Navelwort may be undertaken later this year. This particular variety is not very common in Britain, however, it is found in Shropshire and North Wales. The larvae can only survive on Navelwort in dappled shade which does not dry out too early in the season. Nigel Jones will advise on the impact of this discovery on the emerging management strategy for this area. David M will draft something for our website which Clive will ask Nigel to check.  **Budget.**  Carl Pickup (SWT) wants to come to the next meeting of this Committee to talk about the budget for the Reserve. We need to reach a clear understanding about who is funding what. Clive asked about the two sets of a hundred steps. David M said only some would need repairing. Most of such work should be covered by the SITA grant for Access Improvement as well as the Council. David M pointed out that a recent Financial Strategy document suggested the Council would not be funding Rights of Way after April 2017. It was agreed the main cost this year would be the needed **Tree Safety Report and associated work re.** safety concerns. SWT uses an experienced forester and he could be employed to walk the paths and bridleway to identify work that needs to be done. SWT are obviously responsible for this but if people roam freely off the paths on the hill, we cannot take liability.  **First Aid Training.**  This is being provided by SWT on 3rd March and there are places for us. Mike will be attending.  **Oak Kissing Gate.**  Richard Phillip has made and installed this excellent gate replacing the rather rickety gate at the bottom of the Craft. Mike will write to thank him. |
|  |  |
| **6.** | **Competency Form.**  Clive has looked at this as has Mike. It was agreed that Clive, Mike and David M would meet at SWT on 4th February at 2pm to discuss it further. |
|  |  |
| **7.** | **SITA Grant.**  It was agreed that Mike and David M would meet with the SWT Finance Officer. Joe will also be there. |
|  |  |
| **8.** | **Nest Box Scheme**  Adrian said that twenty nest boxes are ready to go up having been made by the local **Scouts.** Adrian had had trouble getting the timber at such short notice but the Powis Estate helped in the end. He had followed the RSPB design and Autotyres provided the rubber. The committee thought this was brilliant and the thanked Adrian and the Scouts. The cost of the wood was £55 and the screws were £15.  David M said that the response from Mary Webb School had come rather late and they weren’t able to help with workshop facilities.  It was agreed that these 20 boxes would suffice for the 2016 season and they will be sited in the **Lower Camp** area. Adrian said that the Scouts had written their names on the back of the boxes so they will know which is theirs.  **Jonathan Groom, the SC Biodiversity Officer**  is doing a **Training Day** for nestbox monitoring. In Joe’s timetable this is on Sat 12th March but Jonathan is suggesting a weekday. He is available on 27th February and could be asked to mark the trees where they will be sited. Clive and Joe could then fix them in place.  Christopher asked whether we could have a photograph of the Scouts and the nest boxes for the website. Mike said that we should first try to get it in the local press and SWT might help with this. Once this has been achieved it can go on the website. John Bielstein might put the Scouts forward for an award.  David M said that it had not been possible so far to track down the “owner” of the boxes in the Habberley Valley but next year we might replace some of them. Dave T suggested a decision be made in September.  It was agreed that Adrian should buy the timber, up to £100, when it was available. |
|  |  |
| **10.** | **Website.**  Mike said this was a work in progress. David M and Jan Purs said it was coming along quite well. We do need more material but some has been identified tonight. The Hoverfly paper can go on. Later the nest boxes and the scouts can go on. |
|  |  |
| **11.** | **Practical Work.**  **Car Park.**  The P3 Group could be involved. This is not covered by the SITA Grant but it does fall under the LPS supported work and Joe commented there was a little more time for the LPS money.  **Shropshire Wood Carvers.**  Mike said they were happy in principle. A meeting of all interested parties will be needed soon to discuss interpretation for the combined reserve and to take things forward. Adrian said he would be interested in being part of this. |
|  |  |
| **12.** | **Date for AGM.**  Mike said the Finance Officer of SWT cannot supply the annual figures before May so we are looking at a June date. David M told Clive that we would need the costed Management Plan by then.  It will be interesting to see how many Friends renew their annual subscription. Mike and Dave T would liaise about the reminder to renew as well as assessing what we have achieved in readiness for the AGM.  The date will be finalized at the next meeting. It is possible it could follow a walk on the Hill. |
|  |  |
| **13.** | **Any Other Business.**  **Lottery Licence.**  Dave T asked whether there was any need to renew this. It was agreed there was no need.  **Hill Fort/Toposcope.**  Joe produced a map of other hill forts that can be seen from the Earl’s Hill fort. He wondered if this could be a theme for the interpretation on the hill and whether a suitable toposcope could be placed there. This map could also be put on the website. |
|  |  |
| **14.** | **Date of the next meeting** will be on **14th March 2016.** It was also agreed that we will meet at **7.00pm** rather than 7.30pm. |