

Friends of Northcote Nature Reserve

5th AGM – 20th Oct 2021

Attendees

Vanessa Smith – Chair
Alan Smith – Member
Dean Griffiths – Member and NNR scheme designer and coordinator
Ben Driver – Member
Andrew Miklewski – Committee Member
Lynn Halstead – Committee Member
Jo Bonner – Member
Ady Collins – Secretary
Anna White - Member
Tilly Briggs – Junior member
Dani Kutzmutz - Member
Sophia Griffiths – Junior member
Dylan Griffiths – Junior member

Chairs Report

Links to the chairs report is on the website
Birdboxes have been installed including an owl box
This is the second year of the wildflower meadow – which was instigated by FoNNR to help with green corridors. Also the Poppy field on top of air raid shelter (although weather was not ideal for a good second year bloom).

Noted - File name on 2020 AGM minutes is incorrect

Financial Update

Current balance in the fundraising account (£116) –
Funding money for the main project works on site is dealt with by LB Hounslow.
Progressing with the admin updates of the FoNNR Lloyds account, so we need to update the signatures
Some junior members raised £47.70 doing the Captain Tom 100 challenge, baking & selling cakes. Generally, we need to start planning fundraising on a bigger scale and with a longer term strategy.

Elections

Chair – Vanessa Smith stood down as Chair. Volunteers called for. Dean Griffiths agreed to step in, Ady Collins seconded. No other nominees. Motion passed

Secretary – Ady Collins volunteered to re-stand. Seconded by Dean Griffiths. Motion passed.

Treasurer – No volunteers came forward (Note - Dani Kutzmutz volunteered afterwards for the position after the meeting concluded).

Committee Members – Lynn, Alan Smith, Vanessa Smith.

Planning – Dean updated:

this is a complex process with land use surveys etc. Full planning permission was granted Xmas eve. Following on from that the Environment Agency permit relating to all the river activities was approved in March. That covered all the main approvals

to allow us to proceed with the procurement and tender. Since this there has been a long process to get the procurement/tender processed. The legal team have checked all legal/contractual requirements. This is going out on Monday 25th October 2021. It will be a full tender going on to the London Portal. We have already engaged with several key potential bidders, and they are familiar with the project, including some that have worked with Force previously.

Timelines – Out for a month to tender. Come back and be considered, along with an interview process (overseen by Dean with the HC parks Dept). This will take a while, including site visits. Programming for a 4-6 week mobilisation period. Look to be starting on site around February and anticipating 5-6 weeks for all the main works to be completed but maturing on the planting etc will take a while longer. Fencing etc will remain until it is deemed suitable to remove.

Funding is all still sitting there. We approached several funding opportunities, including Mayors Grow Back greener scheme (this was London wide with a considerable pot). They chose approx. 30 projects from hundreds of submissions. We achieved 6% of the whole pot, providing additional £40k for NNR. More funding focus in the long-term initiatives and strategies for implementing all the educational/research/training programmes that we would like to get involved with the project.

Collaboration and moving forward

Lots of collaboration/discussions going on in the background (scientific, environmental etc) this was always part of the plan and was included in the planning applications. We are looking at other initiatives with research-based groups, such as a group from Cardiff who focus on the medicinal qualities of plants (they have already done a survey of all the plants, thanks to the Tidal Crane Association). We would like people to get involved (observation, citizen scientists, hands on help etc).

We invited some younger members tonight to emphasise the focus on youth and education and working with the schools.

Q: When you say the Funding money has been parked – has this been parked forever, or does this have a limit?

A. This has been there for several years, and we have used some of this. It was S106 funding. It is all allocated to the project. The figure decreases slightly from time to time. It took a while for them to initiate a full invasive species plan (knotweed etc), and this is all factored into the scheme. LBH have hinted extra moneys have started to come in through new funds.

Discussion have begun for progressing the reach of the Nature Reserve, and the overlap with community/people and history. NNR would like to support the heritage of the Horticultural Society, so we are looking at some collaboration. The Horticultural Society has been here for 100 years. The allotments are a separate entity. The Horticultural Society has two large allotments that are attached to the hut but not part of the allotments. Looking at the education and research aspects of NNR, it presented the idea of integrating the two and apply the philosophy of the nature reserve to the building and make it sustainable, low carbon footprint etc and

create a place that is a significant aspect of the community and will allow other groups to also benefit from the improved space. Model of the hut shown and discussed. The intent is to re-roof the hut, and include a disabled toilet with a septic tank. Timber roof on top, and a green roof. The back edge is south facing, so will include a full length of solar panels to power everything. The bones of the building is sound, so we are utilising this and improving (over stages, starting with electricity). Front - considering using a rammed earth wall to act as thermal mass (utilisation the soil from the nature reserve) and the existing concrete wall will act as a shutter. Rear will also have a rammed wall, but utilising the heat from the sun to grow plants to fund the project further.

We are also considering a formal physic garden as part of a formal research site, linking in with the Cardiff University element and Kew Gardens. Small scale, but plans to have formal elements and allotments. The boundary features will tie in with NNR, such as dead hedge. This will not be open access to the allotments, as the hut is a controlled area. A weather station and environment monitoring equipment will be on the roof of the extension (in a concealed, protected space for the equipment). Envisioning small groups of 10-15 using the space. It is very small scale, and all related to the ecology of the Crane and ecology of the nature reserve. Timescales – this will be individual elements happening at different times. Engagement and sharing with all kinds of community groups. Potential to hire the space for generation of income. Horticultural Society happy with the plans. The building belongs to the Horticultural Society on the land that belongs to Hounslow Council.

Nature Reserve plans have not changed. The biggest challenge last year was testing and the technical and appropriateness of certain aspect of the project (soil quantity and samples etc). Conceptual and design strategy came through. It was an enormous and rigorous testing strategy, but we came through this and it is reassuring that this process is so rigorous. These are important considerations. The contractor will be living and breathing this strategy, as this is all in the tender documentations. The Environment Agency want to record and film the progress as a exemplary project of its type nationally. There is a lot of interest and a lot of support for what we are doing.

Up until now huge effort was on the tendering process, but this will now pass to the Contractors (Dean Griffiths is overseeing this, but a project manager will be provided by HC). Unknown who the Project Manager will be at this stage. This will include Health & Safety aspects.

We need to focus on communications and identity. Communicate this to people outside to get more people involved.

END OF MEETING