



Friends of Rising Sun Country Park

Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 April 2023

Present: Claire Partleton (Chair), Eric Styan (Treasurer), Keith Taylor (Secretary), Jan Casson, Vivien Fenn-Webber, Amanda Williams, Pixie Phelan (North Tyneside Council - NTC), Ian Hogg (McDonalds), Jill Potts (Northumberland Estates)

Apologies: Dennis Nelson, Pat Nelson, Val Watson, Janet Weatherburn, Chris Tallack (NTC)

Full introductions were made; in particular to welcome Jill Potts to the meeting. She was there to represent Northumberland Estates (NE) and she later gave a summary of her role, and explained how NE were keen to build a close relationship with all the Park's groups and visitors.

Matters arising from February Meeting

Chippings for the Wigloo structure in the Wildlife Garden: NTC arboriculture team unable to provide due to currently chipping trees with ash die back; we cannot use wood chippings which may have been infected. For the time being we will not purchase any chippings ourselves. We will need to regularly remove any weeds growing in the planting holes, and to make sure the structures get plenty of water when the weather turns drier. We can include both tasks as part of the regular Thursday morning volunteer sessions. **(AP1: to review at next meeting).**

Interpretation Boards and Signage: NTC is looking at how Section 106 money for signage will be used. The aim is to address the boards and signage generally across the whole park. Vivien will pass on to Pixie the details of the company which has been used before. **(AP2: NTC for May meeting).**

Nature Walks and Talks – Guided bird walk: Two events were held, and we have received some extremely positive feedback, so this is something we can consider running again in the future.

Bat Walks: Eric has had no response from the organiser of events in Wallsend Park, so for the time being we will not pursue this. We could, however, arrange our own event.

Gardening Sub-Group: Jan and Janet attended the Voluntary Organisations Development Agency (VODA) Grow and Eat Spring Social event on 18 February, and there will be another event in the Autumn. The sub-group has met to discuss their plans for our allotment area and is now in the process of writing up a plan, to be known as the Backyard Project, to support the application for a grant. Any funds received are likely to be spent on compost and soil improvers for the raised beds. The maximum grant is £ 500.00. **(AP3: review in May).**

Great British Spring Clean: Another successful event was held on 25 March, with thanks going to McDonalds, ASDA and 1st Rising Sun Brownies, some of whom were doing badge work. Despite the very poor weather, some 60+ bags of litter were collected, so well done to everyone who took part. The next event will take place on 24 April, and consideration will be given to tackling areas where we haven't worked for some time, which can include NE land.

City Nature Challenge: Information about this is on the Noticeboard, and this involves downloading the iNaturalist App and taking photos of anything which is spotted in the park, such as birds, bats, flowers, insects etc, then uploading them to the project: 'City Nature Challenge 2023: North East England' so as to contribute to the overall total. We aim to undertake recording activities over the weekend of 28 April – 1 May and we should be able to borrow some equipment from NTC to help with activities such as pond-dipping. The event is already advertised on our Facebook page, so hopefully we will get a few people involved.

Remembering the Past: Claire has scanned the material she's been given and has put together a rudimentary archive. Vivien also has some documents which she will bring in. The aim is to link this work with the Heritage week in September this year, and the 20th anniversary of the opening of the Centre in October. It was agreed that any requests for people to share their personal memories will be confined to the Friends' Facebook page only. If anyone is interested in going to the Woodhorn museum to view the Rising Sun Colliery banner, can you please let Claire know. **(AP4: review in May).**

NTC event on 16 August 2023: We will have a stall at this event again, as we did at Christmas, so we need to decide what we intend to do on the day. To support the Scarecrow competition, Jan kindly agreed to take the lead for the Friends' entry. McDonalds, the Brownies and Northumberland Estates are also looking to create scarecrows, which will be placed around the park to create a trail. **(AP5: review in May).**

The Friends' Calendar: The bakery has provisionally agreed to make a donation to the cost of the calendar, and they will confirm nearer the time. On behalf of NE, Jill said that funding might be available. Keith had drafted a form of words for the Facebook page to invite park visitors to share their better photos with us, for consideration of inclusion in the calendar and Claire has provided the technical specifications. Keith will incorporate these into the draft and will send it out. **(AP6: review in May).**

Suggested Projects for 2024: This will be carried forward, but the jobs list has been updated. No further action is required at the moment regarding the suspected leaking pipe in the wildlife garden; if it becomes an issue, it will be reported to Chris.

Northumberland Estates (NE): Jill began by thanking the group for the invitation and said that on behalf of NE she was keen to help everyone with an interest in the wider park area to work together so as to support each other and make the whole area more welcoming. Ideally, she wanted visitors to feel that there was one park, and not a series of unconnected spaces which were under different management and control. She then gave a summary of some of the problems which she and her colleagues were dealing with on a regular basis, such as vandalism, graffiti and littering, all of which had resulted in police action. They are looking at pathways and general access across the NE land, and consideration was being given to re-establishing the meadow area, with the possibility of re-introducing some grazing areas as well. The group thanked Jill for attending and said they looked forward to developing a good working relationship, for mutual benefit.

Treasurer's Report: Eric has completed the end of year accounts (1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023) and these show that the income for the year was £ 2,207.63, the bulk of which came

from donations and calendar sales, with expenditure of £ 1007.97, the bulk of which was spent on various projects, as well as the production of the calendar. At the year-end we had a total of £ 3,924.08. We have not had the accounts independently audited for some time, and we are required to do so according to our constitution. We've been quoted a cost of approximately £ 100.00 to have this done by a VODA contact, but both Eric and Amanda believe they have contacts who would be willing to do this, possibly free of charge. They will make enquiries and report back. **(AP7: review in May).**

Other Business: Despite us providing a great deal of information to the SumUp company, which would allow us to accept payments by card, we've been informed that we don't meet their requirements, so the account has been closed.

Eric and Keith will look at installing a new rope fence in the wildlife garden, using the posts already held in stock. **(AP8: review in May).**

We need to arrange a date for the Annual General Meeting, but it was agreed that this can be done once we've had the independent review of the accounts. We have six months after the end of the financial year to hold the AGM, which gives us until the end of September. **(See AP7 above).**

After a discussion, it was agreed that we will continue with the Monthly Newsletter, and a huge vote of thanks goes to Eric for the sterling effort he puts in on this. Now that we have Northumberland Estates on board, there will be scope to cover things from their perspective in the Newsletter. To give NE a flavour of what the Newsletter covers, Claire will send Jill a copy of the latest edition.

As we are a volunteer group, we are all eligible for free on-line training provided through VODA. If you're interested, please speak to Claire.

The Easter Egg raffle generated £ 75.00 and the winning numbers have been posted. Thank you to all who donated the prizes, particularly Lisa and Michelle ASDA's Community Champions for organising a very generous donation of chocolate eggs.

The group discussed methods of obtaining feedback from park users as it had been suggested that the park could have a 'suggestion box'. Pixie informed the group of NTCs online feedback form. Group to consider ways in which park users view can be sought. **(AP9: review in May).**

In view of the pressure on time at this meeting, Claire explained that she would be speaking to Pixie about the procedures for recruiting new volunteers, and will report back, either by the group e-mail or at the next meeting. **(AP10: review in May).**

Next Meeting: Friday 12 May 2023, 12 midday @ Countryside Centre, RSCP