



Friends of Rising Sun Country Park

Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 March 2023

Present: Claire Partleton (Chair), Eric Styan (Treasurer), Keith Taylor (Secretary), Janet Weatherburn, Jan Casson, Dennis Nelson, Chris Tallack (North Tyneside Council - NTC), Stephen Gibbinson (NTC), Elaine Elliott (NTC), Ian Hogg (McDonalds), Michelle and Lisa (ASDA).

Apologies: Pat Nelson, Val Watson, Vivien Fenn-Webber

Matters arising from February Meeting

Willow structures in the Wildlife Garden – The Willow structure was purchased from The Willow Bank at a cost of £ 266.95 and was installed on 2 March. Thanks go to all those who helped out, including some new faces, and particularly to Justine Holdsworth for her valuable advice on the day. Maintenance instructions have been laminated and copies are held in the Volunteers' room cupboard, additional digital copies are held by Claire and NTC. As part of the regular maintenance, we will need to ensure it is regularly watered and kept clear of weeds whilst it establishes itself. Chris will speak to his colleagues to see if a supply of wood chippings can be provided, to prevent the interior ground from getting too muddy, and to suppress weeds. **(Action Point 1: CT)**

Interpretation Boards and Signage – There have been some IT issues within NTC but good progress has been made. The George Stephenson heritage panel has been re-installed, with thanks going to Eric and Chris.

Bird and Bat Boxes – All of these across the wider park area have now been identified and catalogued. If we wish, we can put up a few new Bat boxes, but there are no immediate time pressures should we decide to do so.

Squirrel Survey – It was decided at the last meeting, that in view of the lack of a response from the bio-diversity officer and at the recommendation of Cramlington & District Red Squirrel Group, we would cease any further monitoring work. Claire has sent out the relevant e-mails to alert people to this effect, and in return, we have received the thanks of the Cramlington group for the work done over the years. One of the squirrel boxes has been removed.

Nature Walks and Talks – Guided bird walk: There is one space left (out of eight) on the event scheduled for 30 March at 08.30, and three spaces left for the second event on 6 April (same time). Claire will be meeting with the walk leader, Oscar, on 29 March at 2.00 for a pre-walk, so if any Committee member is available to help, please meet at the Car Park. **Bat Walks:** Eric will contact the organiser of events in Wallsend Park, to see if he is available/willing to run an event for the Friends Group at RSCP. **(AP2: ES)**

Educational Visits to the Stables – In view of the on-going uncertainty regarding the running of the farm, it is thought quite unlikely that these could be arranged for several months, so it was agreed that this will be put on hold and re-considered once the picture becomes clearer.

Seed Swap event – Claire and Jan attended the event on 18 February, along with some 200 other attendees, where they acquired some reasonably-priced seeds for the allotment, and some good practical advice. This is likely to become an annual event, with the possibility of some seeds for perennial edible produce being available next year. Michael Cruddace has emailed to ask if anyone is interested in helping him set up a regional seed bank: Claire has the contact details.

Jan and Janet will be representing our group at the Grow&Eat Spring Social event, which is being run by the Voluntary Organisations Development Agency (VODA) on Thursday 23 March, between 11.00 and 1.00. VODA is the organisation which helps community groups to publicise their activities and generate new volunteers. This led to a discussion as to whether our Friends' group should consider submitting an application for a grant of up to £ 500.00 to help develop the allotment area. In view of the work which has already been done there, and the scope for further development, it was agreed that an application would be submitted. In order to save time at the monthly Friends' full meetings, a gardening sub-committee will deal with matters relating to the allotment area, and they will report back as and when updates are required. Anyone interested in joining the gardening sub-committee should let Claire know. **(AP3: All)**

Great British Spring Clean – Our event will take place on 25 March, and a flyer for this has been put on the Noticeboard in the Rising Sun main building and advertised on Social Media platforms. Ian will be speaking to his colleagues to discuss how McDonalds intends to support this event, and Asda provided their contact details at the meeting, as they are keen to get involved as well. Claire has also delivered flyers to local Scouts and Guide groups. If anyone is involved with any other groups who could help out on the day, please see Claire, who can provide more flyers. **(AP4: All). Note:** We will still be going ahead with the usual litter-pick on Monday 27 March.

City Nature Challenge – The aim of this project is to identify the different types of wildlife which exist in our area. Claire has completed an on-line awareness session and she will send out copies of the slides, to provide more background to the rest of the group. **(AP5: CP)**. Our event will take place on Saturday, 29 April, so we need to publicise it on the Noticeboard and social media.

Remembering the Past – This has been under discussion for a few months now, but in view of the volume of information which is being collated, and the number of other issues with which we are involved, it was agreed that we will aim to link it with the Heritage week in September, and the 20th anniversary of the opening of the Centre in October, which gives us more time to work with. We need to invite people with personal stories and memories of the Rising Sun over the many years of its existence, to share them with us, and we will put a request on our Facebook page as well as the Facebook page of the Community Group. **(AP6: ES)**. Claire has been in contact with Woodhorn museum regarding access to the RS Colliery banner and they have agreed that after April this year, we can arrange a time for the Friends Group to view this in storage, as it will not be on public display again until June 2024. Woodhorn have provided Claire with a photo of the banner, but this cannot be used for publication or promotional purposes.

Promoting the Group in the NTC magazine – The Friends' group should be appearing in the community space section in the next edition of Our North Tyneside Magazine which will go out in June. Stephen will let Claire know if any further information is required.

20th Anniversary of the opening of the Centre/ NTC activities in 2023 – Elaine distributed copies of the proposed schedule of NTC events this year, along with a summary of what is being planned for the Family Summer festival day on Wednesday, 16 August. The Friends' group will be helping out with this event and we will also have a stall to publicise our activities. It was agreed that we will organise a Scarecrow competition for the 16th. **(AP7: All)**.

The Friends' Calendar – Eric has been in touch with the printers and their advice is to continue with the same size and format as in previous years, as they believe this is the best value for money. Eric will speak to the bakery, to see if they are prepared to sell the calendar, as before, and make a donation to the costs. **(AP8: ES)**. We now need to invite park visitors to share their better photos with us, for consideration of inclusion in the calendar. Keith will draft a proposed message. **(AP9: KT)**.

Treasurer's Report

Thank you to Vivien for funding the cost of a cherry tree which was planted last month. We now have £ 4,105.25 in the bank and £ 69.94 in cash. Expenses to be addressed include the Willow structure and fees to Justine (her work on the willow) and Oscar (Guided Bird Walk). This led to a discussion on any projects we might like to consider this year; ideas included a camera to capture wildlife images overnight in the wildlife garden. These ideas, and any others, will be discussed in more detail at the April meeting. **(AP10: KT for next agenda)**.

It was noted that we have not had an independent review of our financial records for some time, so we need to consider this in time for the 2023 Annual General Meeting (likely to be in May).

Other Business – The Jobs list has been updated. Janet asked if the suspected leaking pipe in the wildlife garden had been investigated. There does not appear to be an issue now, but should this recur, it will be reported to NTC. **(AP11: CP)**

It was noted that a fence on the Northumberland Estates land had fallen down and rubbish had been deposited in their pond. Claire will email them to see if they intend to deal with the matter. **(AP12: CP)**.

(VODA): During discussions with representatives from VODA, Claire was made aware of a range of policy documents which groups such as ours are recommended to adopt. It was noticeable that apart from our Constitution and General Data Protection Regulations documents, there are several areas for which we do not hold policy documents. Claire will send out copies of the documents which VODA recommends for consideration, as some policies areas could be covered by volunteering with NTC.

Next Meeting: Friday 14 April 2023, 12 midday @ Countryside Centre, RSCP