



**Minutes of the Meeting on 13 October 2023**  
**Rising Sun Country Park: 12.00**

**Present:** Claire Partleton (Chair), Keith Taylor (Secretary), Eric Styan (Treasurer), Amanda Williams, Ian Hogg, Jan Casson, Janet Weatherburn, Martin Huttly, Vivien Fenn-Webber

**North Tyneside Council (NTC):** Pixie Phelan, Elaine Elliott, Chris Tallack, Stephen Gibbinson and Amanda Bennett.

**Apologies:** Lisa and Michelle (ASDA), Dr Rev Rae Caro.

The Minutes from the meeting on 8 September 2023 were formally accepted.

**Action Points from September:**

All items proposed on the **VODA Grow & Eat Grant** application have been purchased, leaving a remaining balance of £ 65.01. It was agreed that this sum should be spent on soil improvers. Eric had provided a price list from the Little Moor Allotments and has agreed to purchase some fish blood and bone, as well as some bamboo canes to help support the plants. The meeting agreed unanimously that there should be no distinction whatever between the Friends' activities in the allotment and the park; income and expenditure will be treated as one, and activities will be carried out as required.

In the **Wildlife Garden**, Eric and John had been busy the day before, removing the duckweed which had built up in the pond. NTC have requested that apart from routine tidying up in the Wildlife Garden, plans for extensive project work should be put on hold and reviewed when the Centre Technician returns to work. Stephen has put together a list of the jobs in the centre-grounds that can be carried out during volunteer sessions (to be circulated with these notes). Further project work in the Wildlife Garden and the Giant's Garden will be added to the Friends' planning document to be reviewed later.

The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary event to commemorate the opening of the Centre took place on 9 October, and the Friends' **Remembering the Past** display was very well received and attracted numerous positive comments from the visitors. This featured an exhibition of the history of the grounds and buildings, from its time as an isolation hospital through to its current role as a visitors' centre. A number of well-deserved "thank yous" are in order; to Jan for the wonderful felt model of the Stag's head, to Claire, Amanda W and Susan McGinty (NTC) for their hard work in carrying out extensive research, pulling it all together and creating the display, and to Elaine (NTC), for all her help in planning and organising the event.

The **plaque for the Stag's head** has been installed. Following a discussion, it was agreed, reluctantly, that we would not go ahead with trying to erect a plaque next to one of the cherry trees in the centre grounds, given the practical difficulties in maintaining it. Thanks go to Vivien for the purchase of one of the trees.

The **calendar for 2024** has been delivered and is now on sale in the café and at the Earth & Fire Bakery, with adverts appearing on social media and the noticeboard. 100 copies were ordered at a printing cost of £ 333.60. The photographers whose pictures were chosen have been invited to collect their complimentary copy from Reception.

In terms of the **Volunteering Policies** that need to be adopted for anyone working in the park, Pixie has been in touch with a number of colleagues and is awaiting their response. As this is likely to be a time-consuming process, it was suggested that this be moved off our monthly agendas and added to the formal planning document, to be reviewed in the Spring.

Some of the material used in the Remembering the Past event will be added to our developing **Website**, in the coming months.

We had received a revised invoice in connection with the installation of the **Wigloo** in March. Although this considerably lower than the amount originally sought, it is still more than the amount we felt justified; however, in order to settle the matter, it was agreed that we would pay the sum of £ 83.00.

The **Christmas event** for the public takes place on December 2, from 11.00 till 3.00 and this will feature a number of indoor market stalls, fairground rides and family activities as well as a Santa's Grotto. It has been suggested that the Friends could put together a trail in the Centre grounds (similar basis as the

Scarecrow Trail). In addition, we will be selling the calendar and can consider whether to run a raffle. We may be able to call on ASDA for some donations. Elaine has requested two volunteers to help with the Santas Grotto and marshalling activities; please let Elaine know if you are available to help. Vivien will look into the possibility of getting some 'reindeer' to be present for this event and will liaise with Elaine to progress this further.

The Schools Christmas Grotto sessions start on 27 November. Preparations for this will start week commencing 16<sup>th</sup> October. Amanda B and Claire will coordinate a list of jobs that the Friends will help and support the Outdoor Learning Team with. We aim to tackle these during the normal Thursday morning volunteering sessions. In addition, there are a number of activities that we have been asked to help with in preparation for the public event, Claire will co-ordinate these with Elaine.

The **Euro bio-blitz** event took place over the weekend of September 29 and 30, and this involved Claire and Amanda W making wildlife observations across the whole park and recording their findings via iNaturalist; and a public event, led by the Outdoor Education team, featuring two pond-dipping sessions and a discovery walk. The Friends Group recorded 176 observations of 145 different species, positioning 28<sup>th</sup> out of 8,548 participants across Europe. Well done to all those involved!

**Treasurer's Report:** As usual, there are some expenses to be accounted for, such as the Calendar, but we currently have a bank balance of £ 4,271. 50, and cash of £ 45.69.

**Update from NTC:** there are some updates in terms of the Section 106 monies. The Roundhouse in the Celtic village is to be demolished and there are plans to upgrade this area. The next phase of removing storm damaged trees is due to take place but there is a possibility that this may need to be delayed. New pontoon tern islands for Swallow Pond have arrived. NTC is also looking to install a new bird hide at Swallow Pond and is in the process of installing new signage and information boards.

**Other Business:** The Gosforth Wild Web is a new two-year project being run by Natural History Society of Northumbria (NHSN). It is a citizen science project with the aim of encouraging the public to identify and record nature in neighbourhoods surrounding the Gosforth Nature Reserve. The Rising Sun Country Park falls within the area included in the project. Claire has joined the

project via the iNaturalist app, on behalf of the Friends' Group. All wildlife observations can be added to this project via the iNaturalist and iRecord apps or directly with NHSN. NHSN have advertised an 'urban nature walk' on 31 October, meeting in ASDA car park at 1.00, it is likely that they will be visiting the park as part of this event. However, NTC was unaware of this event and, as such, have requested that the Friends do not advert the event via our social media platforms until the relevant checks can be made with NHSN.

There was a discussion on whether we should get involved in **Autumn bulb planting**, but we need to bear in mind that we would be required to source the bulbs from an NTC-approved supplier. Because of Health and Safety issues, it is unlikely that we would be able to run an event involving members of the public at fairly short notice. Claire will discuss the matter with NTC and send out further information.

**The next meeting will take place on 10 November 2023.**