



Friends of Rising Sun Country Park

Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 June 2023

Present: Claire Partleton (Chair), Eric Styan (Treasurer), Keith Taylor (Secretary), Vivien Fenn-Webber, Janet Weatherburn, Amanda Williams, Donald MacDonald; Pixie Phelan, Chris Tallack and Stephen Gibbinson (North Tyneside Council – NTC), Ian Hogg (McDonalds), Michelle and Lisa (Community Champions - ASDA).

Apologies: Jan Casson, Rev. Dr Rae Caro (Rising Sun Neighbours)

Action points from May 2023

Chippings for the Wigloo area: Janet has come across a site called Green Line Community Arb, which connects local tree and land workers to recycle various resources. Claire has registered our interest. In addition, NTC may now be able to provide some chippings, as more work is being done across the park, and the trees involved are believed to be free of disease. **(AP1).**

Voluntary Organisations Development Agency (VODA) Grant: Our application for grant funding to develop the allotment area was successful (£ 460.00) and a number of purchases have already been made, taking advantage of special offers and multi-buys. We only have some perennial plants to be acquired, which will leave a balance of about £ 60.00. We are obliged to only spend this money in accordance with the grant application, and we are also required to demonstrate to VODA how the funds have been used, and to show what the benefits have been. We can decide at the next meeting what the balance of the funds should be spent on, by which time we'll have a clearer picture of the amount involved. **(AP2).**

Claire enquired about using group finances to fund some wildlife habitat creation in the allotment area, however it was suggested that it would not be good use of funds because of the access problems for the public to see it.

This led onto a discussion about the Wildlife Garden, which is in need of attention. Claire will speak to Heather and Amanda (NTC Education Team) to find out if there is anything they would like to see there, and this will also include the Giant's Garden area, which has been tidied up a few times but doesn't appear to be in much use. **(AP3).**

Vivien has kindly offered to group some plants from her garden.

Remembering the Past: Although Claire and Amanda have been continuing their research and made contact with a few organisations, there have been no responses to date. After a discussion it was agreed that, to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the opening of the main centre building in October this year, we will hold a presentation on the history of the Scaffold Hill Hospital, which used to occupy the site of the current centre building. As for the format which such a presentation will take, Amanda and Eric offered to work as a sub-group to consider putting together something along the lines of a slide show, using the on-site TV facilities. **(AP4).**

NTC Event on 16 August 2023: In addition to the Scarecrow trail, there will be a number of traditional fairground-type activities for the children. ASDA has also kindly offered to contribute some prizes for the children. **(AP5).**

Calendar for 2024: Despite the poster on the Noticeboard and a permanent notice on our Facebook page, we have had no photographic entries for the calendar. However, we do have 5 or 6 people who regularly contribute their pictures on our Facebook page, so Claire will contact them individually to see if they would submit some photographs. **(AP6).**

The Group's Status: At earlier meetings, we considered whether there were any advantages to us seeking to acquire charitable status. Keith and Claire had done some research and this is quite a complicated process, with the option of a number of different legal structures, however given that our annual income is on such a small scale, meaning that there are no specific financial advantages, it was agreed that this is not something the group will pursue further.

Dead Hedge in the Wildlife Garden: This will be addressed as part of the wider discussion about this area and the Giant's Garden, however late summer/ early autumn are considered the best time for this work. **(See AP3).**

Volunteer Policies: There is a wide range of Health & Safety policy documents held by NTC which volunteers should be aware of while working on-site. Pixie has been reviewing these with Stephen and they have compiled a file specifically for volunteers. This is currently available to view in the office. They are proposing a volunteer awareness session to go through the different policies which must be adhered to, so that we are all aware of appropriate PPE to use and safety issue to consider when undertaking various tasks. **(AP7).**

Update from Northumberland Estates: Nothing to report as there was no representation at meeting.

Treasurer's Report

We now have £ 4,395.88 in the bank, plus cash in hand of £ 79.94, although there are a number of expenses to be paid. Bank signatories need updating. **(AP8).** The new donation boxes are now in use in the café.

Other business

The open days at **the farm** went ahead last month and it is believed that something in the region of 20 parties expressed an interest. The next stage is the completion of a comprehensive bid document, which NTC will review, with the possibility of formal interviews. It is not expected that this process will be completed before Christmas.

Claire has met with representatives from **Rising Sun Neighbours** (a group of churches working together to help communities around the park), which included a tour of the park. They will

be attending the event on 16 August (and will be contributing some scarecrows). When time permits, they will attend our monthly meetings.

The staff kitchen is now available for our use, and we can purchase items as and when we need them. **Please remember to keep this communal area tidy!**

Claire has been working on setting up a **website** for the Friends' group, although this is still in its early stages. **(AP9)**.

It was noticed that the **plaque** on the dipping pond fence was very worn down and almost illegible, so it was agreed that we would get a replacement. We will also get a plaque for the cherry tree in the centre grounds. **(AP10)**.

It was suggested that future agendas should include a spot for a specific **update from NTC**, as it seems that a new pontoon for the lake has been approved, and most of the Friends' group were unaware. Updates from NTC should enable the Friends' group to co-ordinate their volunteering activities to support them.

Donald was very keen to tell the group about EARTH X TV, a Freeview channel dedicated to promoting the environment and sustainability, and which is a very useful source of information.

The next meeting is on Friday 14 July 2023, 12pm at the Countryside Centre