



Friends of Rising Sun Country Park **Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 January 2024**

Present: Claire Partleton (Chair & minute taker), Jan Casson, Vivien Fenn-Webber, Martin Huttly, Janet Weatherburn, Amanda Williams, Stephen Gibbinson and Elaine Elliott (North Tyneside Council – NTC).

Apologies: Keith Taylor, Rev Dr Rae Caro (St Marks Church & Rising Sun Neighbours), Eric Styan, Chris Tallack, Pixie Phelan and Amanda Bennett (NTC),

The Minutes of the November meeting were accepted as a true record. There was no meeting in December 2023.

Matters arising from the November Meeting

Voluntary Organisations Development Agency (VODA) Grant: Receipts, report and evaluation documents for the Grant have been forwarded and accepted by VODA. This action is now completed.

Members discussed the possibility of applying for further community grants. The Friends Group would not be eligible for further grants from the VODA Grow & Eat Community Fund for twelve months, although we could consider applying to other funding sources where appropriate.

Feedback from the Christmas Event (2 December): Elaine thanked the group for their help with the Christmas Fayre, it was a successful event that received lots of positive comments. Well done to all involved!

Friends Group fundraising activities faced the usual problems of lack of ability to take card payments within an increasingly cashless society and possibly pressures of cost-of-living crisis. There are still several unclaimed raffle prizes. It was agreed sufficient efforts had been made to inform people of the winning numbers via social media and notice boards, that been agreed at point of sale. Several prizes had now reach expiry dates.

It was agreed that going forward fundraising would be limited to our donation boxes for duck/food and allotment produce. This will be reviewed, particularly if we are raising money for a specific project.

New Bird Boxes: Eric has purchased wood for these. It was questioned where these would be sited and what kind of boxes would be produced. This is to be agreed with Eric.

It was suggested that a wooden donation box be made for the Sharing the Harvest table outside the cafe as the plastic box had blown off the table during high winds before Christmas.

Nature Walks and Talks: Claire had been in touch with Oscar, who was happy to lead a nature walk although event would need to take place before early February due to his commitments. All agreed that this did not give long enough for planning and advertising. It was suggested that the group could explore the possibility of running a regular 'Nature Discovery Walk' where group could learn from each other and use apps and spotters guides to increase our own knowledge. Elaine reminded the group that any planned events would need approval from NTC. Further discussion is therefore required with NTC to pursue this idea, although a

provisional day for these events to take place was suggested to be the third Thursday each month.

Litterpicking Equipment: The park team have provided the group with new equipment. Claire to provide Elaine with the list of dates planned for this year. Date of next event is Monday 29th January at 10:30 and will continue to be held on the last Monday of each month (excluding December).

Treasurer's Report: Eric has provided the group with the following financial report –

'Since our last meeting we have cash income from the cafe collection and two from the duck food. Unfortunately, the duck food has been rather obscured in the cafe which might be a reason very little sold.... We purchased bird food at £23.99. I have transferred £100 cash to bank.

The Bakery have paid £150 by BACS for the calendars they sold so a big thanks to them for their support.

Cash £36.79 Bank £4061.78

As regard calendars:

Cafe 1/11 £146

Cafe 29/11 £50

Xmas Fair 2/12 £60

Cafe 6/1 £78

*Total Cafe **£334** (there is still money in the box in the cafe so not absolute total)*

Bakery £150

*Grand Total **£484** to date.*

Calendar cost £333.60

NB - Funds raised at Christmas fayre was not reported. Need to check amount with Eric.

Calendar Update: We have 10 unsold calendars in the café. The group agreed to reduce the price to £3, and advertise this reduction on social media etc.

A discussion was held regarding producing a calendar for 2025 as sales have dwindled year on year. It was suggested that while it is time consuming endeavour that does not generate a significant amount of revenue, it does raise the profile of the park and the group. It was agreed that more consideration needed to be given before deciding to go ahead for 2025. A suggestion was to explore producing a smaller, slimline calendar or a series of blank greetings cards that could be sold year-round as an alternative. We could also revisit getting sponsorship - possibly from ASDA?

Vivien agreed to contact an acquaintance who has a card producing business to explore costs for producing greetings cards.

Stephen Gibbinson confirmed that it would be ok to sell cards in the café on a cash only basis.

Update from North Tyneside Council (NTC) – Elaine reported that a group from The Princes Trust via Newcastle United Foundation would be engaged in maintenance work in the Quarry from 5th February for two weeks. This work will focus mainly on improvements to the

Quarry Steps. During the February half term work will commence to dismantle the Celtic Roundhouse, other works planned for this area are still under discussion for the moment. Due to the planned works in the Celtic Village there will be no events planned in the park for the February half-term, but Outdoor Education are planning to run family events on Tuesdays and Thursdays during the Easter and May half-term holidays.

Other business:

North Tyneside Garden Network meeting (Tuesday 16th Jan 10-12) Janet and Amanda Williams to attend this social and networking meeting on behalf of the group. Claire to forward details of meeting to them.

Upcoming Dates for the Diary

- **RSBP Big Garden Bird Watch** (26th -28th January) It was agreed that this should be a self-led activity again this year. RSBP data collection sheets will be available for park users to use in the foyer and bird ID sheets on the noticeboard. Details of this RSPB citizen science project to be promoted on our social media platforms (Facebook and Instagram) to encourage participation. We agreed it would be good to keep our own record of observations to compare with next years event.
- **Great British Spring Clean** (15th- 31st March) It was agreed that Saturday 16th March would be the date for our main event this year. Our regular monthly Monday litterpicking on 25th March would also take place between the dates of the National event this year.
- **Climate Change Coalition Campaign 'Show the Love'** – (throughout February) Last year we produced and gave out paper seed hearts to park visitors on Valentine's Day. This year it was suggested that we write to the local councillors representing the areas around the park, raising the profile of the climate Change Coalition Campaign, the park and the work of the Friends Group, along with an invitation to our February 'Show the Love' litterpick! All agreed that this was a good idea, with a suggestion that the Mayor also be invited! More details about the Climate Change Coalition Campaign can be found at <https://www.theclimatecoalition.org/>
- **City Nature Challenge 2024** – advance notice of Claire's favourite event scheduled to take place at the end of April – Friday 26th to Monday 29th. It is hoped that the Outdoor Education team will be able to get more involved this year.
- **Friends Group Social Event** – all agreed that the Christmas Social session we held for volunteers was a lovely way to celebrate the end of the year and it was suggested that a Summer Social would be a good idea, with either a BBQ in the BBQ area or visit to another park/garden. Ideas welcomed and date to be agreed.
- **Volunteer Session on Thursday 25th January** – Area referred to as the 'Orchard' in the wildlife garden to be tidied.

Next Meeting: Friday 9 February 2024, 12 midday @ Countryside Centre, RSCP