



## **Friends of Rising Sun Country Park** **Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 March 2024**

**Present:** Claire Partleton (Chair), Eric Styan (Treasurer), Keith Taylor (Secretary), Jan Casson, Vivien Fenn-Webber, Martin Huttly, Ian Hogg, Amanda Bennett and Graeme Sample (NTC)

**Apologies:** Amanda Williams, Janet Weatherburn; Pixie Phelan, Stephen Gibbinson, Chris Tallack and Elaine Elliott (all NTC), Lisa and Michelle (ASDA Community Champions), Rev Dr Rae Caro.

After the apologies were noted, the Minutes of the February meeting were accepted as a true record.

### **Matters arising from February 2024:**

**Bird Boxes:** the Friends have been advised that NTC Tree Team maybe able these up, once we have identified suitable locations. Although ladder training might be available for the Friends, this would not cover us for work on uneven surfaces such as across the wider park. We therefore need to schedule time to revisit all the mapped boxes to update our inventory and then give the details to the Tree Team. **(AP 1).**

**Bat Boxes:** These require untreated wood, which is difficult to source, so for the time being we will not proceed with making any. Although we could purchase some ready-made bird or bat boxes, these too would need to be erected by the NTC staff.

**Calendar for 2025:** In order to try and encourage park visitors to send us their photos for possible inclusion, a reminder has gone out on Facebook, and we've already had some responses. Before we invite the school children to do some paintings for possible inclusion in the calendar, Claire will check with the printers as to whether this would be feasible. **(AP 2).**

**Greetings Cards:** Vivien has a contact who has offered us a price of £ 4.50 per pack of 12 blank greetings cards, (the images can be different), with a minimum order of 25 packs (total cost of £ 112.50). Further enquiries will be made to establish whether the back of the cards could include our name, logo and the name of the person who submitted the photo, and possibly the species, if a bird or animal is featured. **(AP 3).**

**Voluntary Organisations Development Agency (VODA) Meeting Feedback:** Claire and Amanda attended a meeting with VODA on 12 February. VODA offers a small organisation health check and makes suggestions as to how groups such as ours can strengthen their organisation by improving certain administrative aspects, or by introducing new policies. These recommendations echo the suggestions within VODA's Better Friends Report, which groups are encouraged to review at least once a year. Amanda W has kindly agreed to take the lead for the group and has already prepared drafts of all the policies which have been recommended. A further meeting with VODA is scheduled for March 15, and further feedback will be given at our April meeting. **(AP 4).**

**NTC Summer Fayre on 14 August:** Volunteers are needed to cover marshalling, ticket entry and the hook-a-duck attraction. Can anyone who is able to help out on the day let Claire know. **(AP 5).** There will once again be a scarecrow trail, with the theme being characters from Nursery rhymes. Entries are likely from the Friends, Brownies, Guides, the Church, Asda, Dogs Trust and Hartbeeps.

**Boot-scraper for the Education Team:** Eric has identified three supporting frames so all that is now needed is a number of scrubbing brushes which he will attach. If anyone has any

brushes which they no longer need can they please bring them in. **Note:** these must be flat-backed, and preferably made of wood. **(AP 6).**

**Bulb-planting in the Wildlife Garden:** The best time for planting is October, so this item will be picked up nearer the time.

**Treasurer's Report:** We currently have £ 65.91 in cash, and £ 4,485.38 in the bank. In response to a question, because we are regarded as technically being a business, the Bank is unable to offer us an interest-paying account. One of VODA's policy documents specifically covers the accounting arrangements for dealing with money and this will be addressed as part of Amanda's brief. In the meantime, we need to arrange for an independent review of the financial records, in readiness for the Annual General Meeting. **(AP 7).**

**Update from North Tyneside Council (NTC):** Nothing to be reported this month.

#### **Other Business:**

We have received an e-mail asking if any Section 106 monies could be used to purchase and install **fencing** to protect the nesting areas for **the skylarks** on the pit heap, especially in view of the dogs which run freely on the hill. This fencing is, apparently in place in other parks. Claire has already replied to say that once S106 money has been earmarked for certain projects, it cannot be re-allocated elsewhere. Claire also explained that she would pass on the request to NTC, and she will forward the e-mail to Pixie. **(AP 8).**

The NTC Operational Manager has put forward the suggestion that the **sand-pit area** next to the café could be re-developed. This would involve removing the existing willow hedges, both at the front and the rear of the grassed area, and creating an enclosed area with fencing, seating and a covered sand-pit. In particular, the fencing would improve safety issues, as this would prevent small children from wandering into traffic at the rear of the café. The garden could then be named and opened by the Friends, with a plaque on the gate. The question is whether the Friends would consider contributing towards the costs?

The meeting agreed that, in principle, we would be willing to contribute to this project, but that we would like bio-diversity and ecological aspects to be included. We would also hope that regular maintenance and cleaning would be addressed. **(AP 9).**

#### **Forthcoming events:**

**Great British Spring Clean:** 16 March

**North Tyneside Garden Network:** Meeting on 18 March at 10.00

**Nature Discovery Walk:** 21 March – book through Eventbrite.

**March Litter-Pick:** 25 March. Note new start time – 10.00.

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