

Minutes of The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday 25th January 2024
7:30pm, Sackville College

Attending

There were 10 members present:

Brian Auker, George Brinkhurst, Michael Diebel, Mike Funnell, Neil Hancock, Katherine Meade, Stephen Metcalfe., Lloyd Richards, Mrs Richards, Elaine Griffiths

Also in attendance – Caroline Metcalfe

1. Apologies for absence

Brian Akehurst, Louise Collett, Reg Garrido

The Chair advised that Winnie King, Tony & Penny Fisher and Adrian Slaughter have now retired from the group.

Prior to the start of the meeting, Caroline Metcalfe welcomed the group to Sackville College and gave a brief introduction to the history of the buildings

2. Minutes of last meeting

The Chairman updated the group on actions arising from the last minutes:

- ACTION: Chair to contact EGMEL and keep them updated. - The Chair sends updates about the tasks to the MSDC rangers and EGMEL
- ACTION: Chairman to investigate alternative banks for community/charity groups - The Chair had done some investigation but had not found a suitable alternative. The Treasurer advised that Barclays are increasingly difficult to deal with and will continue to look for another bank that has community/charity accounts. Nat West was suggested as a potential option. **ACTION – Michael Diebel to investigate further.**
- ACTION: Chair to contact Chris Nunn and enquire if he has any more details about the dormouse boxes. - Chris had no additional information of use. The survey of the boxes found that most were either not found or in a bad state of repair. Due to the cost of new boxes and the difficulties finding a licence holder to check the boxes, the boxes were not replaced. The meeting discussed whether footprint tubes could be tried instead. **ACTION – Chair to investigate potential of making and installing tubes in the woodland**
- ACTION: Steve Metcalfe to contact CTS about acquiring some of the recently cut cedar to make dormouse boxes – Nothing further came of the enquiry
- ACTION: Chair to find out about using the pavilion for a base and to check state of litter pickers. - The Pavilion was available to use at the litter pick. This needs to be arranged in good time. The litter pickers were maintained and repaired where needed.
- The rangers have offered to arrange a spring cut when the ground has dried out. ACTION: Chair to follow up – A spring cut was carried out by MSDC contractors and appears to have been quite successful. The wildflowers seem to be spreading further across the meadow
- ACTION: Brian Akehurst to pass battery recharger to Louise to try rechargables – This has been sorted out.

- ACTION: Chair/Steve Metcalfe to investigate how to share bushcam videos and photos with the group – Videos and photos are shared on Facebook. There had not been any progress with sharing the photos through Google.
- ACTION: Chair to follow up about bonfires in the woodland before February task – MSDC have confirmed that bonfires are no longer allowed in Ashplats Wood as part of the task days.
- ACTION: Chair to request further advice from MSDC Rangers The rangers have suggested that the brash/coppiced wood could be chipped instead. There was some concern that this would be detrimental to the woodland even if a chipper could be brought onto site. **ACTION – Chair to request clarification about chipping**
- ACTION: Chair to contact EGMEL about the removal of dead trees – Lloyd Richards advised that MSDC have organised contractors to start removing dead Ash. The work will be done in two phases and details are yet to be agreed. They will leave as much standing dead wood as possible. They are still to work out what to do with the spoil. Details of the Ash removal will be on the MSDC website. **ACTION – Chair to add a link to the microsite to the ACG website**
- ACTION: Brian Akehurst to write an advert ACTION: All to circulate advert within their areas ACTION: Chair to put up posters around Ashplats ACTION: Chair to investigate town events, library display etc ACTION: All to let committee know if they know of any events/opportunities for the group to attend - ACG had a stall at the local MSVA volunteer fair and attracted a few new volunteers for the February and March tasks. The volunteers have been added to the email list but have not returned to the tasks after the summer break. The Bonfire Society join the coppicing tasks to source torch handles. **ACTION – Continue to look at ways of promoting the group.**
- ACTION: Chair to investigate training opportunities – Chair and Brian Auker attended a first-aid course. **ACTION – Continue to notify group of suitable training opportunities**
- ACTION: Chair/Steve Metcalfe to arrange a group visit to Sackville College – A small group enjoyed a tour of Sackville College in May. Thanks to Caroline and Steve for arranging this.

The members did not raise any further questions. The minutes were approved by the meeting.

3. Chairman's Report

The Chairman's report was summarised by the Chairman.

- The mower broke while the meadow was being mowed. Three volunteers came to the raking task on the hottest day of the year. **ACTIONS – Chair to discuss mowing regime with Glendale and the rangers and ask rangers to do a spring mow**
- iNaturalist has been set up with Ashplats/East Court as a location. Any records submitted within this location will show in the ACG project. **ACTION – encourage visitors to the woods to use iNaturalist to boost record numbers. ACTION - produce calendar to show what is out when, so visitors are aware of what they might see.**
- Newt survey – none were found in the lake, only a couple were spotted in Cranston Pond.
- Glendale are the new contractors. The rangers have been TUPEd across. **ACTION – talk to Glendale about their plans for the woods, volunteer group, mowing regime etc**
- Litter pick had fewer participants and reduced litter overall.

4. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's report was circulated to the members prior at the meeting. The Treasurer advised the meeting that EGMEL now reimburses the group for any expenditure that occurs instead of giving an annual grant. Therefore we will have a relatively constant balance of around £1850.

There was very little expenditure during the year with the biggest expenditure being insurance. MSDC cover this cost. There is a new contact at MSDC following a change in staff. The insurance is a standard policy with Zurich covering liability, tools etc.

The Treasurer informed the group that Barclays had requested various documents for verify IDs of the signatories during the year and were becoming increasingly difficult to deal with. Other members of the group had experienced similar things with other banks.

ACTION: Treasurer to investigate alternative banks for community/charity groups

5. Election of Committee

Neil Hancock offered to remain as chairman, proposed by Michael Diebel, seconded by Steve Metcalfe and is duly elected.

Michael Diebel offered to remain as treasurer, proposed by Neil Hancock, seconded by George Brinkhurst and is duly elected.

Stephen Metcalfe and Elaine Griffiths offered to stand as committee members.

6. Task Suggestions and discussion

- Meadow mowing – Glendale to be asked about the possibility of a spring mow. **ACTION – Chair to find out if a pedestrian mower will be available in the autumn**
- Litter pick
- Laurels around the lake **ACTION – Discuss with Glendale about their plans for the area** around the lake.
- Sycamores to be cut back in the Scout Land
- Fallen oak along Anenome Path to be tidied up and the path to be diverted around it **ACTION- discuss with Glendale to check they will not be dealing with it first**
- Survey/iNaturalist introduction
- Follow-up rhododendron/Laurel removal

Any other business

- Several chestnuts have fallen across the paths by Coppice Ride. Are these suitable for the group to clear?
- Local cycling & walking infrastructure plan has suggested a potential route through the woods and East Court
- EGMEL & MSDC have started making enquiries into improving the Ghyll steps, boardwalks, path surfacing and bridges. Initial meetings with Polydeck using a recycled plastic construction
- Should volunteers be told they can wear hi-viz/hard hats if they want to? **ACTION – check latest guidance for volunteer groups**

The meeting closed at 9:30pm

Minutes taken by Katherine Meade