

Minutes of the Committee Meeting of the Friends of Selsdon Wood held on Monday 29th July 2024 at 8.00pm in the Forestdale Forum.

Present: Heather Govier (in the Chair), Ted Forsyth (Vice Chair), Linda Morris (Secretary), Karen Hall (Treasurer), Jim Dunning, Valerie Baldry, Neale Fox, John Bickerstaff

1. Apologies for absence from David Debenham and John Zareba.

2. Minutes of the last meeting held on 20th May 2024 as archived on the website (accessed by Committee only via Events page) were approved as a correct record of that meeting.

3. Matters arising – Enough photos have been submitted now so the Photo Competition will take place as usual.

4. Finance – Karen had circulated the recent financial details and reported a current credit of £5503 with proposed / planned expenditure of £ 3170

5. Walks and Work Sessions – Ted reported on the walks held since the last meeting. Details of the walks are on the website.

All Work Session reports are posted on the website too whether they are the planned FSW ones or any undertaken by one or more individuals on an ad hoc basis. Ted listed the tasks dealt with since the last meeting including the work done weeding and watering the BB and clearance of path edges in Noakes Way and around some seats. There had also been spreading of the remaining ballast in a muddy path area and tree clearance following fallen branches etc including the tree across Farleigh Border. A square of turf had been removed in David's Crook in readiness for Marjoram planting when weather permitted, possibly on the next work day.

6. Facebook – There are still over 1700 followers and the pages are well used.

7a. Seats and Benches – It was planned that clearance of summer growth around the seats would be done on workdays and when Grow Wild attended. Seat 36 was especially mentioned.

7b. Bird and Bat Boxes – Jim planned to map the locations of the bat boxes and would make some more bird boxes, mainly to replace damaged ones.

8. Council Liaison – a. Friends' Support Officer @ the Council - Linda advised that Meike's post had now been taken by Alice Owusu-Evans and that she had attended the recent ACCS online meeting. She seemed well qualified to deal with ecology matters and keen to meet Friends groups. Richard Edwards has left the Council to work for Tandridge. It is understood his post is now divided between three untrained tree officers. Xabier Mendez remains as the overall manager of Parks and Green Spaces.

Heather hopes to meet Alice soon – see BB section below.

Alice has already contacted Heather about the removal of Ragwort and offered to do this if FSW could not. It was agreed that the Council should deal with this as it was beyond the scope of the active volunteers in FSW.

b. Toilets – The Committee agreed that the redecoration of the toilets should be requested within the local community budget spending now under consideration by the Council. Linda will put this forward.

c. Car Park Relining – Steve Budd had met a person who had offered to reline the parking the spaces. He was a professional but would not charge us for this. Heather will contact Xabier to get permission for this to be done. Steve will be present when the work is done. *(With Council agreement, this work took place on 2 August.)*

9. Website - Heather continued to update the website

10. JG funding – Linda will update the campaign page for the Stones not Mud project so it can be publicised at the Open Day ready for more deliveries of ballast.

11. Projects – a. Linden Glade – Following a request, Linda had cut down some of the ferns obscuring the view of the pool. She asked for help in dealing with the request to transplant some to behind the cairn as she found there was too much digging involved for her to be able to do it alone without causing herself more injury to her hand and wrist.

She agreed to contact SES to request that they repair the stopcock so we can regulate the top-up of the pool as required.

b. Entrance gate sign – Jim has obtained a very general estimate for this sign (c. £2000) but the supplier will need to see professional artwork before an exact figure can be given. It was agreed that this should be considered in more detail at the next meeting. Before we can proceed further, Heather will enquire if replacement of the old board is acceptable to the Council.

c. Wood carvings – The toadstool seat to celebrate Ted's birthday is now ready to be installed and it was hoped this would be done within the next month.

It was noted that the owl carvings were being defaced by bird droppings as birds were being encouraged there by someone who is using it as a bird table for bread. There seems no way to stop this as there had already been many messages on FB asking them not to do this.

d. Butterfly Bank - Heather reported that she had been in correspondence with Steve Bolton (original BB project manager) and Alice as they had been critical of our management of the BB and the replanting there this summer to try to improve it, in our eyes at least. Steve and Alice seemed to think that we should have 'let nature take its course' just with perhaps more cutting back of the grass. Heather has asked to meet with Alice in the next few weeks to show her our work and explain it in more detail. She hoped to be able to discuss with her our approach to managing the BB, bearing in mind our limited availability and desire to increase butterflies and general biodiversity.

Valerie confirmed the source of her plants and information she had gleaned about managing BBs in her experience when volunteering at OLF. Heather noted this and will so advise Alice. Linda and Valerie expressed their view, as the main workers on the BB (and in Linden Glade) that plants introduced, in good faith, through donations and careful purchases should not now be removed. They will manage them carefully and accept that maybe no more should be planted. It was noted that many new plants appear throughout the wood naturally, spread by birds and other animals from surrounding gardens.

It was agreed that the fence around the BB was still needed to deter bikes and dogs damaging the bund and to prevent the flat area being mown when the field is cut.

12.AOB - a. Swing - This had sadly been cut down again. Neale was considering fixing it with chains rather than rope.

b. Filming in the wood - Heather reported that she had been approached by a group who wanted to film in the wood from 12th -18th August. She had given permission for this as felt it was a public space so she could not really refuse. However, it was thought by the Committee that maybe such requests should now be directed to the Council (as Linda understood they should be) especially in case there was damage caused or there were insurance issues. Heather agreed to refer future requests to Xabier/Alice.

c. Open Day - Linda thanked those who had remembered to bring her items for the tombola and Valerie for her offer of help marking out the stall sites on the Friday or Saturday before the event. To date, she has received no other offers of help except from Ted (Walk leader), John B (Membership table), Jim (setting up and some time on the info stall). Heather will deal with the photo competition.

3.Date of next meeting – 30th September 2024.

The meeting closed at 10.00pm