

Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG)

Registered Charity Number: 1157957

Principal Address: c/o 25 The Birchlands,
Forest Town, Mansfield NG19 0ER



Registered Charity No. 1157957

Forest Town Nature Conservation Group

Annual Report and Accounts 2015

(for the period 1 April 2014 - 31 March 2015)

Object of the Charity:

'to promote for the benefit of the public the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment in and around Forest Town'

Produced by **Josh Downen** (Treasurer) and **Shlomo Downen** (Chair)

Approved by **all Trustees** on 29th April 2015

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Declaration

The Trustees of the Forest Town Nature Conservation Group declare that they have approved this Trustees' Report and Accounts for the period 1 April 2014 - 31 March 2015.

Signed on behalf of the charity's Trustees

Signature:

Full name: Shlomo Downen

Position: Chair

Date: Wednesday 29th April 2015

1. Introduction

The Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG) has come a long way since its inaugural meeting on the 1st of February 2011 (see Chronology for details). On the 23rd of July 2014 FTNCG was formally registered as a Charity with the Charity Commission (Registration No. 1157957).

Although FTNCG has held Annual General Meetings (AGMs) and provided accounts of activities in the past, this is our first formal Report and Accounts as a registered charity. This Report and Accounts was written to ensure FTNCG compliance with our obligations under the Charities Act 2011 in accordance with Section 27 of our Constitution.

As of 29th April 2015 the Forest Town Nature Conservation Group comprises 48 members under the terms of Section 8 of FTNCG's Constitution. In accordance with Section 12 of FTNCG's Constitution, this would mean that the quorum for the AGM would be 5 members entitled to vote on the business to be conducted at the meeting.

In accordance with Sections 10, 11, 12 and 31 of the Constitution, formal notice for the AGM was deemed to have been issued on the 19th of April 2015 (48 hours after posting) to all FTNCG members and trustees for the AGM to be held on the 6th of May 2015, i.e. at least 14 clear days before the AGM and within 15 months of our previous AGM; and the notice set out the date, time and place of the meeting and the general nature of the business to be transacted at the AGM.

2. Structure, Governance and Management

The Forest Town Nature Conservation Group's Constitution, adopted on 22nd May 2013 and amended on 14th July 2014, is the governing document that establishes FTNCG as an association with the following charitable object: 'to promote for the benefit of the public the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment in and around Forest Town'.

FTNCG Membership confers no financial benefit, and is set at £2 (waivable on request).

The deeds for Spa Ponds are held in trust by the Official Custodian for Charities.

FTNCG Trustees for 2014/15 were as follows:

Name	Office / Role	Date of Trustee Appointment
Lorraine Downen	Secretary	1 st February 2011
Shlomo Downen	Chair and Minutes Secretary	1 st February 2011
Josh Downen	Treasurer	1 st February 2011
Ian O'Brien	Vice-Chair	9 th May 2012
Richard Smith	Facebook Mgr / Rushpool Liaison	22 nd May 2013
Alan Alberry	Spa Ponds Warden	2 nd July 2014
Barry Housley	Spa Ponds Warden	2 nd July 2014
Rosemary Powell	Trustee	2 nd July 2014
Ross Lacey	Trustee	2 nd July 2014

All of the existing Committee members (Trustees) were elected at the 7th May 2014 Annual General Meeting, except for those Trustees co-opted onto the Committee on the 2nd July 2014 by the existing Committee. A proposal to endorse all these members as Trustees and to empower them to sign the newly-amended FTNCG Constitution was unanimously endorsed at the Special General Meeting on 14th July 2014.

The Forest Town Nature Conservation Group is a member (or affiliate) of the following:

- The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)
- Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (and associated Mansfield & Ashfield Local Group)
- The Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group (NottsBAG)
- WatersideCare
- The Rufford-Clipstone Landowners Group
- Sherwood Catchment Partnership

As a TCV member, FTNCG is insured through Zurich, as part of TCV's Community Network Membership Public Liability and Personal Accident Insurance Scheme.

3. Review of the Past Year

Throughout the period 1st April 2014 - 31st March 2015 Forest Town Nature Conservation Group Trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit. The most obvious expression of FTNCG acting in the public interest included becoming a registered charity, purchasing Spa Ponds for the benefit of all, and transferring the deeds to the Official Custodian for Charities.

Over the year, FTNCG undertook the following additional activities in relation to our objective *'to promote for the benefit of the public the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment in and around Forest Town'*:

- Holding meetings, open to the public without charge, to consider and plan the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment in and around Forest Town in general, and in particular at sites of ecological interest including Stinting Lane, the Rushpool Open Space and Spa Ponds (and environs).
- Maintaining both electronic and hard copy communications with more than a hundred members and supporters, providing ongoing updates and promoting activities of potential interest, via e-mail, our website and Facebook pages, and by sending printed copies to postal addresses.
- Working as a Group to deliver hundreds of volunteer hours carrying out litter picking and conservation work at both the Rushpool and Spa Ponds sites that resulted in recognised improvements of the physical and natural environment.
- Joining or renewing membership of / affiliation with charitable organisations with similar objects to FTNCG, including: The Conservation Volunteers (TCV); Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT) and the associated Mansfield & Ashfield Local Group; the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group (NottsBAG); WatersideCare; the Rufford-Clipstone Landowners Group; and the Sherwood Catchment Partnership.
- Entering into a formal agreement with NWT to work in partnership towards a shared vision of Spa Ponds. A signed vision statement is appended to the end of this Report and Accounts.
- Working with other like-minded public benefit organisations and agencies, including: the Forest Town Community Council (FTCC) and FTCC's Planning Sub-Committee; the Forest Town Heritage Group; Sherwood Forest Trust (SFT); the RSPB; local schools (e.g. Samworth Academy, Garibaldi School / College); Nottinghamshire County Council (Public Rights of Way); Friends of Thynghowe; Maun Conservation Group; the Forestry Commission; the Environment Agency;

Mansfield District Council; Nottinghamshire Fungi Group; Mercian Archaeological Services CIC and the Sherwood Forest Archaeology Project; the Nottinghamshire Amphibian & Reptile Group (NARG); Birklands Ringing Group; EMEC Ecology; Mansfield & Ashfield Rights of Way Network / Ramblers Group; Nottinghamshire Police; the Sherwood Landscape Partnership; Friends of King John's Palace; the Nottinghamshire Biological and Geological Record Centre, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Entomology Society and a variety of County Wildlife Recorders.

Minutes of meetings provide a record detailing FTNCG public benefit contributions, and are available at: <http://www.foresttown.net/index.php/nature/ftnccg-minutes/> and in hard copy (upon request). This Report provides some illustrative examples:

- Providing education and training, including certificated bush cutter training (in conjunction with SFT), as well as informal training in toad identification (in conjunction with NARG), and heritage learning (in conjunction with Mercian Archaeological Services). Further learning and skills opportunities for members and the wider public are planned for the coming months (see Chronology).
- Cooperating with the Forest Town Community Council's Planning Sub-Committee, including providing regular (monthly) updates at FTCC meetings, making joint submissions to support a Tree Protection Order, and commenting on several planning applications with potential to impact adversely on the local natural environment, providing information regarding the environmental value of the local area and advice on potential mitigation and compensation where appropriate. FTNCG and FTCC's Planning Sub-Committee jointly nominated Spa Ponds for Local Green Space (LGS) status as part of Mansfield District Council's LGS consultation.
- Contributing to efforts to manage invasive non-native species (such as Himalayan Balsam), in conjunction with NottsBAG; and contributing as an active partner in the Sherwood Catchment Partnership, to "*conserve and enhance the Rivers Idle, Ryton, Poulter, Meden, Maun, their tributaries and surrounding land, to create a healthy and wildlife rich water environment for the benefit of both people and biodiversity*".
- Meeting with fellow local landowners and police to address anti-social behaviour, e.g. to curb illegal off-road biking, to protect the physical and natural environment.
- Promoting recording and reporting of wildlife sightings. On 26th March 2015 more than 1,300 FTNCG-recorded sightings covering the period July 2012 - March 2015 were reported to the relevant County Recorders. This data also fed into EMEC Ecology's *Spa Ponds Ecology Report and Management Plan* produced for FTNCG.

Although FTNCG's 2015 Toad Count fell outside the period that is the focus of this Report, an account of this highly successful activity is provided overleaf.

Forest Town Nature Conservation Group 2015 Toad Count

On five evenings between 2nd and 7th April 2015 Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG) members and supporters, led by FTNCG Trustee Richard Smith, visited Spa Ponds in search of toads. The energy was as high as the toad count, and the excitement of increasing numbers of toads helped volunteers overcome their tiredness to keep counting.

FTNCG's 2015 Toad Count confirms that each of the three main ponds at Spa Ponds exceeds the current threshold for status as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS, formerly known as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation, or SINC). According to the *Guidelines for the selection of Local Wildlife Sites in Nottinghamshire*¹ (Part 2A – *Local Wildlife Sites selection criteria: species*²), sites in Nottinghamshire holding amphibians and/or reptiles will be designated as LWSs where they meet one or more defined criteria. The Toad Count shows that Spa Ponds has "a significant population size for Nottinghamshire of Common Toad (*Bufo bufo*)...present and breeding".

According to the Guidelines: "Although not rare, these species [Common Frog, Common Toad and Smooth Newt] have suffered a considerable decline in numbers in the Nottinghamshire countryside over the last century due to habitat degradation and loss. Common Toad is a Species of Principal Importance".

The threshold number of adults noted on a single visit to a site taken to indicate a significant population size for Nottinghamshire is 100. The highest numbers of Common Toad counted for each pond is as follows:

- Pond 2 (nearer the spring): 661 on 6th April (Comprising 554 Male + 107 Female)
- Pond 3: 431 on 6th April (Comprising 366 Male + 65 Female)
- Pond 4 (nearest the Maun): 565 on 4th April (Comprising 463 Male + 102 Female)

Added together, FTNCG's 2015 Toad Count recorded a maximum total of 1,657 toads! Volunteers, who between them delivered nearly 70 volunteer hours for this round of toad counting, also identified a Smooth Newt (on both 3rd and 4th April), and as many as 6 Common Frogs (on 7th April).

Our sightings have been sent to the County Recorder and Chris Jackson, who provided us with training last year via his role with the Nottinghamshire Amphibian & Reptile Group (NARG). For photographs please visit our 2015 Toad Count Gallery at: <http://www.foresttown.net/index.php/nature/april-2015-toad-count/>

¹ Available from: <http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/article/1047/Nottinghamshire-Biological-and-Geological-Record-Centre-NBGRC>

² Available from: <http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=49714>

4. Financial Review

Estimated basic annual running costs

Current basic running costs for FTNCG amount to around **£500**, as follows:

£115 for Membership:

- **£35** - Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT)
- **£40** - The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) Community Network
- **£40** - Council for British Archaeology (CBA)

£240 for Public Liability and Personal Accident Insurance (for up to £5m cover):

- **£40** - Public access for land <5 Acres (public liability)
- **£120** - Up to 500 project days
- **£40** - Use of Power Driven Machinery (non-chainsaw)
- **£40** - Insurance scheme administration charge

£135 for Other General Running Costs:

- **£55** - Sundry items (e.g. signs, tools, plants, seeds, gloves, etc.)
- **£55** - Education and training
- **£25** - Postage (AGM notification and minutes for members without e-mail)

The Liability & Insurance and Sundry Items costs are currently expected to come out of money ring-fenced for Spa Ponds, with the remainder of costs from the General Fund.

Reserves policy for 2015/16

There is always a balance to be struck between spending now and building reserves for the future. Trustees have adopted short-term aspirational targets, but as these exceed our available funds, in some instances reserves have been set below these targets for the coming year to ensure that the Group can spend now on our charitable purposes. This is based on our expectation that sufficient funds will be generated during 2015/16 to pay for the anticipated running costs for 2016/17.

Running Costs (Reserved £500; target £1,000): As the majority of FTNCG's basic running costs are on an annual basis, the Group has adopted a one-year contingency for these costs (currently £500), i.e. enough to pay for the current/coming year and the following year. This figure is based on past expenses and anticipated future expenses based on FTNCG's current level of commitment (e.g. ownership of Spa Ponds).

Contingencies (Reserved £500; target £500): To cover unexpected expenses, Trustees have set a target of £500 for contingencies, rising in future years as finances allow.

Match-funding (Reserved £1,000; target £2,000): To position FTNCG to take advantage of match-funding opportunities, Trustees set a target to ring-fence £2,000 of uncommitted funds for our contribution to such funding bids. This financial element would be used alongside using volunteer hours (i.e. in-kind contribution) to support the success of bids where appropriate, rising in future years as finances allow.

Potential financial and other resource implications of current and anticipated bids

FTNCG is involved, alongside partner organisations, with a number of bids for grant funding. If any of these applications are successful there could be significant financial and other resource implications. Current potential commitments include:

Spa Ponds: Social And Environmental Heritage Project

- £3,700 is being sought from Development Phase funding granted by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the Sherwood Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS). Up to £96,300 in further funding could come from the HLF Sherwood LPS Delivery Phase.
- As part of the Development Phase FTNCG proposed contributing £420 cash and £600 worth of volunteer time in-kind. If the Delivery Phase bid is successful and the project is awarded the full £100,000 requested, FTNCG would be responsible for up to an additional £15,000 in cash and in-kind over the project's 5 years (2017-2021) with up to £10,000 of this being in cash, equivalent to £2,000 a year for five years.
- If necessary, FTNCG would carry out extensive fundraising in relation to this project and/or reduce the scale of the project to match our capacity.

Access Control in Partnership

- In conjunction with fellow land-owners, FTNCG is seeking funding from the HLF Sherwood LPS as part of a coordinated effort to control off-road biking in sensitive areas, such as Spa Ponds, by *"...work[ing] cooperatively to secure boundaries and install features to prevent this illegal activity and to restore peace and undamaged habitats to the area. This would also involve training local people in conservation and wardening skills to help them to look after their local area"*.
- If successful, FTNCG can be expected to contribute resources (primarily, or exclusively, in-kind) to support this collective effort. The scale of FTNCG's commitment will depend on a range of factors, including: the total cost of the Access Control project and the level of HLF Sherwood LPS contribution; the degree of inclusion of Spa Ponds in the relevant phase of the project; and the specific requirements of the Partnership to deliver relevant HLF outputs.

Sherwood Forest Trust bid

- FTNCG has signalled our interest in working with SFT to deliver volunteer training in conservation work. FTNCG has offered to host volunteers, from FTNCG's members and supporters and from the wider community, at our Spa Ponds site. This allows for synergies, including being better able to carry out work outlined in the Spa Ponds Management Plan (produced for FTNCG by EMEC Ecology).
- The financial cost of an initial one-day session involving SFT delivering training for conservation volunteers at Spa Ponds is anticipated to be £250.

The charity's principal sources of funds (including any fundraising)

For the period covered by this Report and Accounts, FTNCG's total income was just under £1,270, of which nearly £270 was donated specifically for Spa Ponds. The principal source of this income was donations from individuals (approximately £560, including funds raised through individual efforts) and from organisations (£280 from RAPID and £100 from the Forest Town Heritage Group). Additionally, £325 was received from a Mansfield District Councillor's Constituency Pot.

In addition to the funding bids for specific projects, members of the Group intend to continue general fundraising efforts and FTNCG will continue to seek funding through membership donations, general appeals, and grant funding from Councillors' constituency pots. As well as obtaining Gift Aid on future donations, in the coming year FTNCG expect to receive a small sum for Gift Aid from donations made during 2014/15.

There is also potential for funding to be set aside for Spa Ponds as a result of Section 106 money associated with nearby future housing development. Such funds, if forthcoming, could be used to pay for improved access and signage. The money would most likely be managed by Mansfield District Council and would probably not be paid in to FTNCG's funds. Potential resource implications include volunteer hours needed to help support spending any funding (e.g. to monitor works carried out by contractors).

How expenditure has supported the key objectives of the charity

Expenditure during this period amounted to just over £16,740.

The overwhelming majority of the expenditure during the period, approximately £16,230 was associated with the purchase of Spa Ponds, including legal fees, etc. The purchase of the Spa Ponds site is helping to protect this important local nature conservation site

Additionally, just over £100 was spent on maintaining the Spa Ponds site (e.g. signs and boundary posts). The maintenance of Spa Ponds is central to FTNCG's efforts to improve the physical and natural environment.

Other expenses included about £300 for membership and insurance, about £160 for education and training, and about £25 in postage.

All of these expenses were essential for enabling the Forest Town Nature Conservation Group to undertake activities to carry out the charity's object '*to promote for the benefit of the public the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment in and around Forest Town*'.

5. Annual Statement of Accounts

Accounts for 1 April 2014 - 31 March 2015

Opening balance	£17,606.85
In Spa Ponds fund	£15,865.47
Total income	£1,269.40
Donated to Spa Ponds fund	£269.93
Total expenditure	£16,742.62
Spent from Spa Ponds fund (Note #1)	£15,376.61
Closing balance	£2,031.98
Cash	£32.80
Bank	£1,999.18

Accounts for 1 April 2013 - 31 March 2014

Opening balance	£1,316.99
in Spa Ponds fund	£0.00
Total income	£16,675.04
Donated to Spa Ponds fund	£15,948.85
Total expenditure	£385.18
Spent from Spa Ponds fund	£83.38
Closing balance	£17,606.85
Cash	£510.00
Bank	£17,096.85

Note #1: Purchase of Spa Ponds for £15,000 (plus legal expenses, Land Registry, etc.) - included £1,000 that was ring-fenced by FTNCG from the General Fund (but was not formally part of the Spa Ponds fund), with the rest being donations made for this specific purpose.

BALANCE SHEET AT 31 MARCH 2015

	2014/15	
	£	£
<u>Assets and Liabilities</u>		
FIXED ASSETS		
<i>Tangible assets</i>		
Tools (Cost)	38.26	
Tools (Accumulated depreciation)	(38.26)	
Total fixed assets		0.00
CURRENT ASSETS		
<i>Cash at bank and in hand</i>		
Current Account - Coop Bank	1,999.18	
Petty Cash	32.80	
Total cash at bank and in hand	2,031.98	
Total current assets		2,031.98
LIABILITIES		
<i>Creditors due within one year (Note #2)</i>		80.26
NET CURRENT ASSETS	1,951.72	
Total net assets		1,951.72
<u>Represented by funds</u>		
<i>Unrestricted funds</i>		
General Fund	1,217.33	
<i>Restricted funds</i>		
Spa Ponds	814.65	
Total funds		2,031.98

BALANCE SHEET AT 31 MARCH 2014

	2013/14	
	£	£
<u>Assets and Liabilities</u>		
FIXED ASSETS		
<i>Tangible assets</i>		
Tools (Cost)	711.14	
Tools (Accumulated depreciation)	(711.14)	
Total fixed assets		0.00
CURRENT ASSETS		
<i>Cash at bank and in hand</i>		
Current Account - Coop Bank	17,096.85	
Petty Cash	510.00	
Total cash at bank and in hand	17,606.85	
Total current assets		17,606.85
LIABILITIES		
<i>Creditors due within one year</i>		0.00
NET CURRENT ASSETS	17,606.85	
Total net assets		17,606.85
<u>Represented by funds</u>		
<i>Unrestricted funds</i>		
General Fund	1,628.00	
<i>Restricted funds</i>		
Spa Ponds	15,978.85	
Total funds		17,606.85

Note #2: £38.26 owed from Spa Ponds fund to reimburse cost of torch purchased for toad counts, and £42.00 owed to Dawson for Spa Ponds deeds transfer

Chronology

2011

During 2011 the Forest Town Nature Conservation Group held 7 minuted meetings, and several outdoor events, that were open to members of the public, and we regularly updated the Forest Town Community Council regarding the Group's progress. We hosted guest speakers, including the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust's (NWT's) Andy Lowe and Ruth Testa, Chris Jackson of the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group (NottsBAG), and the Sherwood Forest Trust's (SFT's) Wayne Ball. We also launched a website at: <http://foresttown.net/nature/>

FTNCG attracted dozens of local people for a guided walk around the Spa Ponds Local Nature Reserve. FTNCG members and supporters also joined NWT volunteers for several Himalayan Balsam pulls at Spa Ponds, and for gorse clearance and litter picking on the Rushpool Open Space. The Rushpool Open Space activities were preceded by a public awareness-raising leaflet drop for near neighbours and a public meeting where plans for the site were discussed and a presentation about the history of the site and plans for its future management was delivered.

Notable dates:

- 1 February 2011 - Inaugural meeting
- 23 March 2011 - First public meeting
- 4 June 2011 - Guided walk around Spa Ponds with Andy Lowe

2012

During 2012 the Group held 11 minuted meetings, and numerous outdoor events, that were open to members of the public, including workdays at Spa Ponds, Stinting Lane (surveying), and the Rushpool Open Space, and a guided nightjar walk around Budby and the Major Oak (with Andy Lowe). We hosted guest speakers, including Friends of Thynghowe's Stuart Reddish and Lynda Mallett, and Dorothy O'Brien talking about her survey work with the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO).

FTNCG joined, and sent representatives to meetings of, the Friends of Greenwood Community Forum and Mansfield District Council's Friends Group Network (also known as the Mansfield Parks & Open Spaces Network). FTNCG also became part of both the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group (NottsBAG) and Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (and associated Mansfield & Ashfield Local Group).

Notable dates:

- 9 May 2012 - First Annual General Meeting
- 11 August 2012 - Guided walk around Attenborough Nature Reserve
- 13 August 2012 - First wave of wildlife sightings data (covering December 2011 - June 2012) sent to relevant recorders

2013

During 2013 the Group held 9 minuted meetings, and numerous outdoor events, that were open to members of the public, including a visit to the Cedar Animal Sanctuary and a nightjar walk around Rainworth Heath (with Andy Lowe), as well as workdays at Spa Ponds, Stinting Lane (surveying), the Rushpool Open Space and Rainworth Heath. We hosted guest speakers, including Nigel Slater (Butterflies and Dragonflies), NWT's Ruth Testa, Nottinghamshire Fungi Group's Ann Ward (the hidden delights of mushrooms and toadstools), and Mercian Archaeological Services CIC's Andy Gaunt (History of Spa Ponds).

Notable dates:

- 19 February 2013 - Spa Ponds Appeal launched (Forest Town Community Council)
- 18 May 2013 - Visit to the Cedar Animal Sanctuary
- 22 May 2013 - Second Annual General Meeting
- 1 November 2013 - Forest Town Community Council-organised Spa Ponds Appeal Pie & Pea fundraiser

2014

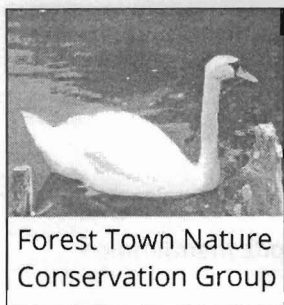
Dramatically, in January 2014 FTNCG agreed to purchase the Spa Ponds Nature Reserve, and by 1st July the deeds were transferred to FTNCG! During 2014 the Group held 9 minuted meetings, and numerous outdoor events, that were open to members of the public, including several survey days at the Rushpool Open Space, and water testing training with WatersideCare's Les Warren at Spa Ponds. A Local Improvement Scheme grant, managed by the Sherwood Forest Trust, enabled an interpretation board to be installed at the Rushpool Open Space, and for certificated bush cutter training to be undertaken by three FTNCG members. We hosted guest speakers, including Nottinghamshire Amphibian & Reptile Group's (NARG's) Chris Jackson (Toads), and Mercian Archaeological Services CIC's Andy Gaunt (Sherwood Forest Archaeology Project: "The Future of Sherwood's Past").

Notable dates:

- 10 January 2014 - Committee agreed best and final offer of £15,000 for Spa Ponds
- 7 May 2014 - Third Annual General Meeting
- 1 July 2014 - Deeds to Spa Ponds transferred to FTNCG
- 23 July 2014 - FTNCG Officially registered as a charity with Charity Commission

2015

Several minuted meetings and outdoor events, open to members of the public, have already taken place in 2015, including a series of Rushpool Workdays supported by Sherwood Forest Trust's Andy Hollis, as well as workdays at Spa Ponds (bridleway maintenance and boundary marking) and a cluster of five toad counting session's led by FTNCG Trustee Richard Smith. A number of formal and informal Spa Ponds site management meetings have also taken place, and more are planned, alongside a talk by Birklands Ringing Group's Andy Lowe (Using GPS to Track Sherwood's Birds) at our Annual General Meeting, a Fungi Foray at Spa Ponds in September, and a talk by Mercian Archaeological Services CIC's David Budge's about the Medieval Pottery of Sherwood in November. Also in November, in conjunction with the Forest Town Heritage Group, FTNCG will co-sponsor a Forest Town History Day.



A Vision for Spa Ponds Nature Reserve

Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG) and the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT) agree to a vision for Spa Ponds Nature Reserve in partnership, supporting each other as friends.



Within this context the parties agree:

- To work to manage the site to retain the Local Wildlife Site (LWS) status.
- NWT will support the Group in discussions regarding future planning developments in the surrounding area.
- NWT will endeavour to ensure a management plan is written by May 2015 to help guide conservation management of the site.
- NWT will provide a backstop if FTNCG (or its successor) is unable to manage the site by accepting their gift of the freehold provided the site retains LWS status.

The interest in the site is based on the invertebrates present. Work will be undertaken to survey and conserve this interest. Wetland habitats will play an important role within the context of Green Infrastructure, and Spa Ponds has a place within that. However receiving water directly from built development will be unacceptable to both parties.

Each party acknowledges that the Land is likely to face increased pressure from development, tourism and climate change. The Land needs to be resilient to this pressure and form an integral part of a wider Living Landscape within, but not limited to, the boundaries of Sherwood Forest.

Oak birch woodland is a critical habitat in the Nature Reserve, however long term climate change may make this less appropriate. Both parties agree to look to maintain this habitat until such time as both agree that a change may be appropriate.

Public awareness and community engagement are crucial issues for both organisations, and raising the awareness of Spa Ponds Nature Reserve is a shared goal. Both parties will look to support each other in this matter as appropriate. This may be in responses to planning matters, walks and talks, survey and fund raising.

Further information is provided as an annex.

Signed

Forest Town Nature Conservation Group
(FTNCG)

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust
(NWT)

Annex for the Spa Ponds vision

The NWT congratulates FTNCG on the success of acquiring Spa Ponds. The aspiration and commitment shown by raising the funds and taking the ownership is real leadership.

Spa ponds are owned by FTNCG who are responsible for the day to day management of the site. NWT will assist with advice and occasional tasks to support the nature conservation interest of the site.

Insurance and risk for the site will be managed by FTNCG

Whilst the transfer of the site into FTNCG ownership means that it will no longer be a NWT nature reserve, NWT will support FTNCG to achieve the shared vision for the site. NWT will include Spa Ponds in its Sherwood Campaign as a "Friends of Group" to help develop support for the FTNCG.

- NWT will provide a liaison officer to FTNCG who will be available to support the interests of the site.

The interests of the site will be surveyed and conserved.

In the context of the infrastructure, and the fact that the site has a plan for the future, it is clear that any development will be unacceptable to both parties.