

## **Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG)**

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> July 2012, 7 - 9 pm, at the Forest Town Welfare



**Present:** Lorraine (Chair); Dave (Vice-Chair); Shlomo (Secretary); Josh (Treasurer); Ian (Site Management Support); Betty; Alan; Barry; Colin; Margaret; Christine; Dorothy; Megan; Frances; Rose; Helen; and Ron [17]

**Apologies:** Alyson (Membership Secretary); Jeff (Rushpool Representative); Val; Geoff; Susan; Pauline; Malcolm; and Andy [8]; also Mansfield District Council's (MDC's) Jo Hull [1]

### **Sightings forms**

Christine reported seeing a large flock (approximately 40) of birds (thought to be black-headed gulls). Sighting confirmed by Margaret. Data from sightings forms ready to be sent to the relevant recorders (covering December 2011 – June 2012).

### **Finance Update**

Since the previous meeting FTNCG has received a cheque for £200 from Mansfield District Councillor Mick Barton, and a promise of a contribution from Councillor Martin Wright.

### **Rushpool Open Space**

Dave suggested the name be changed to "Rushpool Conservation Area" to reflect the less-than-open nature of much of the site. Paths have yet to be removed – MDC's Jo Hull informed the Group that a start date for this work is being negotiated. Once paths are gone we expect MDC to prepare the ground to receive heather scrape (possibly from Oak Tree Heath, in conjunction with the Sherwood Forest Trust (SFT), who are hoped to provide advice on heather management). Plans for hedge have yet to be finalised. Lorraine is looking forward to working with Dave, Ian and Andy Lowe (Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT)) to plan to remainder of the site. Shlomo reported that the hedge planting could potentially be supported by the Conservation Volunteers, thanks to networking by the NWT's Ruth Testa. Lorraine recognised that Ron and Helen's home provides them with a good view of the site, and asked them to think about what types of trees and plants (native to the Sherwood Character Area) that should be planted on the site to inform discussions with MDC (expected to take place by the end of September). Ron shared the concerns of some local residents who also wanted a fire break near their properties. Lorraine explained the need to manage the gorse sensitively and to ensure prickly plants are present to prevent access while the hedge grows. Additional hedges can also be planted to allow further fire breaks in the future. Dave suggested touching base with MDC regarding the process for ordering trees, including broom, for the site.

Actions: Shlomo to ask Jo Hull about name change for the site and about the procedure for ordering trees and clearance work to prepare for planting. Shlomo to contact Jane (Conservation Volunteers) re: helping plant hedge. Helen and Ron to e-mail their thoughts re: plants and trees.

## **Stinting Lane**

As discussed in our previous meeting, the Group undertook to survey the hedges running along either side of Stinting Lane. As the result of two visits, the first 200m of both hedges (as measured from Old Mill Lane) have now been surveyed. Lorraine extended special thanks to Ian and his Mum Dorothy for their help organising the surveys and, along with Alyson, identifying plant species. The surveys revealed a great diversity of trees, plants, shrubs and grasses. We also found some gaps that appear to have been caused by the nearby Sandlands development, MDC has been informed, and we are awaiting a report back from MDC as well as responses to a series of questions put to them under the Environmental Information Regulations. Questions include clarification regarding the ownership and maintenance responsibilities for the hedges (particularly the Sandlands hedge). Christine asked if there is a restricting order on the hedges.

Action: Shlomo to enquire regarding a restricting order.

## **Planning Issues**

Shlomo called attention to the prospect of development on the Maun Valley side of Stinting Lane, as the site is included in MDC's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) as a potential site for housing development. Shlomo was instructed to write to MDC about the value in protecting the site as a local amenity. FTNCG could also work with the Forest Town Community Council's Planning Sub-Committee to call for ecological / Green Infrastructure gains (including cycle paths, etc.) at the reserve matters stage for the housing developments granted outline planning along Clipstone Road, near Whitegates. Other planning applications also discussed, including for the former paddock behind 183 Clipstone Road West, and two applications for land At Clipstone Drive, Clipstone, including reserved matters for 201 dwellings and community facilities, alongside an application for a residential development of up to 180 dwellings including associated roads, sewers and public open space. Lorraine asked if anyone was interested in working to protect local (Forest Town) footpaths.

Actions: Shlomo to write to MDC re: removing the Maun Valley side of Stinting Lane from the SHLAA, and to look further into the planning applications. Shlomo to contact Richard Hallam to request a progress report regarding footpath application(s).

## **Balsam Pulling**

The planned Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> July balsam pull at Spa Ponds went very well, although plenty remains to be pulled on this and other nearby sites. FTNCG members have been invited to help pull balsam on Forestry Commission land (known as Cavenish Wood) and at Vicar's Pond. Wardens expressed concern about the balsam at Spa Ponds despite our best efforts, and it was agreed that we would pull again on 18<sup>th</sup> August from 10 am. No date has been set for a pull at Cavenish Wood. Subsequent to the meeting, several FTNCG members joined Nottinghamshire County Council's Chris Jackson, and others from Clipstone, Oak Tree and the SFT at the Vicar's Pond balsam pull on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> July.

## **Oak Tree Event**

Fellow nature conservation volunteers, in conjunction with the SFT, have organised an event at Oak Tree Heath on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> August – FTNCG has been invited to have a stall, and we appreciate Dave and Rose's offers of support with this, e.g. transport, etc. Setting up begins at 10:30am; the event opens at 11am with the dedication of Barbara's Bench opposite the notice board at the Tesco's entrance off Jubilee Way South. Following this celebratory start, the day's activities will begin, either outside at the triangle (north of the bench) or in the Leisure Centre (east of the bench) if the weather is bad.

## **Outing to Attenborough Nature Reserve**

Fourteen places on the minibus have now been booked and paid for, leaving two places for our outing to Attenborough for Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> August, setting off from Forest Town (Welfare car park) at 10am. Donations of £8 per passenger are requested to cover transportation costs. Members can also make their own way to the nature reserve, where we will be shown around by Mike Spencer, a Director of Attenborough Nature Centre Ltd and a regular volunteer at Attenborough Nature Reserve and Beeston Wildlife Group.

## **Housemartins on Rosedale Way**

Helen has taken a keen interest in the housemartins around the Rushpool site. She is hoping to turn this into a project that keeps track of the impact of climate change and the increase in uPVC fascias, and other changes on the Rushpool site (including FTNCG planting, etc.) on the housemartins.

## **Forthcoming Events**

Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> August from 11 am at Oak Tree Heath (see above).

Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> August for our Attenborough Outing, with the minibus setting off from Forest Town (Welfare car park) at 10am.

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> August from 10am at The Whitegates for a balsam pull at Spa Ponds.

Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2012, from 7:30pm for a Fungi Talk with Ann Ward, Chair of the Nottinghamshire Fungi Group (at the Acacia Centre, Annesley Woodhouse).

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> September from 7pm for the next FTNCG meeting at the Forest Town Welfare.