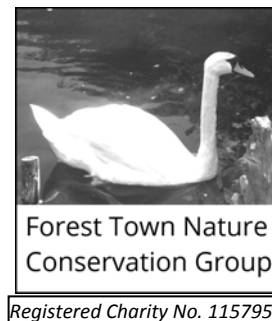


**Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG)**  
**Open Committee Meeting, Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2014**  
**at the Forest Town Welfare, Sherwood Room**



**Present:** Shlomo; Lorraine; Josh; Ian; Alan; Ross; and Richard; [7];  
as well as: Betty; Andy; Dorothy; Gez; and Stephen G [5] [12]

**Apology:** Kevin; Barry; Mark; and Rose [4]

Shlomo welcomed Committee members and other members to the meeting, and explained that the primary focus of the meeting would be the management of Spa Ponds. Shlomo circulated a compilation of previously agreed ideas in relation to the management of Spa Ponds. This document (included below) has been updated in light of the discussion that took place at the open Committee meeting of 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2014.

Matters other than Spa Ponds Site Management Plan

- An e-mail request was received from Garibaldi School regarding their proposed cross-country training route, as the route cuts across Spa Ponds. Lorraine suggested that FTNCG's positive reply should include reference to the need for ongoing contact, as there may come a time when some areas are fenced off to allow for biodiversity gains. Shlomo was also directed to ask about the frequency and number of participants anticipated for the planned cross-country training sessions.

**Action:** Shlomo to write to Garibaldi School as directed.

- It was agreed that Rich, Ross and Ian would accompany Shlomo and the Environment Agency's Darren for the 1<sup>st</sup> October meeting with the farmer of the field related to the run-off.

**Note:** Following the FTNCG meeting Darren advised that only one FTNCG member accompany Shlomo and Darren.

- Andy suggested that the farmer be sounded out about receiving silt from the ponds.
- Ross, Rich and Ian confirmed that plans are progressing for the bush cutter training to take place in early November.
- Alan confirmed that he and Barry will accompany Shlomo (and possibly Ross) for the Spa Ponds water testing with Les of WatersideCare on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> October.
- 50 button-size FTNCG badges have been made up and are selling for £1 suggested minimum donation each to raise funds for FTNCG.
- Rich provided a brief update on the Rushpool site, which has recently had an interpretation panel installed. Rich thanked Helen for helping ensure the panel was installed in the correct location. Jo Hull has put in an internal Mansfield District Council (MDC) request for MDC to mow agreed parts of the Rushpool site. Rich noted the need to follow this up with raking and moving of the grass cuttings elsewhere on the site (to encourage a nettle area for biodiversity). Rich, as our Rushpool Liaison Officer, is also involved in ongoing discussions with MDC and the Sherwood Forest Trust about how remaining Section 106 and Local Improvement Scheme funds will be spent.
- Ian circulated an example of a VistaPrint calendar and agreed to head up the process of gathering Forest Town nature conservation photos for a 2016 FTNCG calendar.
- Lorraine confirmed her intention to write to volunteers to progress the funding group, as previously discussed.

- All agreed that FTNCG would pay £50 to the Mercians for their 19<sup>th</sup> November talk.
- All supported the intention that FTNCG's 2015 programme include a talk about the pottery of Sherwood by David Budge, and also a talk about Spa Ponds and the Clipstone Park Peel by James Wright (on a Friday evening). Andy shared Anne's offer of a Nottinghamshire Fungi Group foray at Spa Ponds in September 2015.
- Lorraine raised the need to produce a Group Affiliation application form, for use by partner organisations such as the Mercians.

### Spa Ponds Site Management Plan

There was a general discussion about Spa Ponds, including a review of the high level aspirations for the site, and more detailed site management ideas. The discussion included the following points:

- Local Improvement Scheme funding could be available for Spa Ponds site management, e.g. to pay for cast iron lockable information boards, as well as for exploratory work to identify the source of the water that feeds the ponds. Andy suggested Shlomo contact the Environment Agency (EA) to ask about putting dye down to help identify the source of the water, and Ian volunteered to research the underlying geology of the area.

**Actions:** Shlomo to ask the EA what they have on file about Spa Ponds, e.g. results of any relevant previous dye testing. Ian to report back on his geological research.

- Information boards should be designed to allow easy changes of the display, which Andy suggested should include e-mail and telephone contacts for FTNCG (e.g. using a dedicated mobile phone for the purpose).
- It was agreed that a priority action for Spa Ponds is the marking of the site boundary with posts (and possibly also conifer stumps). Andy noted that carved trees are used to good effect to mark boundaries on other sites, and that Groundworks (or others) may have funding to support a community arts project that could help enliven the site.
- A related activity is creating a grid system for mapping the site in greater detail.
- Logs could be used to help dry out the bridleway, by burying them under the path.
- There are some dead trees to be cleared from the side of the bridleway.
- It was noted that Gary, Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT) Western Reserves Officer, left Spa Ponds off his list of sites in the Spring, and it was agreed that it would be useful to confirm Spa Ponds' inclusion in the Autumn/Winter cycle, as we rely on NWT volunteers for some essential tasks, including work that might require Nottinghamshire County Council to be informed of the need to close the bridleway.

**Action:** Shlomo and Ian to identify a list of jobs that NWT volunteers should prioritise.

**Note:** Subsequent to the meeting Lorraine communicated with Charles, NWT's Estates Manager, who confirmed NWT's ongoing willingness to support FTNCG with tasks.

- Ian noted that from 2016 the replacement Stewardship Scheme - known as New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS) - could be available for woodland management at Spa Ponds at a rate of about £30/hectare (or about £130 a year).
- Andy expressed the view that the island be removed, as it serves no useful conservation purpose (too exposed to dogs) and provides an unwelcome home for hard-to-reach Himalayan balsam.

- Differing views about the value of replacing the existing pipe with weirs to connect the ponds have been given to FTNCG.
- The idea of converting the bottom pond to wetland habitat to better connect the site with the River Maun was raised. Lorraine noted the wetland habitat that Andy helped encourage on the farmer's field on the Woodhouse bank of the Maun, and the way that site benefits from reduced dog access. The bottom end of Spa Ponds could be fenced off and allowed to 're-wild', with different coloured willows and sedges to add richness.
- All agreed that progressing with a written Site Management Plan for Spa Ponds was another priority, although it was recognised that this is a process and not just a product. It is understood that EMEC is currently working on desk research to feed in to the Spa Ponds Site Management Plan.

**Note:** Subsequent to the meeting Andy confirmed EMEC's intentions to contact FTNCG in the near future to liaise in relation to the Spa Ponds Site Management Plan.

- Alan asked about the possibility of additional volunteers working from time to time on keeping Spa Ponds tidy. In addition to the NWT work days, and the many days Spa Ponds Wardens Alan and Barry devote to litter picking, there is scope for more. It was suggested that community payback schemes be contacted, alongside considering how FTNCG volunteers could get involved in litter picking at Spa Ponds. Shlomo noted that within the WatersideCare scheme volunteers would be expected to keep track of their activities (including dates, number of hours, number of bags of rubbish collected, etc.) for reporting to Keep Britain Tidy.
- Shlomo reported Mark's e-mail contribution to the meeting in relation to the possibility of Woodland Trust support to strengthen the hedges around Spa Ponds. Mark drew attention to the website announcement that: "The Woodland Trust is increasing the support it offers to landowners who wish to plant trees, with more funding now available for a wider range of planting projects, including hedgerow planting. The Trust is now offering assistance to those who wish to plant hedgerows to connect existing woodland...It will...pay up to 60% of the cost of planting if landowners plant the trees themselves or 50% for schemes where the trees will be planted by contractors..."  
Source: <http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/news/press-releases/hedge-funds-available/>
- Shlomo reported having requested 25 'no motorbiking' signs of the sort agreed by landowners. These signs include Nottinghamshire County Council and police logos.
- A question was raised about the possibility of MDC Dog Wardens spraying dog mess at Spa Ponds to help encourage dog walkers to dispose of their dog's mess.
- All agreed that there is unrealised potential for media coverage (Chad, East Midlands Today, BBC Community, etc.) of FTNCG's success story - the purchase of Spa Ponds, our charitable status, etc., and that this could tie in with promoting the 19<sup>th</sup> November Merican talk.
- Andy drew attention to the BBC's Community web pages, and to: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-29125719>

#### Before the meeting closed

- Stephen congratulated Rich on being given a Greenwood Volunteer Award.
- All wished Dorothy a happy birthday, and thanked her for sharing her birthday cake.

### Updates circulated in advance of the meeting

- The Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG) is very pleased to have been invited to become a WatersideCare Group. Keep Britain Tidy's WatersideCare programme "aims to help communities improve their waterways and reclaim them as a vibrant, accessible and pleasant places to spend time".

For more see: <http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/watersidecare/689>

- Several planning objections, and a letter of support for the temporary Tree Preservation Order at the former gun club to be made permanent, have been submitted to Mansfield District Council on behalf of FTNCG. Copies of these are available upon request.
- In early October the Environment Agency will accompany FTNCG representatives for a meeting with the farmer who manages the field adjacent to the Spa Ponds footpath to explore ways to reduce run-off onto the path and ponds.
- On 8<sup>th</sup> September Shlomo represented FTNCG at a meeting of landowners to discuss off-road biking between Forest Town, Clipstone and Rainworth.
- Plans for bush cutter training have progressed, and the training is now due to take place in early November - thanks to the efforts of Sherwood Forest Trust (SFT).
- SFT, along with Rich and Helen, were instrumental in the recent installation of an interpretation board at the Rushpool Open Space site, tucked in behind Asda along The Birdleyway. Go and have a look in person and on our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Rushpool-Open-Space/467517173350367>

### Reminders circulated in advance of the meeting

- Notes from our 3<sup>rd</sup> September meeting are available at: [http://www.foresttown.net/nature/Notes\\_from\\_FTNCG\\_3\\_September\\_2014.pdf](http://www.foresttown.net/nature/Notes_from_FTNCG_3_September_2014.pdf)
- The next FTNCG event will be Chris Jackson's talk about toads on Wednesday evening 1<sup>st</sup> October, from 7pm at the Forest Town Welfare (Arena) Sherwood Room. Chris is the Chair of the Nottinghamshire Amphibian and Reptile Group (NARG) and his talk will include an introduction to the common toad and a discussion of the local Spa Ponds Nature Reserve where Chris and FTNCG carry out an annual toad count.
- FTNCG folk are invited to help lop some broom on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> November at Rainworth Heath from 10am.
- On Wednesday evening 19<sup>th</sup> November, from 7pm at the Forest Town Welfare (Arena) Sherwood Room, we will be hosting Andy Gaunt (and others?) from Mercian Archaeological Services CIC who will tell us a bit about their Sherwood Forest Archaeology Project, described as "A regional flagship Community Archaeology and research project promoting the heritage of Sherwood Forest through community involvement", and as "The Future of Sherwood's Past" no less...

## Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG) Spa Ponds Site Management

27<sup>th</sup> September 2014

### *A collection of ideas and aspirations for Spa Ponds and for FTNCG's management of Spa Ponds:*

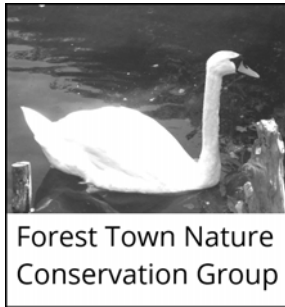
- The Partnership Vision overleaf has been agreed with Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT)
- Intentions conveyed to NWT in advance of the Partnership Agreement included:
  - Establish a Spa Ponds Site Management Committee comprising wardens, FTNCG Committee members and others with an interest in Spa Ponds.
  - Update the Site Management Plan in conjunction with NWT.
  - Raise funds (through grants, donations and Government schemes), and attract (and train) volunteers, to help implement the Site Management Plan.
  - Manage Spa Ponds as a nature reserve and heritage site.
  - Secure first "Local Green Space" and then "Local Nature Reserve" (LNR) status.
  - Address problems and take advantage of opportunities, including access issues, drainage and flooding, off-road biking, illegal fishing.
  - Work with Environment Agency and others in the catchment to improve water quality and biodiversity (including Water Framework Directive projects, balsam management, creating water vole habitat, etc.).
  - Work with Nottinghamshire Amphibian & Reptile Group to record sightings
  - Continue to develop partnership working with NWT, and other partners, including: Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, Mercian Community Archaeology CIC, Sherwood Forest Trust, relevant Local Authorities, Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group, Forest Town Heritage Group, Forest Town Community Council and other sections of the local community (e.g. faith communities, Womens' Institute, etc.), Samworth Academy and other local schools and colleges [and now, WatersideCare].
  - Explore heritage and nature conservation links with other parts of the wider Clipstone Park area, including via the Clipstone Park Study Group, focussing on heritage / non-intrusive archaeology, green infrastructure (green corridors), as well as potential for green tourism / enhanced sustainable leisure opportunities.
  - Consider the impact on Spa Ponds of climate change, developmental pressures, etc. and how to mitigate these and increase resilience.
  - Promote / raise awareness of the site and the FTNCG.

### **May 2014 ideas included:**

- Marking extent of area using small marked fence posts, maps and wheel
- Widen (maintain) bridleway to width of 3m all the way through and 2.5m high, removing overhanging branches and any scrub / trees in way (plus back end marking 3m width with 25mm square posts and also dead hedge gaps in hedge along edge with neighbours)
- Removal of dead, dying, diseased trees that may fall on bridleway users
- Removal of leaning trees and trees on east side of ponds over several years at back end (only fell 5 cubic metres per quarter)
- Install wooden fence, horse steps and kissing gate at bridge when funds allow
- Install more benches, one at each pond minimum, as funds and creativity allows
- Improve signage all the way along e.g. dogs on leads etc., and information signs about site and community ownership (replaceable 'posters' behind perspex)
- Control of invasive species balsam and rhododendron (on going)
- Low fence around some ponds to deter dogs going in ponds (when funds allow)
- Species recording: plants, grasses, trees, butterflies (survey every year training required and volunteers) and if possible, bats, birds and anything else if possible
- Install round timber to try and slow sand being washed into ponds (funds allowing)
- Apply wood chippings to wet areas of bridleway on eastern side of second pond
- Strim the grass near the chicanes and the run alongside the ponds (in the Autumn).
- It was also noted that the Spa Ponds Local Green Space nomination was received and a response from Mansfield District Council (MDC) is expected by the end of 2014; and that a Spa Ponds project is included in Heritage Lottery Fund bid, the results should be known by the end of October 2014; and that negotiations with MDC re: Section 106 for Spa Ponds are ongoing.

### **September 2014 ideas and observations included:**

- Local Improvement Scheme funding could be available for Spa Ponds site management.
- Exploratory work is needed to identify the source of the water that feeds the ponds.
- Information boards should be designed to allow easy changes of the display.
- Priority actions: marking the site boundary, and creating grid system for mapping the site.
- Progressing with a written Site Management Plan for Spa Ponds is another priority.
- Logs could be used to help dry out the bridleway, by burying them under the path.
- There are some dead trees to be cleared from the side of the bridleway.
- FTNCG continues to rely on NWT volunteers for some essential tasks.
- From 2016 the New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS) could be available for woodland management at Spa Ponds at a rate of about £30/hectare (or about £130 a year).
- The island should be considered for removal, as it serves no useful conservation purpose (too exposed to dogs) and provides an unwelcome home for hard-to-reach Himalayan balsam.
- Differing views about the value of replacing the existing pipe with weirs to connect the ponds.
- The bottom pond could be converted to wetland habitat with the bottom end fenced off and allowed to 're-wild', with different coloured willows and sedges to add richness.
- Woodland Trust could support hedgerow planting.
- 25 'no motorbiking' signs requested (to be provided by NWT as part of Landowners Group).



## 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 March 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 part 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.

Signed

Forest Town Nature Conservation Group  
(FTNCG)

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust  
(NWT)