

Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG) General Meeting

Wednesday 5th March 2014, from 7 – 9 pm, at the Forest Town Welfare

Present: Shlomo (Chair and Minutes Secretary), Ian (Vice-Chair), Lorraine (Secretary), Josh (Treasurer), Rich (Facebook Manager and Rushpool Liaison), Kevin, Margaret, Barry, Alan, Ron J, Helen, Lee, Colin, Mark, Stephen D, Val, Pauline, Malcolm, Celia, Ross, Karl and Steven L [22]

Apologies: Alyson, Dave, Rose, Andy, Ann, Jez, Christine, Jeff, Charles, Bernie, Chris, Arnold, Frances, Michael, Jim, Phyllis, Megan and Ron T [18]

Vote on Committee's proposed constitutional change

- It was explained that the proposal arises from legal advice, and that approval would enable FTNCG to proceed with the purchase of Spa Ponds.
- The Committee recommended adding the following to the FTNCG Constitution: "9.5. Where appropriate, the Committee may appoint between two and four members to act as 'holding trustees' to ensure that title to any land acquired is held in trust on behalf of the Group. The title may be transferred to the Official Custodian for Charities should the Group register as a charity."
- The constitutional change was proposed by Ian O'Brien and seconded by Richard Smith, and unanimously approved.

Vote on Committee's proposed charitable status motion

- The Committee sought endorsement from FTNCG members for the following motion: "To provide mandate for the Committee to progress an application for charitable status for the Forest Town Nature Conservation Group".
- It was explained that, in our understanding, this will become possible for the first time once our accounts for 2013/2014 are completed showing we had a turnover of more than £5,000.
- The motion was unanimously passed.

Committee Meetings

- The Committee has met, formally and informally, several times to progress FTNCG business, not least in relation to our purchase of Spa Ponds. Minutes of the Committee meetings held on 13th November and 17th December 2013 and 10th January and 5th February 2014 are available from our updated website's Minutes Archive, with hard copy available upon request.

Rushpool Update

- Rich, our Rushpool Liaison Officer, supported by Helen and other FTNCG volunteers, has been working with the Sherwood Forest Trust's Andy Hollis, bug experts Trevor and Dilys Pendleton, and Jo Hull (Mansfield District Council) to assess the nature conservation value of the site and carry out planned improvements, e.g. controlled removal or chipping of some old/burnt gorse.
- Rich explained that there would not be any more gorse removed for the time being, because bird season had begun.
- Rich offered to take the name and contact details of anyone interested in volunteering, including those interested in taking part in the invertebrate surveying in the Spring / Summer.
- Shlomo explained that the invertebrate surveying entailed examining insects that have been shaken out of branches and onto a table (covered in a sheet).
- All involved in the Rushpool work were thanked for their efforts.

Spa Ponds Update

- Shlomo explained that Spa Ponds has been sold, subject to contract, to the FTNCG, and that the site apparently includes the bridge across the River Maun and the footpath on the other side (Spa Lane). A map of the site was circulated – see overleaf.
- Our Spa Ponds Appeal has so far raised a total of just over £16,000, which – assuming VAT issues are resolved – is enough to cover the purchase, although more is still needed for legal costs (and of course, improvements). As of Tuesday morning 4th March 2014 FTNCG's Spa Ponds Sub-Account stood at: £16,268.07, leaving £646.75 in the Group's main account.
- Thanks to all, who have done an amazing job. Pledges were paid with extra (approx. 140%) and many local people have contributed following Chad coverage and other publicity. Councillors have also helped, especially Mansfield District Councillors Mick Barton, Martin Wright and Denise Moody.
- FTNCG is in the process of negotiating a Site Management Agreement with Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT), via NWT's Estates Manager Charles Langtree.
- Brief summary overview of FTNCG aspirations for Spa Ponds, as conveyed to NWT:
 - Complete the purchase of the site.
 - Enter into a Site Management Agreement with Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT).
 - 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 "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.
 - 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.

- Suggestions were also made regarding aspirations to attract kingfisher and to explore securing Site of Importance for Nature conservation (SINC) / Local Wildlife Site status.
- Spa Ponds toad count starts with training from Chris Jackson of the Nottinghamshire Amphibian & Reptile Group on Saturday 8th March, from 10 am, when we will be gathering at Spa Ponds for a guided walk around our site with toads in mind. Chris Jackson give us a better idea of the location of potential spawning sites (ponds and backwaters) around Spa Ponds to raise our 'toad awareness' in advance of the start of toad counting season. Chris has promised to come back again and help us count toads at Spa Ponds. If all goes to plan, Chris will help us interpret our data and discuss our findings at the Wednesday 7th May 2014 FTNCG meeting (which happens also to be our Annual General Meeting).
- On Tuesday 22nd April 2014, from 10 am, there will be a work day at Spa Ponds where FTNCG members will be joined by NWT volunteers, working together under the guidance of NWT's Gary Cragg (who has replaced Ruth Testa as NWT's Reserves Officer covering Spa Ponds). Ian suggested there may be scope for wild flower surveying on Spa Ponds.

Next FTNCG meeting

- FTNCG meetings will be held on the 1st Wednesday of the month for most months.
- Our next meeting will be 2nd April from 7pm at the Forest Town Welfare's Sherwood Room.
- Also see "Dates for your Diary", below:

Meetings are held from 7 pm at the Forest Town Welfare's Sherwood Room on the first Wednesday of the month for most months, including:

Wednesday evening 2nd April 2014

Wednesday evening 7th May 2014 – Our Annual General meeting (AGM)

Wednesday evening 4th June 2014

Wednesday evening 2nd July 2014

Wednesday evening 3rd September 2014 (venue to be confirmed)

Wednesday evening 1st October 2014 (venue to be confirmed)

Meetings are open to the public, so please come along and feel free to bring a friend.

Additionally:

- Saturday 8th March 2014 – Toad recording training at Spa Ponds, from 10 am

- Spa Ponds toad counts – Dates and times to be arranged.

If you are interested, please contact Shlomo Downen by e-mail to:

shlomo.dowen@gmail.com or telephone (01623) 640134.

- Evenings from April 2014 – Surveying the ancient hedgerows along Stinting Lane

- Tuesday 22nd April – Spa Ponds work day, with NWT volunteers, from 10 am

- Balsam pulling in and around Spa Ponds (and possibly other sites along the River Maun) – To be arranged.

- Monday 30th June 2014 – Samworth Academy Spa Ponds day (volunteers needed)

Website: <http://www.foresttown.net/nature/> Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FTNCG>

