

**Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG)  
Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the Forest Town Welfare  
from 7 – 8 pm on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2014**



**Present:** Betty, Alan, Barry, Ian, Kevin, Rose, Christine, Celia, Dorothy, Mark, Richard, Helen, Colin, Shlomo, Lorraine, Josh, Megan [17] and guests Lynda and Stuart [19]

**Apologies:** Alyson, Dave O, Pauline, Malcolm, Jim, Phyllis, Val, Geoff, Margaret, Jeff, Chris, Arnold, Ron J, Frances, Michael, Andy, Lee, Ann, Elizabeth, David S, Sharon, John, Toni, Stephen D, Stephen G, Ross, Karl, Steven L, Bernie, Charles, Ron T, and Jes [32]

The Chair **welcomed** those in attendance, and gave **apologies** for absent members.

The **Review of the FTNCG's third year** deliver by the Chair (Shlomo) is attached, below.

As of 4<sup>th</sup> May 2014 FTNCG **Membership** stood at 49 members, a small number of whom have yet to renew.

The Treasurer's (Josh's) **Finance** report is included, below.

Members unanimously voted to **re-elect the existing Committee**, comprising: Shlomo Downen, Ian O'Brien, Lorraine Downen, Richard Smith and Josh Downen. It was noted (several times) that others can be co-opted by the Committee.

Several **updates** were given, as follows:

### **Rushpool**

The Facebook pages that Rich created have been well liked. Interpretation panel discussions are progressing (slowly). The future of the Rushpool project depends somewhat on both the Sherwood Forest Trust (SFT) and Mansfield District Council (MDC), and on the availability of funding for further work. Helen reported that the gorse clearing work carried out to date has helped encourage the return of song thrush and has attracted some willow warblers. Rich plans to organise a wildflower survey at the Rushpool site in the summer. Rich took the opportunity to thank all those involved in the Rushpool work, including Helen, and SFT's Andy Hollis.

### **Local Green Space Nomination**

Receipt of FTNCG's nomination of Spa Ponds for Local Green Space status has been acknowledged by MDC. Copies of nomination available upon request. The timescale for a decision is uncertain.

### **Spa Ponds Purchase**

Our solicitors should by now have received a reply from MDC, and the transfer of the deeds to FTNCG should proceed quickly once MDC's response is received. Although the exact costs have yet to be determined, we think we have sufficient funds in our Spa Ponds sub-account to cover purchase and legal costs. We are still waiting for Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT) to progress the Site Management Agreement (which is not required for the purchase, but would be helpful for FTNCG's application to the Charity Commission).

### **FTNCG's Charitable Status**

FTNCG's initial application has been submitted and guidance has been received from the Charity Commission, who also asked for further information. Shlomo and Josh are progressing this. Although not a requirement, the addition of one or two non-Dowens as FTNCG trustees would be good practice. Members (including our Spa Ponds wardens) are encouraged to volunteer.

### **Off-road Biking**

Shlomo met with Sergeant Paul Clarke regarding off-road biking at Spa Ponds and informed our local police of the Landowners meeting (attended by police colleagues from another division). Police were invited to meet with our wardens on the site. The police are also interested in meeting adjacent landowners, including the Forestry Commission. Off-road bikers are not allowed to ride on bridleways, nor to carry out criminal damage (e.g. destroying barriers), nor to cause upset using foul language (which counts as a public order offense). Photographic evidence, including webcams, should be time and date stamped. All are urged to report each and every off-road biking incident to the police, by telephone to 101.

### **Stinting Lane Hedge Survey**

Three evening surveys took place in April, enabling the whole stretch of both hedges to be surveyed. Notable finds include native bluebell and lesser celandine, both of which are ancient woodland indicator species. Our thanks to all those who took part in this year's surveying.

### **Spa Ponds Site Management**

Ian outlined some ideas for the management of Spa Ponds, including: marking site and bridleway boundaries; removing dead, dying or diseased trees along the paths (that could fall on visitors to the site); clearing trees to allow more light to shine on the ponds; installing fences to deter dogs from accessing the ponds and other fencing / gates to deter bike riders; added protection for the paths and measures to limit run-off from nearby fields; installing more benches; improve signage; species recording for plants and creatures; and ongoing efforts to control invasive species.

### **Erin's Big Bike Ride**

Posters were circulated, and Shlomo explained that NWT Communications Manager Erin McDaid is attempting to cycle between the 67 Trust nature reserves as part of NWT's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations, to raise funds towards NWT's conservation work in the Sherwood Forest area.

### **Forthcoming FTNCG activities / volunteer opportunities**

- King John Re-enactment at Sherwood Pines, where FTNCG will have stall on both Saturday and Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> May. Volunteers would be much appreciated.
- Balsam Pull at Spa Ponds on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> May, from 10am at Clipstone Drive entrance.
- Samworth Making A Difference Day at Spa Ponds on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> June – We need volunteers!
- Mercian Community Archaeology Open Day at Castlefield (Kings Clipstone) on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> September. Event will include FTNCG stall focussing on Spa Ponds.
- Nottinghamshire Fungi Group forays on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> September at Vicar's Pond, and on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> November at Ransom Wood.
- Rainworth Heath Broom clearance - Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> November, from 10 am.

### **Future FTNCG meetings**

From 7 pm at the Forest Town Welfare's Sherwood Room

- Wednesday evening 4<sup>th</sup> June
- Wednesday evening 2<sup>nd</sup> July
- Wednesday evening 3<sup>rd</sup> September (venue to be confirmed)
- Wednesday evening 1<sup>st</sup> October (venue to be confirmed)
- Wednesday evening 19<sup>th</sup> November

### **Ideas for future FTNCG activities**

- Wildflower and butterfly surveying.
- Guided walk around Strawberry Hill, possibly on Wednesday evening 2<sup>nd</sup> July.
- Invite Andy Gaunt / Mercians back, possibly in November.
- Guided walk around Brackenhurst, possibly in Spring 2015.

### **Forest Town Village Markets**

At Kingsway Hall from 10 am - 2 pm on Saturdays: 24<sup>th</sup> May; 21<sup>st</sup> June; 19<sup>th</sup> July; 23<sup>rd</sup> August; 20<sup>th</sup> Sept.; 18<sup>th</sup> Oct.; and 15<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2014

### **Closure**

At 8 pm the AGM was brought to a close and we handed over to Stuart Reddish (Public Information Research Organisation founder, Friend of Thynghowe, and friend of FTNCG) who told us about the Sherwood Heritage Sense of Place Project.

Stuart is carrying out some research into people's sense of place, and questionnaires were supplied that provide an opportunity to contribute your own thoughts and feelings about what makes the Sherwood Forest area special. Contact Shlomo for a questionnaire, or to submit completed surveys.

## Review of the FTNCG's third year

Your faithful Committee met no fewer than 8 times since last year's AGM. Notes are available on our website. The year was dominated by Spa Ponds, although I am pleased to report progress was also made on the Rushpool site.

In relation to Spa Ponds, we went from making bids to holding our breath to having our offer refused – twice. We finally reached the moment of truth when the landagent told us that an offer of £15,000 would be likely to be accepted, but failing that the site would be taken off the market. This was in January 2014, after we had raised more than £2,000 in donations during 2013 – including the money raised at Pie & Pea fundraiser put on for us by the Forest Town Community Council. We had also received £9,000 in pledges. The Committee decided to go for it, and our Urgent Spa Ponds Appeal was launched. As you know, thanks to the generosity of many people, we raised what we hope will be enough to cover the purchase and associated legal costs.

We also found time to survey the hedges along Stinting Lane at the end of last year's season and the beginning of this year's season; we saw a nightjar fly by at Rainworth Heath; we objected to an off-road biking application (which was subsequently withdrawn); we enjoyed Anne's fungi talk – followed closely by a fungi foray at Ransomwood; some of us met with an Environment Agency representative to explore water issues and potential funding for improvements; we pulled so much Himalayan Balsam that we're ready for a new challenge; we enjoyed an unforgettable lesson in the history of Spa Ponds from Mercian Archaeological Services; we returned to Rainworth heath for a couple of work days lopping broom; we counted toads in the dark; we're applying for charitable status for our group and Local green space status for Spa Ponds; and thanks to Rich, our Facebook Pages have taken off. And all this time Helen has been keeping records of wildlife sightings.

## Finance

### Current funds:

- General: £747.51
- Spa Ponds: + £16,893.07
- Total: = £17,640.58

### Financial donations to Spa Ponds Appeal from organisations:

- £5,000 Community Involvement in Green Infrastructure (CIIGI)
- £750 Forest Town Community Council
- £500 Forest Town Heritage Group
- £300 M Barton MDC Spa Pond Grant
- £290 M Wright MDC Spa Pond Grant
- £100 Warsop Footpath and Countryside Group

### Other financial donations from organisations (1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 - present):

- £500 Forest Town Community Council
- £405 D Moody MDC Grant

### Recent/upcoming expenditure:

- £15,000 Spa Ponds purchase
- ~£1,250 Spa Ponds legal expenses and disbursements
- £233 TCV Membership & Insurance (cheque sent, treated as spent)
- £33 NWT Membership