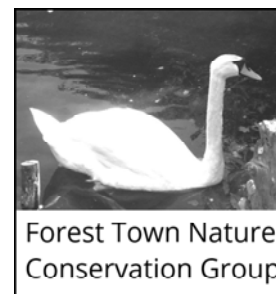


Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG)
Spa Ponds Meeting Notes from
Wednesday 28th January 2015 at the Downen Residence



Registered Charity No. 1157957

Present: Shlomo, Lorraine, Josh, Ian, Rich, and Mark

Apologies: Rose, Ross, Alan, and Barry

Updates

- Wardens
 - All present send best wishes for improved health to Alan and to Betty
 - 18 rubbish bags collected from Spa Ponds in November and 12 in December
 - "No Biking" signs still in place, although one needs repairing. A reduction in activity has been noticed, so signs may be working as a deterrent.
Action: Rich to repair "No Biking" sign and install "Clean up after your dog" signs
 - Mark reported an incident to police on 2 Jan 2015 (Crime incident ref. AW35515)
- Legal
 - Solicitor helping with deeds transfer to Charity Commission Landholding Service
Action: Shlomo to ask solicitor (Mr C G Dawson) for an update
- EMEC / NWT
 - NWT paying towards EMEC's Spa Ponds site management input
 - Could fit within / feed into the Sherwood Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS)
 - Charles Langtree: EMEC currently undertaking Spa Ponds desk research
 - Action: Shlomo to contact EMEC to see how FTNCG can be involved
- Footpath Applications
 - Relevant maps considered and no objections raised
 - If designated, the proposed footpaths could be included in a heritage trail
- Balsam Management Meeting (16th December 2014)
 - Rich and Shlomo attended the coordination meeting called by Chris Jackson
 - Special focus on East Mansfield (including up- and downstream from Spa Ponds)
 - Minutes of this meeting are available from Shlomo upon request
 - Actions: Rich and Shlomo to continue to liaise with Chris re: balsam pulling
- Landowners Meeting (20th January 2015)
 - Continues to be a useful forum for networking, including with police, Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, and the Forestry Commission
 - Access control project to deter motorbiking and improve access to pedestrians could be included in LPS, and this could include Spa Ponds
- Water Catchment Partnership Meeting (22nd January 2015)
 - Another useful forum for networking, including with Environment Agency
 - Partnership would support funding bids for Spa Ponds water quality improvement
 - Minutes of this meeting are available from Shlomo upon request
- WatersideCare Meeting (26th January 2015)
 - Les Warren met with Rich, Lorraine, Shlomo & Josh, and agreed WatersideCare would lend some equipment to FTNCG (e.g. retractable saw, bin bags)
 - Les offered First Aid training (for Rich) and will investigate opportunities for other training (e.g. in the use of grappling hooks & throwlines, water quality testing)
Action: Shlomo to continue to liaise with Les and keep Group informed

- Local Green Space
 - Spa Ponds has been recommended for inclusion as a Local Green Space (LSG) in Mansfield's Local Plan, which is expected to be out for consultation in 2015
 - LGS status could offer protection from development in and around Spa Ponds
 - Further information is available from the Mansfield District Council website at: <http://www.mansfield.gov.uk/cmadexternal/minutesview.aspx?id=2462&entityid=25&date=%20Tuesday%2013%20January%202015&time=05:30%20PM&location=Council%20Chamber&contactemail=tscott@mansfield.gov.uk> and: http://www.mansfield.gov.uk/CMADAttachments/2015/Select%20Commission%202/Attachments/2015_01_13_00012658_Designating%20Local%20Green%20Space%20in%20Mansfield%20District.pdf

Forming Project Groups

- Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) - Sherwood Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS)
 - Shlomo to head up, supported by Rich, Ian, Mark and Josh
 - Spa Ponds Project Proposal and Update circulated to HLF LPS Project Group
 - HLF Development Phase proposal submitted for Spa Ponds ecology and heritage
 - Action: Revised Proposal to be developed and submitted as part of LPS
- Spa Ponds Heritage (to work with the Mercians)
 - Lorraine to head up, supported by Mark and Rich
 - Action: Ongoing discussions with the Mercians (Andy and Sean)
- Boundary Marking
 - Ian to head up, supported by Rich (and possibly Ross)
 - Action: Ian and Rich (and possibly Ross) to meet up to prepare for boundary marking and bridleway maintenance session on Saturday 14th March (10 am)
- Toad Count (March / April 2015)
 - Rich to head up, possibly supported by Ross (and others)
 - Actions: Shlomo to put Rich in contact with Chris Jackson. Rich to be prepared, in response to conditions, to quickly contact Chris & others who express interest
- Bridleway Maintenance
 - Ian to head up, supported by other volunteers (possibly Barry and Alan)
 - Action: Opportunities to double-up with other activities to be explored
- Other Project Groups include: Rushpool (Headed up by Rich, supported by Helen and by Sherwood Forest Trust's Andy Hollis), and Funding (headed up by Lorraine, Celia and Helen, supported by Megan and Rose).

Site Management Priorities for 2015

- Discussion included: low cost measures for silt management, climate change mitigation, bridleway management, improving water quality, and transforming the bottom pond
- October 2014 Spa Ponds Site Management Notes (below) were circulated
- Autumn Fungi Foray (Saturday 12th Sept) opportunity to double for bridleway maintenance
Action: Shlomo to make car parking arrangements with White Gates

See below for Diary of 2015 Spa Ponds (and other) activities

Date of next Spa Ponds Meeting

- No date set for next Spa Ponds Meeting
- Exchanges by e-mail and on 4th March Meeting and 14th March Workday are expected
- Next Open Committee Meeting, on Wed 18th February, will include Spa Ponds Updates

Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG) 2015 Programme (as of 1st Feb 2015)

February 2015

- Monday 16th February: Rushpool Workday, from 10 am at The Bridleway (ASDA) entrance
- Wednesday 18th February: FTNCG Open Committee Meeting from 7pm, Sherwood Room

March 2015

- Wednesday 4th March: FTNCG Meeting from 7pm, Forest Town Welfare, Sherwood Room
- Monday 9th March: Rushpool Workday, from 10 am at The Bridleway (ASDA) entrance
- One evening, probably between around 10th March and 20th April: Spa Ponds Toad Count
- Saturday 14th March: Spa Ponds boundary marking and bridleway maintenance (from 10 am)
- Monday 30th March: Rushpool Workday, from 10 am at The Bridleway (ASDA) entrance

April 2015

- Wednesday 1st April: FTNCG Meeting from 7pm, Forest Town Welfare, Sherwood Room
- *Saturday 18th April: Spring Community Archaeology Conference (with the Mericans)*
- *Wednesday 22nd April: Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group (NottsBAG) Annual Event, £6 per person, must be booked in advance via Chris Jackson*
- Monday 27th April: Rushpool Workday, from 10 am at The Bridleway (ASDA) entrance
- Wednesday 29th April: Special Meeting for Trustees and Potential Trustees

May 2015

- *Sat 2nd May: Magna Carta walk from the Parliament Oak to King John's Palace*
- Wed 6th May: Forest Town Nature Conservation Group Annual General Meeting from 7pm, FT Welfare, Sherwood Room, with guest speaker Andy Lowe talking about GPS bird-tracking
- *Sat - Sun 9th & 10th May: Spring Thing - Magna Carta Re-enactment, Sherwood Pines*

June 2015

- During balsam pulling season (especially June and July): Balsam pulling at Spa Ponds and environs, including in conjunction with WatersideCare and NottsBAG
- Tuesday 2nd June: Guided bird walk with Andy Lowe (Booking via Shlomo is essential)
- Wednesday 3rd June: FTNCG Meeting from 7pm, Forest Town Welfare, Sherwood Room
- Thursday 11th June: Guided bird walk with Andy Lowe (Booking via Shlomo is essential)

July 2015

- Wednesday 1st July: FTNCG Meeting from 7pm, Forest Town Welfare, Sherwood Room
- Monday 6th July: Making A Difference Day (with Samworth Academy & Forestry Commission)
- *Saturday 18th July: Clipstone Gala (FTNCG could have a stall there)*

September 2015

- Sat 12th September: Autumn Fungi Foray at Spa Ponds (with Nottinghamshire Fungi Group)
- Wednesday 16th September: FTNCG Open Committee Meeting from 7pm, Sherwood Room

October 2015

- Wednesday 7th October: FTNCG Meeting from 7pm, Forest Town Welfare, Sherwood Room

November 2015

- Wednesday 4th November: FTNCG Meeting with guest speaker David Budge talking about the Medieval Pottery of Sherwood, from 7pm, Forest Town Welfare, Sherwood Room

December 2015

- Wednesday 2nd December: FTNCG Open Committee Meeting from 7pm, Sherwood Room

Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG) Spa Ponds Site Management (October 2014)

Long-term objectives / Overarching principles

- Manage as a public open space, nature reserve, and heritage site.
- Retain Local Wildlife Site status, and work to protect, enhance and improve conservation value.
- Take account of recreational needs of site users, e.g. families, dog walkers, horse riders, ramblers.
- Take account of educational uses of the site, e.g. local schools, lifelong learning, volunteer training.
- Address problems, including: litter, access, drainage and flooding, off-road biking, illegal fishing.
- Work with Environment Agency and others in catchment to improve water quality and biodiversity.
- Continue to develop partnership working with NWT, and others, including: Forestry Commission; Environment Agency; WatersideCare; Catchment Partnership; Mercian Community Archaeology CIC; Sherwood Forest Trust; relevant Local Authorities; Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group; Forest Town Heritage Group; Forest Town Community Council; the police; local schools and colleges.
- Explore heritage and nature conservation links within 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 threats such as climate change and development pressures, e.g. mitigation and resilience.

Regular site management tasks

- Mark extent of area using small marked fence posts, maps and wheel, and maintain this boundary.
- Collect and remove litter from the site and environs.
- Maintain bridleway to width of 3m, removing overhanging branches.
- Install dead hedging to fill gaps in hedge along edge with neighbours.
- Removal of dead, dying, diseased trees that may fall on bridleway users, and other dangerous trees.
- Control of invasive species balsam and rhododendron, e.g. via balsam pulling.
- Apply wood chippings to wet areas of bridleway and/or burry logs to help dry out the bridleway.
- Strim the grass near the chicanes and the run alongside the ponds (in the Autumn).

Monitoring / Information gathering and recording

- Record and submit wildlife sightings, e.g. amphibians, reptiles, plants, trees, butterflies, bats, birds.
- Exploratory work is needed to identify the source of the water that feeds the ponds.

Improvement project ideas

- 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 on-site signage and provide on-site information about the site and its community ownership.
- Install and maintain low fence around some ponds to deter dogs going in ponds (when funds allow).
- Install round timber to try and slow sand being washed into ponds (funds allowing).
- 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.

Organisational activities

- Provide access to relevant volunteer training, e.g. recording wildlife sightings, use of power tools.
- Promote / raise awareness of the site, e.g. via social media.
- Establish Site Management Committee comprising wardens, FTNCG Committee members and others.
- Update the Site Management Plan in conjunction with NWT and EMEC.
- Raise funds (through grants, donations and Government schemes, as well as S106 Agreements where appropriate), and attract (and train) volunteers, to help implement the Site Management Plan.