

**Notes from the
Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG)
Spa Ponds Site Management Meeting,
7- 9:30 PM, Wednesday 7th December 2016**



Registered Charity No. 1157957

Present: Lorraine, Shlomo, Josh, Rich, Rose, Jez, John G, Mark, Samantha, Phil, Kevin, Rob Vane, and Sheelagh Holland [13]

Apologies: Janet, Helen, Barry, Alan, Shane, John C, Ross, and Colin

All welcomed (by Lorraine, who Chaired), including new volunteer Samantha and guests Rob (from Waingroves Community Woodland Trust) and Sheelagh (InStep walking group).

Matters arising from 14th September 2016 Trustees Meeting:

- EMEC carried out £1,740 worth of work in September, and this was followed by two well-attended FTNCG work days on 22nd October and 19th November 2016
- Phil received strimmer training, and has been maintaining Spa Ponds' entrance
- Phil has also been trained to test water quality, including phosphates, and is using the Environment Agency's new on-line system to report results

Action: Shlomo and Josh to upload water testing results to FTNCG website.

- Jez and Ann attended St John Ambulance training on 11th Oct. in Chesterfield
- Health & Safety standards have been raised, and need to be maintained
- Thanks were given to all those who have reported their volunteer hours - it was noted that it was good to see the buddy system in use
- Mark is continuing to record trees, and is formulating tree recording / geo-location training opportunities to be delivered as part of the Heritage Project
- Establishing a "Summer Team" to support our Wardens (w/litter, etc.) next year

Other matters:

- Rich agreed to take on a new role as FTNCG Biodiversity Officer, incl. species recording and species identification training (and celebrating finds / ID support via Facebook).
- There was a brief review of volunteer and EMEC activities in relation to Spa Ponds Work Plan (EMEC, March 2015), followed by a discussion of EMEC's recommendations for further work. This discussion was given added importance due to the receipt of a £4k windfall and the associated opportunity to provide recommendations to Trustees.
- Tool storage arrangements were also discussed, and it was agreed that there is an opportunity to decentralise the storage of FTNCG's tools, alongside the need to organise a system to ensure that we know where each tool is kept.

Action: Phil to buy an axe (Phil to be reimbursed in exchange for receipt).

- The meeting also benefitted from Rob sharing his Waingroves Community Woodland Trust experiences, including fundraising, and from Sheelagh sharing her perspective on improvements to Spa Ponds as a Walk Leader for the InStep walking group (alongside expressing an interest in the Spa Ponds Heritage Project).
- The opportunity to plant willow at the banks of the River Maun was noted.
- Possibility of inviting Chris Jackson back to Spa Ponds to help advise on biodiversity.
- John expressed concerns, shared by others, re: impact on horses of steps deterioration.

Action: Shlomo to contact Notts County Council Public Rights of Way Team.

- Rob shared funding ideas used by Waingroves group, including on-line shop.

Action: Rob to share the Waingrove group's risk assessments.

Shlomo to liaise with Rob to organise an FTNCG visit to the Waingroves site.

FAO Shlomo Downen
Forest Town Nature Conservation Group

Dear Shlomo,

Re: Spa Ponds Nature Reserve

Description of works carried out at Spa Ponds is as follows.

Felling of the Oak Tree which had fallen over the path and one which had fallen into pond 3.



Anti-motorbike works down by the river included:

Digging a trench across the base of the bank and mounding of the soil to create a bank on both sides.

Steepening of the bank to make it more difficult for motorbikes to scale.

Felling of alder tree across the bank keeping the stem attached and stacking brash to provide more of a barrier.

EMEC Land Management
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Felling of sycamore from along the banks to increase light and use of the timber to create new motorbike chicanes.



Felling of Willow Trees from along the side of pond 3 to stop overshading and leaves silting up the ponds. Material was deadhedged along the edge of the path to keep people and dogs to the path as well as provide habitat for animals.



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Felling of trees in the meadow area along the main path and the area was brushcut to clear the vegetation. Material was deadhedged along the boundary to deter motorbikes. The area was then seeded with an 80% grass and 20% wildflower seed mix.

Future Management Tasks

(In line with EMEC's Management plan) Ideally some of this work to happen this winter.

Removal of the trees covering the islands on pond 4

Removal of some of the silt from pond 1 and creation of a bund to stop the silt-carrying runoff coming from the track to the Forestry Commission land.

Selective felling of more trees from around the ponds to reduce shading and leaves silting up the ponds.

Felling of sycamore trees from the north-eastern woodland to enable light to get to the ground and help increase the diversity of the woodland ground flora.

Installation of bird and Bat boxes around the site.

More motorbike chicanes to inhibit motorbike use of the site.

Dave Sutton BSc (Hons)
Land Management Contracts Manager
EMEC Land Management

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6.2.7 Objective 7: Monitoring

Monitor the effects of management on flora and fauna.

Rationale

Improved species records for Spa Ponds

Further survey work at the appropriate time of year would serve to improve the knowledge of the species that occur within the Spa Ponds Nature Reserve. Any further survey work would better inform the management plan and allow the assessment of the effects that the current management is having on the Reserve, which could inform future changes to the management. Details of further recommended surveys can be seen below.

It is understandable that the funds for further survey work may not be available to the FTNCG and where funds are available they may need to be prioritised for the management of the Reserve.

Therefore, it is recommended that members of the FTNCG and the general public that frequent the site should be encouraged where possible, to record any species that they have observed on site. It is unlikely that records obtained in this way will be of a comparable level to survey work carried out by a suitably knowledgeable ecologist/naturalist, but it is a good substitute with the advantage of records being provided throughout the year rather than from a single site visit.

Further ecological survey work to be considered if funds are available include:

Aquatic invertebrate survey

The site has in the past been known for its aquatic invertebrate communities, in particular dragonflies and damselflies. Although it has had this reputation in the past there are few species records for aquatic invertebrates and the current status of the aquatic community is not known, this survey work would therefore be beneficial in establishing a baseline knowledge of the species present, whilst better informing the management of the site.

Botanical survey

The Spa Ponds site was surveyed during February 2015, therefore the majority of ground flora that would be expected within the woodland and aquatic vegetation expected to be within the ponds was not yet apparent. Botanical surveys during the spring and summer would allow more accurate recommendations to be made towards the enhancement of the floral diversity within the woodland and ponds.

Bats

Bat transect surveys would be beneficial to determine which species are making use of the site, and in order to monitor the effect of management on bat use of the site. Additionally, if any bat boxes are installed on site, it is recommended that they are checked once a year by a licenced ecologist or by the local (Nottinghamshire) Bat Group.

Birds

Surveys during the bird breeding season could further assess the use of the woodland by birds, so that the management could be tailored towards the species recorded or to try and attract species that are not currently present on site.

6.3 Management Operations: Plan of Work

The following is an ideal plan of work. Although every effort should be made to implement the actions listed, this will be governed by certain constraining factors including resource availability.

6.3.1 Objective 1: Woodlands

Maintain and enhance the woodland areas to encourage the healthy growth of trees and maintain a mosaic of woodland habitats.

Increase the diversity within the woodlands by improving the ground flora.

Obj.	Action	Timing
1/1	Selective thinning should be carried out in areas where the tree growth is particularly dense. This should be aimed at removing 10-15% of trees (focusing on less desirable species such as sycamore) or sufficient to allow more mature specimens to thrive. Woodland edges should be maintained more or less intact.	October to February (inclusive)
1/2	All works to the woodland should be carried out outside the breeding bird season.	October to February (inclusive)
1/3	Deadwood felled during any work operations should be scattered within the woodland to enhance invertebrate interest and provide shelter for other faunal species.	n/a
1/4	Weeding of bramble in woodland areas adjacent to Packman's Way. This should ideally be carried out through mechanical means, i.e. hoeing.	October to February
1/5	Application of woodland ground flora seed mix and plug plants in woodlands.	Late autumn
1/6	Monitor all woodlands for continued healthy growth of trees and development of woodland ground flora. Species such as nettle and bramble should not be permitted to take over large areas of the woodlands.	Year round

6.3.2 Objective 2: Hedgerows

Enhance the existing hedgerows bordering the track through the centre of the development.

Obj.	Action	Timing
2/1	Creation of dead hedges to fill in the gaps in the defunct hedgerow.	January to February
2/2	Planting of whips to fill the gaps in the defunct hedgerow. Use a variety of native species to increase diversity.	October to February (inclusive)
2/3	Maintenance of intact/mature hedgerows	January to February
2/4	Monitoring and after planting maintenance, i.e weeding, beating up, pruning/trimming, and replacement of any dead or dying shrubs.	October to February (inclusive)

6.3.3 Objective 3: Supplementary habitat for faunal species

Install bird nest boxes, bat roost boxes and invertebrate habitat boxes to increase the value of the site for faunal species.

Obj.	Action	Timing
3/1	Install bat, bird and insect boxes if deemed appropriate for Spa Ponds.	Year round
3/2	Monitoring of bat boxes by an appropriately experienced and licenced individual.	October or February to avoid the disturbing bats during hibernation

6.3.4 Objective 4: Ponds

De-silting of the ponds to maintain and enhance the diversity of habitats present.

Obj.	Action	Timing
4/1	De-silting of ponds when/where necessary.	July to August
4/2	Preservation of the shallow marginal vegetation and bare earth on the south bank of ponds 1, 2 and 3.	n/a
4/3	Thinning trees around pond	October to February
4/4	Maintain pond outflow pipes	Year round

6.3.5 Objective 5: Access, Litter and Vandalism

Ensure woodland paths are maintained; the woodlands are secure from off-road vehicles and the site free of litter and vandalism.

Obj.	Action	Timing
5/1	Footpaths should be monitored each year and maintenance works carried out as necessary to keep them in good condition.	Year round
5/2	Monitoring of the health of trees adjacent to the footpaths on site. Any trees considered to pose a risk to anybody using the footpaths should be felled and the wood scattered throughout the woodland to provide additional habitat for invertebrates.	October to February (inclusive)
5/3	Litter picking to be carried out when possible/necessary. Litter to be removed from the site and disposed of appropriately. Any vandalism / fly tipping should be appropriately dealt with / removed.	Year round

6.3.6 Objective 6: Invasive Species Control

Removal of Himalayan Balsam

Obj.	Action	Timing
6/1	Hand pulling of any Himalayan balsam and ensuring that it does not re-root once pulled.	April to May (or until seed pods are present)
6/2	Investigation of the land surrounding Spa Ponds to determine whether Himalayan balsam is present in the wider landscape.	April to July

6.3.7 Objective 7: Monitoring

Monitor the effects of management on flora and fauna.

Obj.	Action	Timing
7/1	Incidental recordings by FTNCG or general public	Year round
7/2	Aquatic invertebrate survey	May to June (inclusive)
7/3	Botanical survey	April to September (inclusive)
7/4	Bat surveys	Mid-May to September (inclusive)
7/5	Breeding bird surveys	Mid-March to July

4. Financial Review

Estimated basic annual running costs

Current running costs for FTNCG amount to more than £500, but if necessary these costs could be limited to around **£500**, for example, as follows:

£125 for Membership:

- **£40** - Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT)
- **£40** - The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) Community Network
- **£40** - Council for British Archaeology (CBA)
- **£ 5** - CBA East Midlands

£135 for Insurance:

- Includes Public & Products Liability (for up to £5m cover) and Personal Accident

£240 for Other General Running Costs:

- **£150** - Education and training
- **£ 50** - Sundry items for Spa Ponds (e.g. signs, tools, plants, seeds, etc.)
- **£ 20** - Printing and postage
- **£ 20** - Volunteer travel expenses

Reserves policy for 2016/17

Running Costs (Reserved £1,000; target £1,000): There are some basic expenses that must be met, e.g. various forms of insurance, alongside health & safety equipment and training. Trustees have set the reserve at a level equivalent to two years' running costs at £500 per year, although in reality we expect to spend more than £500 in the coming year, and we expect to attract further funds to replenish some or all of this spend.

Contingencies (Reserved £500; target £500): To cover unexpected expenses, Trustees have set a target of £500 for contingencies, rising in future years as finances allow.

Match-funding (Reserved £0; target £2,000): To position FTNCG to take advantage of match-funding opportunities, Trustees set a target to ring-fence £2,000 of uncommitted funds for our contribution to such funding bids. This financial element would be used alongside using volunteer hours (i.e. in-kind contribution) to support the success of bids where appropriate, rising in future years as finances allow. As there are no specific match-funding projects foreseen in the near future, and because it is important to spend money now on charitable purposes and we have other worthwhile purposes for which to spend the money, the reserve is currently set to £0 so as to allow for more money to be spent on projects to be realised in the coming year or so.

Spa Ponds Heritage Management Plan Project (Reserved: £1,000; target £1,000): To complement our Habitat Management Plan for Spa Ponds, Trustees have identified £1,000 to be spent in addition to any other funds raised, e.g. through a successful Heritage Lottery Fund bid, to pay towards costs associated with related training, researching and producing a Heritage Management Plan for Spa Ponds, and other

publications and activities intended to highlight aspects of the history of Spa Ponds. The scope of the project will depend greatly on the availability of external funding, but its main focus will be to produce an initial Heritage Management Plan to ensure that the Spa Ponds site is managed, maintained and improved in a manner consistent with, and sensitive to, its heritage value. The greater understanding of the site's heritage would also be able to contribute to support future bids for nature conservation work.

Spa Ponds Site Improvement Works (Reserved: £1,500; target £2,500): In accordance with the March 2015 Habitat Management Plan for Spa Ponds, Trustees have identified improvement that we would like to see carried out in the coming year or so, including installation of fencing, management of the trees, and other work necessary to maintain and improve access and public safety. As this work is expected to require external contractors and the purchase of materials it will incur costs over and above the money budgeted for FTNCG's ordinary, volunteer-led, running costs.

Spa Ponds Donation Fund: Money donated specifically for Spa Ponds will only be spent on expenses related to Spa Ponds, e.g. on general running costs attributable to FTNCG's involvement in Spa Ponds, on Spa Ponds Site Improvement Works, etc.

The charity's principal sources of funds (including any fundraising)

For the period covered by this Report and Accounts, FTNCG's total income was just over £3,350, of which £350 was donated specifically for Spa Ponds. The principal sources of this income were as follows:

Donations from councillor division/ward funds	£1,450
Donations from individuals, inc. membership	£ 890
Other fundraising	£ 340
Donation from CII GI	£ 320
Donation from ASDA	£ 200
Gift Aid from HMRC	£ 150

In addition to funding bids for specific projects, members of the Group intend to continue general fundraising efforts and FTNCG will continue to seek funding through membership donations, general appeals, and grant funding from Councillors' constituency pots. As well as obtaining Gift Aid on future donations, in the coming year FTNCG expect to receive a small sum for Gift Aid from donations made during 2015/16.

There is also potential for funding to be set aside for Spa Ponds as a result of Section 106 money associated with nearby future housing development. Such funds, if forthcoming, could be used to pay for improved access and signage.