

**Forest Town Nature Conservation Group
(FTNCG) Annual General Meeting (AGM)
Forest Town Welfare (Arena) Sherwood Room
from 7 pm on Wednesday 6th May 2015**



Registered Charity No. 1157957

Present: Alan, Barry, Pauline, Malcolm, Kevin, Rose, Celia, Christine, Richard, Helen, Colin, Shlomo, Lorraine, Josh, Megan, Jes, John C, Andy L, Ann W, Ann C, and guest Lynn **[21]**

Apologies: Ross, Ian, Dorothy, Mark, Betty, Jim, Phyllis, Val, Geoff, Margaret, Jeff, Chris, Arnold, Ron J, Frances, Lee, Elizabeth, David Sm, David Sh, Stephen D, Karl, Steven L, Ron T, Trev, Natalie, Greg, Martin, Mickie, Pam S, Lisa and Tony **[31]**

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

The Review of the FTNCG's fourth year was delivered by the Chair (Shlomo), and is attached, below. For additional information see FTNCG's Report & Accounts for the period 1st April 2014 - 31st March 2015.

As of 3rd May 2015 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. For additional information see FTNCG's Report & Accounts for the period 1st April 2014 - 31st March 2015.

Helen proposed the re-election of the following FTNCG Officers and Trustees:

- Shlomo Downen for the Office of Chair;
- Richard Smith for the Office of Vice-Chair;
- Lorraine Downen for the Office of Secretary;
- Josh Downen for the Office of Treasurer; and
- Alan Alberry, Barry Housley, Rose Powell and Ross Lacey as Trustees

This proposal passed unanimously.

The AGM was then closed, and was followed by a talk from Andy Lowe (Birklands Ringing Group) on the use of GPS to track the birds of Sherwood Forest, including cuckoo and nightjar.

Next FTNCG Meeting:

Wednesday 3rd June 2015, from 7 pm at the Forest Town Welfare

Review of FTNCG's fourth year

Forest Town Nature Conservation Group's fourth year has been transformative. We are now a registered charity. Our charitable object is: 'to promote for the benefit of the public the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment in and around Forest Town'. Throughout the year, Trustees have had regard to the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit. Our decision to become a registered charity is closely tied to our decision to purchase the Spa Ponds Nature Reserve for public benefit.

Yes! We did it. We bought Spa Ponds. And now we are landowners. The money raised through so many generous donations as part of our Spa Ponds Appeal was sufficient to buy the site, pay all legal expenses, and still have some left for conservation and improvement. I am pleased to report that we now have a management plan for Spa Ponds, written for us by EMEC Ecology, and this will now inform our conservation and improvement work. Through a formal agreement with the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, and through the legal transfer of the deeds for Spa Ponds to the Official Custodian for Charities, FTNCG is doing all we can to protect the site for future generations.

Over this past year or so we've delivered hundreds of volunteer hours, carrying out litter picking and conservation work at both the Rushpool and Spa Ponds sites. We've carried out surveys of wildlife along Stinting Lane, Rushpool and Spa Ponds. In March 2015 we reported more than 1,300 wildlife sightings recoded by FTNCG members over the past few years to the relevant County Recorders. Since then we experienced a highly successful toad count. FTNCG's 2015 Toad Count confirms that each of the three main ponds at Spa Ponds exceeds the current threshold for status as a Local Wildlife Site and that Spa Ponds has "a significant population size for Nottinghamshire of Common Toad...present and breeding". Added together, between the three largest ponds, we recorded a maximum total of 1,657 toads.

FTNCG has also provided education and training, including certificated bush cutter training (in conjunction with SFT), as well as informal training in toad identification (in conjunction with NARG), and heritage learning (in conjunction with Mercian Archaeological Services). Further learning and skills opportunities for members and the wider public are planned. There will be a Fungi Foray at Spa Ponds in September, and a talk by David Budge about the Medieval Pottery of Sherwood in November. Also in November, in conjunction with the Forest Town Heritage Group, FTNCG will co-sponsor a Forest Town History Day.

Last Wednesday, 29th April 2015, FTNCG Trustees formally approved the Report and Accounts for the period 1 April 2014 - 31 March 2015. Please read it. I am very proud of it, and of all the good will that the Report and Accounts faithfully reflect. I want to thank all of our Trustees; and on behalf of the Trustees, I thank our members, and our many supporters from Forest Town and elsewhere. Thank you for last year, and thank you in advance for your ongoing support in the years to come.

Finance Report

For the period covered by this Report and Accounts, FTNCG's total income was just under £1,270, of which nearly £270 was donated specifically for Spa Ponds. The principal source of this income was donations from individuals (approximately £560, including funds raised through individual efforts) and from organisations (£280 from RAPID, and £100 from the Forest Town Heritage Group). Additionally, £325 was received from a Mansfield District Councillor's Constituency Pot.

Expenditure during this period amounted to just over £16,740. The overwhelming majority of the expenditure during the period, £16,230 was associated with the purchase of Spa Ponds, including legal fees, etc. The reason that the outgoings is so much greater than the income is that the vast majority of the community fundraising for the purchase of Spa Ponds occurred before April 2014.

As set out in our Report and Accounts, FTNCG have a Reserves Policy. In this context, the term Reserves does not refer to Nature Reserves, but to how we intend to use unspent funds. Technically a reserve is the part of a charity's unrestricted income funds that is freely available to spend, and the Reserves Policy is how you justify not having spent it, e.g. because you intend to spend it in the future or have it in case of emergency to ensure the viability of the organisation.

At the end of 2014/15 there was £815 left that had been donated to the Spa Ponds fund, with the remaining £1,217 being unrestricted funds. This does not subtract debtors to the Spa Ponds account that existed at the end of the year, which would reduce the amount left in the Spa Ponds fund to £734.

The debts of £38.26 owed for the purchase of a torch for the toad count and the £42 owed to the solicitor for the Spa Ponds deeds transfer set out in Report & Account have now been paid out of the Spa Ponds fund. The £38.26 for the torch was included within the amount spent on Spa Ponds in the Accounts as the torch was purchased during this period, but as the funds did not leave the account until after the period it should technically come under the 2015/16 financial year, so this will be corrected in next year's accounts with a note added to explain the situation.

In future years the Reserves Policy will be more clear about the distinct difference between the General Fund and the Spa Ponds Fund. Estimated basic annual running costs for FTNCG amount to around £500 a year. FTNCG's Reserves policy for 2015/16 identifies money for running costs, contingencies and to take advantage of match-funding opportunities.

FTNCG is involved with a number of bids for grant funding, and if any are successful there could be financial and other resource implications. The Report & Accounts sets out potential financial and other resource implications of current and anticipated bids. Further detail can be found in the Accounts section of the Report & Accounts.

You may notice that the Report mentions the potential of receiving Gift Aid in 2015/16 for donations made in 2014/15, and I am pleased to say that this has now happened as HMRC yesterday paid us £3.75, for eligible donations of £15, i.e. 25p to the pound.