

**Initial notes from Friday 30th August 2019 Spa Ponds walk around
with WatersideCare's Rob Martyr and Les Warren**

Jes and Shlomo were present to represent FTNCG and to show Rob around (Phil sent his apologies). FTNCG is grateful to Les for setting up the walk around, and to Rob who travelled some distance to meet with us. Rob is the Habitat Development Manager for Keep Britain Tidy. For more about Rob see: http://www.lohp.org.uk/sites/default/files/about/Trustees/Mini_Cv_RobM_ed.pdf

Rob expressed his appreciation of the diversity of grasses and the openness of the glade area. He immediately understood what FTNCG is trying to achieve with the glade, and believes we have made good progress in that direction. Rob is keen to work with FTNCG to achieve further improvements to the glade area.

Rob agreed that, pending the results of any heritage-related investigations (core sampling, etc.), there is plenty of scope for channelling silt into Pond 0 to help protect the wet ponds.

Rob suggested that the excess duck weed could be managed through the introduction of a series of floating solar-powered aerators / oxygenators (which should cost no more than around £45 each to purchase).

Rob was also encouraged by the success of the reed bed and the bank work in Pond 2, including in the vicinity of the stream and around the backwater (near the felled oak).

Rob raised the prospect of introducing a boardwalk to improve access without disrupting the sandy habitat.

All of the ponds could benefit from pegging logs along their banks, leaving a gap to be filled by brash, as this would, over the subsequent five years or so, fill with silt and create new, stronger, banks whilst improving water quality. The introduction of straw bales would also help improve water quality.

Rob intends to return to Spa Ponds in November to help with a work session, potentially including some chainsaw work to let more light in and to generate more logs and brash for shoring up the banks / creating new banks.

Rob is prepared to support FTNCG to apply for Stewardship funding (around £1k a year) to pay for site maintenance work, e.g. tree surgeon to inspect trees once every five years (to assess the health of the woods and to identify trees in danger of falling down).

The Stewardship application process begins with considering the existing site management plans and reaching agreement (amongst Trustees, etc.) on a shared vision for the future of the site. The deadline for the next round of applications is in May 2020, with 75% of the funding to be paid by the end of 2020.

Rob identified a need to more accurately measure (and demark) the area of FTNCG's ownership, clarifying the boundaries and potentially approaching neighbouring landowners to explore the possibility of FTNCG being given, sold, or leased buffer strips to be managed by FTNCG for greater biodiversity (and to better protect FTNCG's existing Spa Ponds landholding).

Rob noted the large number of paths and gullies that appear to have been formed by run-off. There is a need to identify which of the many existing paths are to be maintained and which are to be blocked off, e.g. by laying brush to collect run-off. There is also value in accessing funds to pay for further ecological surveying, e.g. to identify invertebrate species present at Spa Ponds.

An application for capital works could also be worked up with Rob's support, e.g. to better regulate the flow of water from pond to pond.

Rob explained that he anticipates being very busy over the coming couple of months. Despite this, Rob will make time to explore FTNCG's website.

Rob is especially interested in:

- The Ecological Management Plan at:
http://foresttown.net/nature/Spa_Ponds_March_2015_Habitat_Management_Plan.pdf
- Water quality data available from: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Np2Ey-HywxIBHcJiMSykUX645wrsHzIQbOAvIHGyfGk/edit?usp=sharing>
- Tree data, e.g. as per:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/11jDtnt3Zd9IUc_mL0XqU5SPAWtV6urhC9-6XpaGpq8/edit#gid=263197519
- Sightings records, such as those available from:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/16CeeVBUDlDy9-K2GEA1zrHTbvWX8jK5WqLugSCAT_e4/edit?usp=sharing
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Nw0s7EUIhh8Q2vnniuGu8t62Noli31pd8JMLaK6F9ac/>
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/OB0snsk1bWCCEMTNJZHhazR6Q2c/view?usp=sharing>
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/OB0snsk1bWCCEmkhWQ3pBTEIHTTA/view?usp=sharing>
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/OB0snsk1bWCCELW81NjVtbzVhekk/view?usp=sharing>
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/OB0snsk1bWCCEa3hiQW5LRHBaVEk/view?usp=sharing>
- Heritage Management Plan (including the Chronology, etc.) available from:
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/OBxx0kdC79NtxdGtsY1dvOWhiU28>

Rob will ask Shlomo for links / electronic copies of any information that is not readily available via the website.

With respect to the River Maun, Rob identified that there will be some great opportunities to make a big and positive difference through a series of modest actions, e.g. introducing material to narrow the river, speed up the flow of water, reveal gravel, and channel silt away from the river (e.g. into the willow holt area).

Actions:

- Rob, Les, and Jes to review these notes and send corrections, improvements, etc. to Shlomo
- Shlomo has added Rob to the FTNCG circulation list, as agreed
- Shlomo to ask Rob for further advice about the right type of aerators / oxygenators to purchase (and about how these can be installed to help prevent them being stolen)
- Rob to make time to explore the FTNCG website at: <http://foresttown.net/nature> and get back to Shlomo with any requests for additional information