

## Forest Town Nature Conservation Group

Notes from the meeting of Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2011, 2 - 4 pm,  
at the Forest Town Methodist Church Hall (side room)



**Present (14):** Lorraine (Acting Chair); Dave (Acting Vice Chair); Shlomo (Acting Secretary); Josh (Acting Treasurer); Betty; Alan; Malcolm; Rose; Margaret; Christine; Colin; Megan; Susan; and Andy (Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT))

**Apologies (10):** Alyson (Acting Membership Secretary); Jeff (Rushpool Representative); Val; Geoff; Pauline; Barry; Helen; Ron; Ian and Jackie

**Membership Update:** As of 5<sup>th</sup> December, taking into account Susan and Ian joining the Group, the Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG) had 31 members. Please continue to encourage friends and relatives to join the Group. We intend to launch a fresh membership drive after the 2012 Annual General Meeting (AGM).

**Financial Update:** The Group's bank account stands at about £700, £400 of which is ring-fenced for next year's basic running costs (including insurance, BTCV membership, NWT membership, and some venue expenses), leaving £300. In addition to this sum, the Group has now received a cheque for £300 from Mansfield District Councillor Mick Barton. We are most grateful to Councillor Barton, and indeed to Councillors Moody, Bennett and Wright, for supporting our group with funds from their ward allowance.

Lorraine described the Group's intention to submit a bid to the Chestnut Fund. This modest application for about £350 worth of tools (see [http://www2.btcv.org.uk/chestnut\\_criteria.pdf](http://www2.btcv.org.uk/chestnut_criteria.pdf)) would then be followed by a more substantial Lottery bid in 2012.

**Actions:** Shlomo and Lorraine to draft a Chestnut Fund bid for tools, guided by suggestions from Dave and Andy. The bid should include at least 6 loppers, 6 bow saws, several pairs of gloves, and a large hot water flask. It was also suggested that Shlomo contact Jo Hull at Mansfield District Council (MDC) regarding litter pickers.

**Rushpool Open Space:** Dave declared the Rushpool Open space activity a success. Dave also expressed his appreciation for Ruth Testa's support and training. All agreed that Ruth's help had been very important. The activity itself went well, and we now know that future activities should be limited to a maximum of 3 hours (because any more than that is exhausting to do in one session, although this might depend somewhat on the weather and season). Dave showed off his new, and fully stocked, first aid kit, which he is happy to bring along to future FTNCG activities.

Lorraine thanked all who took part in the Rushpool activity, including those who contributed photographs. Some of these photos have now been uploaded onto the website (<http://www.foresttown.net/index.php/nature/rushpool/>). Rose offered to help print photos.

Dave suggested that we return to the Rushpool site for some more gorse clearing on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2012, which fits nicely after our 29<sup>th</sup> February meeting.

**Action:** FTNCG Executive Committee to meet in mid-January to plan future Rushpool activities, to be followed by a discussion about the site with MDC officers.

**Hedges (for the Rushpool Open Space and other nearby sites):** Lorraine asked Dave and Andy to work together to produce a plan for managing and planting hedgerows. Lorraine pointed out how work on establishing hedges could provide a lasting legacy of the Group's efforts, as hedges are beautiful and, if properly conceived and managed, could last for hundreds of years. All agreed that there is scope to compensate for the many hedges that have been lost to Forest Town in recent years, and that hedges can contribute to much needed wildlife corridors, for example linking Stinting Lane (also known Greeny Lane) across towards Sandlands Way.

Andy agreed to keep the Group informed about opportunities for training in hedge laying. Andy also mentioned that he is aware of other potential volunteers (associated with the probation service) to assist with the more strenuous work that the Group may wish to take on. Those present expressed general support for Andy to move forward with this option. Lorraine also noted the opportunity for volunteers to be supplied via NatWest Bank, suggesting this would be more suitable for help pulling Himalayan Balsam. Christine suggested that ASDA and/or the Scouts and Guides could also be approached regarding volunteering.

**Actions:** Andy to support Dave to receive training to produce a hedge plan and share this plan with the Group. Andy to explore volunteering opportunities with the probation service, and keep the Group appraised of relevant training opportunities. Shlomo to contact MDC for clarification regarding plans for a footbridge and/or access road associated with the Sandlands development opposite Rushpool Open Space. Shlomo to signal interest in NatWest volunteers to help pull Himalayan Balsam (in the Spring) – and approach ASDA in the near future, and/or the Scouts and Guides nearer the next Himalayan Balsam pull.

**Idle Valley Events:** Shlomo provided details of forthcoming events to be held in December 2011 and January 2012 at NWT's Idle Valley Nature Reserve (<http://www.nottinghamshirewildlife.org/nature-reserves/idle-valley/>).

**Friends of Mansfield Parks & Open Spaces Network:** Shlomo gave an account of events leading up to the formation, under the auspices of Mansfield District Council, of this network of Mansfield's Friends Groups. This Network met for the first time at Titchfield Park Pavilion on 8<sup>th</sup> November. The Network includes FTNCG, Friends of Hornby Plantation, Friends of Peafield Park, Friends of Quarry Lane, Friends of the Carrs, Friends of Yeoman Hill Park, Friends of Carr Bank, and the Maun Conservation Group. FTNCG was represented by Lorraine and Shlomo on this occasion, and Lorraine asked for volunteers to represent the Group at the next Network meeting, scheduled for 14<sup>th</sup> February 2012. Dave and Rose offered to attend on behalf of FTNCG. Many familiar issues were raised at the Network meeting, and it is clear that areas of interest for FTNCG are shared by fellow Groups. Notes from the meeting were circulated, and are available from Shlomo upon request.

**Action:** Shlomo to inform Jo Hull of this decision, and pass on Dave and Rose's e-mail addresses – also, Shlomo will need to ensure that Dave and Rose are supplied with the necessary details nearer the event.

**Recording Wildlife Sightings:** NWT's Andy Lowe delivered a presentation about the importance of maintaining a record of wildlife sightings. Such a record could be useful for providing evidence to support funding bids, and to inform planning decisions. The record could provide much-needed baseline data that could be used to evaluate the impact of nature conservation work. Andy noted that records should include consecutive sightings of the same creature(s) on different days. Andy also emphasised the importance of ensuring that the records kept by the FTNCG are formally registered (e.g. every six months) with the appropriate authorities. Andy provided relevant contact details. Dave noted that the Internet is an excellent source of information about plant and animal species, with photographs and even sound recordings of bird song freely available. Josh and Shlomo drafted a reporting form (based on a template that was kindly supplied by Andy) that was circulated and subsequently improved in response to feedback. The form accompanies these notes.

**Actions:** Shlomo to circulate the wildlife sightings form, and everyone is encouraged to return completed forms to Shlomo.

**Other Business:** Betty described a recent mishap, where MDC was responsible for damaging several trees as a result of felling a tree. Alan reported progress towards achieving NWT Warden status for himself and Barry. Alan and Barry remain very active in clearing litter from the Spa Ponds site, and engaging in other actions to maintain the site.

**Next meeting:** Monday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2012 from 2pm at the Forest Town Methodist Church