
FRIENDS OF PETERSFIELD HEATH

MINUTES OF THE 18th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 9 MAY 2017 AT 7.30 pm

IN THE ROSE ROOM, PETERSFIELD FESTIVAL HALL

Present: R. Warton (Chairman), N. Brooke (Treasurer), J. Gummerson (Secretary), J. Barrow, J. Bleach, H. Bonney, L. Bowden, P. Bowers, A. Brooks, S. Brooks, J. Dandridge, Cllr. J. Deane (Mayor), J. Francis, D. Greef, M. Greef, D. Hocking, T. Howes, R. Ive, A. Lewis (Guest Speaker), T. Lugger, Cllr. J. Matthews, T. Ostersen, V. Pike, A. Robinson, A. Smallbone, G. Thomas, S. Wallace, K. Wilson, and A. Woodland.

1. Apologies for Absence

1.1 Apologies were received from B. Arnold, D. Birstall, Cllr. Butler, R. Hart, Cllr. Humphries, D. Olphert, M. Oxley, Cllr. Palmer, R. Roberts, T. Roberts, A. Smith, C. Smith, Cllr. Strawbridge, and H. Warton.

2. Minutes of 17th Annual General Meeting held on 3rd May 2016

2.1 The minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman

3. Matters Arising

3.1 There were no matters arising.

4. Chairman's Report

4.1 The Chairman began his report with the sad news of the death of John Pike, his predecessor, who had served the Friends for many years. He went on to highlight a number of significant issues from the previous 12 months:

- grants and donations from Petersfield Town Council, East Hampshire District Council, the South Downs National Park Authority, and Waitrose;
- the regular winter work parties and ad hoc ones in the summer;
- loss of habitat from the clearance of barrows for the People of the Heath Project
- the new Management Plan for the Heath produced by SDNPA and PTC;
- new collaborative arrangements between the Friends and PTC (see Minute 7 below);
- the work of the Heath Pond Working Party;
- the new website.

He thanked all the volunteers and Committee members for their support, and PTC for the use of its facilities for meetings. Finally he informed the meeting that this would be his last year as Chairman and called for others to come forward to take the reins.

The Chairman's Report is attached to these minutes.

5. Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2017

5.1 The Treasurer presented the Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2017, copies of which were circulated at the meeting. He highlighted the following:-

5.2 The current account is with Natwest. Cheques have to be signed by any 2 of

3 authorised committee members (currently D. Birstall, N. Brooke and R. Warton). The Accounts have again been audited and approved by Mr. Alistair Stewart free of charge. The Treasurer thanked him warmly and this was endorsed by those present.

5.3

Income and Expenditure

Income from subscriptions of £1100 this year decreased by £50 compared with last year due to a slight reduction in the number of paid up members. Donations and grants of £806 this year were substantially up from £548.85 thanks to the generosity of the Town Council, the National Park Authority and the Waitrose "Community Matters" scheme. Total income was therefore higher than 2015 at £1906 compared with £1695.85.

Expenditure totalled £1771.59 this year compared with £858.93 in 2016, the major differences being expenditure on:-

- Gift to Vivien Pike as retiring secretary (£100);
- Leaflet printing costs (£305.99 offset by a grant of £225 from PTC);
- Cost of developing the new website (£428.69);
- Tools & Maintenance much higher this year at £669.24 including the purchase of a tree popper for which a grant of £250 had been received – this is used for uprooting undesirable saplings;
- "Social" expenditure in both years related to FoPH covering a small part of the cost of the Christmas meal at the Plump Duck for volunteers and committee members.

Overall there was a surplus of income over expenditure of £134.41.

5.4

Balance Sheet

The Treasurer drew attention to a high cash balance this year-end of £6,044.23. However this included a grant of £2650.00 from East Hampshire District Council which was ring-fenced for the replacement of the storage container, and other reserves. The available cash balance was therefore £2,656.41.

5.5

D. Hocking proposed and J. Bleach seconded the approval and adoption of the Accounts and this was agreed unanimously by a show of hands. The Chairman thanked the Treasurer for his report and for all his hard work and support throughout the year.

6.

Election of Officers and Committee Members

6.1

Election of Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary

Richard Warton (Chairman), Nevill Brook (Treasurer) and John Gummerson (Secretary and Membership Secretary) were re-appointed by a unanimous show of hands.

6.2

Committee Members

The following Committee Members were appointed by a unanimous show of hands: Jordan Bleach, David Birstall, Mark Greef, Robin Hart, Drake Hocking, Melanie Oxley, Vivien Pike, and Alf Smallbone. Gavin Thomas was unable to serve again due to work commitments, and the Chairman thanked him for his hard work and support with the Committee and the winter work parties.

7. **Memorandum of Understanding with Petersfield Town Council, Terms of Reference and Constitution**

7.1 **Memorandum of Understanding with Petersfield Town Council (MoU)**

The MoU was tabled at the meeting and the Chairman took those present through it line by line, explaining that the main purpose of the MoU was to clarify and formalise the working relationship between the Friends and PTC. He particularly thanked Melanie Oxley for her contribution to the production of the document. In the ensuing discussion the following points arose:-

- the document was sensible and advantageous and put the relationship with PTC on a sounder footing;
- the new Petersfield Heath Management Plan 2017 and the Dolphin Report which underpinned it will be on PTC's website;
- the MoU provided a framework for dealing more effectively with any issues that might arise;
- the National Trust has Training Guides on the use of equipment which Andy Lewis can make available.

The Chairman concluded the discussion by seeking members' approval to sign the MoU on behalf of the Friends. D. Hocking proposed and T. Howes seconded this and the motion was approved by a unanimous show of hands.

7.2 **Terms of Reference**

The Terms of Reference, which had recently been revised by PTC, were tabled at the meeting. The Chairman went through the document highlighting the significant changes which were:-

- regular meetings between PTC and FoPH rather than an annual one;
- FoPH will give at least one week's notice to PTC of any work to be carried out on the Heath.

The new Terms of Reference were noted.

7.3 **Constitution**

Copies of the updated Constitution were tabled at the meeting. The Chairman highlighted the changes as follows:-

- FoPH will liaise with the SDNPA to ensure that any recommendations FoPH makes to PTC are consistent with the SDNPA's heathland strategy;
- Committee members will be appointed for a term of one year and may be re-elected at each AGM;
- Officers shall hold office for not more than three years but may be re-appointed at the end of each term;
- In the event that one of the officers becomes unavailable on a long-term basis, the committee shall have the power to appoint an unelected replacement officer, who would not be entitled to vote until he/she had been formally elected at the AGM.
- Consent to dissolve the organisation shall be obtained by a vote of at least a 2/3 majority of those members attending an AGM or Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM). If the organisation shall by general consent of its members, cease to exist, all assets shall pass to

- Petersfield Town Council and/or another body or bodies chosen by a 2/3 majority of those members attending the AGM or EGM.
- Removal of the requirement to apply for affiliation to the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers.

There was some discussion about whether it was necessary to specify a quorum for the AGM and any EGMs and it was agreed to note that on balance this was not necessary.

J. Bleach proposed and D. Hocking seconded the adoption of the revised Constitution and this was approved unanimously.

8 Any other business

- 8.1 Concern was expressed at the erosion of grass due to the long spell of dry weather. Cllr. Matthews responded that the Town Council was aware of the problem and that discussions were taking place on how to mitigate it. Andy Lewis stated that he was trialling a method of grass protection and would be happy to share information.
- 8.2 Mrs. Bowers asked whether more protection could be provided for nesting swans. The Chairman agreed to meet with her on the Heath to look at the problem in more detail.
- 8.3 Concern was also expressed at the number of trees which had been cut down. The Chairman said that a number of people shared this view but he hoped that the new MoU with PTC and regular meetings might improve the situation.

9 Talk on Uppark House Gardens by Andy Lewis, Senior Gardener

- 9.1 Andy gave a presentation on the theme of the value of the landscape, and in relation to Uppark House in particular, the value of the woodland, the garden and the meadow.
- Uppark is a 362 hectare site listed grade II* on the English Heritage Register. It has an historical and cultural garden shaped by Lancelot Brown and Humphry Repton. It is in an area of outstanding natural beauty with significant chalk downland and a rich diversity of species
- Having identified the nature of the woodland and some of its problems, he explained its value in terms of carbon dioxide reduction, absorption and adsorption of other pollutants, and flood prevention. Current nature conservation activity included hedge laying, phased coppicing on rotation to conserve the dormouse population and additional nest boxes for tits and wrens.
- In terms of the garden he and his staff were, amongst other things, restoring the original layout including the historic path network, removing historically incorrect island beds and improving the presentation of the borders around the house and East Pavilion. They were also encouraging families to use the meadow as recreational space.

The Chairman thanked Andy for his interesting and informative presentation and drew the meeting to a close at 8.45 pm. Refreshments and informal discussions followed.

DJG - 17 May 2017

FoPH Chairman's Report 2016/17

I start this year's report with some very sad news. As many of you already know, John Pike, our former chairman sadly died peacefully earlier in the year. John will be remembered for his gentle and considerate approach in his long stewardship of the Friends.

I can report that the year has been both successful and productive for our Committee and Volunteers. We have been very fortunate in receiving supportive grants from the Town Council for the printing of leaflets. Money raised from the Waitrose Community Matters scheme and a donation from SDNPA enabled us to buy much needed new tools and, finally, three East Hants District Councillors arranged a substantial grant for the future replacement of our leaking equipment container. We must also not forget the continuing financial support of Churher's College and the hard work of their students on the Heath.

Last summer saw our volunteers progressing well with bracken control with help from SDNPA and farmer Peter Cains with his tractor and topper kindly financed by the Town Council. With funding for materials from The Town Council, members also completed improvements to the edging of the Heath Road car park.

We once again had a stall at the ever popular Secrets of Heath event and hope to do so again this year enhancing our attraction with more activities for children.

During the winter our team of volunteers undertook sapling removal from the fairways with our new Tree Popper and cleared woodland margins of encroaching brambles and seedling trees. They also supported the People of the Heath project by clearing a couple of the northern barrows ready for surveying this year, using the cut material to finish off the dry hedge along the brook. The 4 year archaeological project comes to an end this summer and we look forward to some of their significant finds on display at the Museum.

There has, controversy, been a significant loss of habitat due to the archaeological project. The Friends are committed to restoring as much of this as possible while still enabling the Neolithic cemetery to have the right presence within the Heath. The Town Council will be conducting a survey to assess if badger sets or bat roosts are present so that any future disturbance can be avoided.

The SDNPA together with the Town Council have produced a new Management Plan for the Heath. The guidelines will enable the Town Council and ourselves to focus on future maintenance priorities and help to find the right balance between necessary work and conservation.

It has been clear for some time that the working relationship between the Town Council and the Friends needed to be put on a better footing. To facilitate this, a core group has produced a Memorandum of Understanding and updated our Terms of Reference. These have been approved by the Town Council. We also took the opportunity to update our Constitution all of which we will be asking you to consider approving this evening.

The Pond working group, of which we are participants, is still considering options for bank reinstatement and are planning a public consultation day to take the ideas forward. Work has already started on large willow tree coppicing to enable better reed bed growth which will support wildlife and protect the banks from erosion.

Our new website and Facebook page are now up and running. It will be carrying news of our work, and wildlife sightings together with contact details for membership etc. and many thanks to Melanie and John for this and the regular updating of information.

Finally, on a personal note, I would like to thank all our volunteers, Committee members and work organisers for their support and hard work over the year. We have achieved a lot together and I look forward to another successful year ahead. However, it will be my last year as chairman as I will have to hand over the batten at the next AGM.

Clearly the Friends are going to need a new Chairman. If you feel inspired to take over or know someone who might be, or just want to have a chat about the role please make yourself known and we can take it from there. I would be happy to support the new chairman for as long as needed.

Before I close I would just like to thank the Town Council for their continuing support and the use of this room for our AGM and the Council Chamber for our Committee meetings.

Richard Warton

09/05/2017