

FRIENDS OF PETERSFIELD HEATH

MINUTES OF THE 19th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 15 MAY 2018 AT 7.30 pm IN THE ROSE ROOM, PETERSFIELD FESTIVAL HALL

Present: R. Warton (Chairman), J. Gummerson (Secretary), J. Bleach, A. Brooks, S. Burkitt, P. Crane, R. Hart, R. Marlow, V. Pike, R. Roberts, T. Roberts, A. Smallbone, H. Warton, K. Wilson.

In attendance: C. Carré and K. Sherman (guest speakers)

1. **Apologies for Absence**

1.1 Apologies were received from N. Brooke, D. Burstall, J. Crowhurst, Cllr. Deane, D. Greef, M. Greef, Cllr. Humphries, L. Morgan, M. Morgan, H. Nichols, Mr. and Mrs. Redstone, Cllr. Strawbridge, and G. Thomas.

2. **Minutes of 18th Annual General Meeting held on 9th May 2017**

2.1 The minutes were approved and a copy was 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 by thanking the Committee without whose support he would not have been able to continue. He went on to highlight a number of significant issues from the previous 12 months:

- the high number of visitors to the Heath and the need for a balance between wildlife, habitat management and accessibility for visitors;
- the regular winter work parties and ad hoc ones in the summer supported by SDNPA volunteers, whose hard work resulted in, amongst other things, a wonderful show of heather;
- the new and larger equipment store;
- the planting of a mixed hedge on the south side of the Heath Road car park;
- the need for greater efforts to foster an effective working relationship with Petersfield Town Council (PTC);
- further work being done on the production of a Management Plan for the Heath ;
- his work in monitoring rainfall and its impact on the water level of the Pond, and PTC's plans for the development of the Pond;
- the identification of new badger setts on the Heath, and the wildlife surveys to be undertaken by PTC.

He thanked all the volunteers and Committee members for their support, and PTC for the use of its facilities for meetings.

The Chairman's Report is attached to these minutes.

5. **Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2018**

5.1 The Chairman re-iterated the Treasurer's apology for absence. He read out the Treasurer's Report presenting the Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2018, copies of which were circulated at the meeting. Attention was drawn

to a typographical error in the Auditor's statement at the bottom of the Accounts, where 31 March 2017 should be 31 March 2018. The Treasurer's Report highlighted the following:-

5.2 The current account is with Natwest. Cheques have to be signed by any 2 of 4 authorised committee members (currently D. Burstall, N. Brooke, J. Gummerson and R. Warton). The Accounts have again been audited and approved by Mr. Alistair Stewart free of charge. He was thanked warmly and this was endorsed by those present.

5.3 Income and Expenditure

Income from subscriptions of £1045 this year decreased by £55 compared with last year due to a slight reduction in the number of paid up members. Only £10 had been received in donations and grants this year compared with £806 in 2016-17. Total income was therefore lower than 2016-17 at £1055 compared with £1906.

Expenditure totalled £1861.25 this year compared with £1771.59 in 2016-17, resulting in a deficit of £806.25 as against a surplus last year of £134.41. The major expenditure items this year were:-

- AGM costs of £100.44 - this year's figure included a fee payable to PTC of £36.68 for the hire of a projector for the use by the guest speaker;
- Donation of £200 this year to a bench in memory of the late John Pike, previous chairman of FoPH;
- Hedge plants at a cost of £545.28;
- Tools and maintenance cost of £441.05;
- Insurance cost this year for the first time of £98.22. The Committee decided that with the additional tools, two tree poppers and a new container it would now be appropriate to insure these items rather than take the risk ourselves. Following investigation it was agreed to take out a £5000 policy with Zurich Insurance to cover, on a 50/50 basis, both the tools and container.

5.4 Balance Sheet

The Cash Balance is lower this year due to the deficit of £806.25 that occurred in the year as well as the full utilisation of the Container Reserve of £2650. The closing balance of £2551.26 is the figure that is available to spend. The Footpath Reserve (£701.10) is the balance still available from the original £1000 grant from PTC for the raised footpath maintenance. The charge of £36.72 in the year was due to cost of hiring a compactor for a day for use on the path.

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

6. **Election of Committee Members and appointment of Officers**

6.1 Committee Members

The following Committee Members were re-elected by a unanimous show of

hands: Jordan Bleach, Nevill Brooke, David Burstall, Mark Greef, John Gummerson, Robin Hart, Drake Hocking, Alf Smallbone, and Richard Warton. Melanie Oxley and Vivien Pike did not wish to serve again and the Chairman thanked them for their hard work and support, and each was presented with a bouquet of flowers.

Kate Wilson had expressed an interest in serving on the Committee. Her nomination was proposed by R. Warton and seconded by J. Gummerson, and she was elected by a unanimous show of hands. The Chairman welcomed Kate onto the Committee.

6.2 Appointment of Officers

Richard Warton (Chairman), Nevill Brook (Treasurer) and John Gummerson (Secretary and Membership Secretary) had indicated they they were willing to serve again and, in accordance with the Constitution, their re-appointment will be considered at the next Committee meeting.

7 **Any other business**

- 7.1 Melanie Oxley, who had not been present for the Chairman's Report, asked for an update on the relationship with PTC. The Chairman indicated that progress had been made and he hoped that the work to produce a new Management Plan for the Heath would result in a shared vision for the future of the Heath incorporating the recommendations which Melanie had made.

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The formal part of the meeting ended at 7.55 pm and was followed by a presentation on the Heathlands Reunited Project by Colin Carré and Katy Sherman from the South Downs National Park Authority. The key points from the presentation are summarised below.

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The Heathlands Reunited Project and the preservation of heathlands in the South Downs National Park

Heathland is part of our heritage and the aims of the project are:-

- to restore, increase and reconnect heathland habitats and create a lasting legacy;
- to inform, engage and involve people and local communities with the heathland heritage.

Heathlands are rarer than rain forest and England has 20% of the world's heathland – 5 % is in the SDNPA.

The project involves 11 organisations and 41 sites within the National Park, on 36 of which management work is being carried out.

In SE England, 85% of heathland has been lost due to development, farming, sand extraction, afforestation and neglect over the last 200 years.

A video has been produced to showcase the flora and fauna of heathlands in order to encourage the involvement of people in the project - it can be seen at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PgmbhY8Y2fY>

The practical side of the project includes:-

- conservation grazing, mimicking how heathland was used in the past;

- clearance of woodland, scrub, bracken and rhododendron;
- connect the existing heathland left in the national park by creating 9km of wildlife corridors to form an area of heathland greater than 1,200 football pitches;
- a range of free events to engage the general public, including the Secrets of the Heath on Petersfield Heath on 8/9 September 2018;
- training eg in how to lead guided walks.

More information about the project is available at

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/heathland/heathlands-reunited/>

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

DJG - 17 May 2018

FoPH Chairman's Report 2017-18

The Chairman's report starts with an apology to those who may have been expecting a new face this year after my statement at last year's AGM about retiring. As you can see I'm still here, and with the excellent support of our Committee, and in particular John, our secretary, hope to be able to continue for a while yet.

Once again we have seen record numbers of visitors to the Heath and while this is to be welcomed in benefiting the well-being of everyone it does mean we have to be even more conscious of the balance between wildlife, habitat management and accessibility for visitors.

For some weeks now our volunteers have been considering the summer bracken control. You may remember the wonderful heather show last summer in the area just north of the stream walk and dry hedge. This was a direct result of a request for help to the SDNPA and their volunteers to clear that area of bracken earlier in the summer. They will continue to help us again this year with an additional cut later in the season to further improve the regeneration of heather there.

Our own volunteers continued to hand pull bracken from the more scattered heather clumps and cut it on the south facing bank close to the Little School. The Town Council again funded our request for Peter Cains to cut the more open and accessible areas with his tractor and topper. My thanks to Alf Smallbone and Les Bowden for organising all of this and to our loyal band of volunteer helpers for seeing it through.

Last August saw the arrival of our new and slightly larger equipment store which has made storage easier and much more flexible. Mark Greef kindly led those volunteers who turned out to lay the foundations for the new container.

Our stall at the Secrets of the Heath event in late August proved very attractive to both young and old who participated in the shaving horse and draw knife activity kindly provided by Oliver Young. Although we always hope to sign up new members it is the opportunity to talk to visitors about our aims and activities that is also so important.

The arrival of Autumn saw us commence with the winter programme of conservation and control of woodland spread. Volunteers removed saplings from the open areas and woodland margins using our recently purchased and ever popular tree poppers. There was also a huge amount of effort put in to removing the previous year's dead bracken fronds from the area opened up by the Park volunteers in the summer enabling them to have an easier cut this year.

The season was completed with the establishment of a mixed hedge along the south side of the Heath Road car park. We hope this will both screen the shipping container and tidy up the boundary to the car park and, in due course replace the decomposing dry hedge. Of course I must not forget our most enjoyable Xmas supper at the Plump Duck which has now become quite a tradition for our volunteers and Committee members.

You may remember that last year we worked with the Town Council in formulating both a Memorandum of Understanding and a revised Constitution in expectation of it helping mutual understanding and a better working relationship. All concerned had high expectations of its success, however in practice, it is clear more work is needed in trying to find a common vision. This has been somewhat complicated by the development of a new management plan. In hindsight it is clear that this management plan needs to be revised, and I understand that this is planned for the coming year and will hopefully also consider our suggestions; I would particularly like to thank Melanie Oxley for her expert work on our recommendations for the plan.

The Town Council continue with their plans for the development of the pond through the bank improvement scheme. I have been recording rain fall and water levels each month since September in order to have some measure of the rise and fall of water levels over the year. This information might be useful if we experience a reduction in average rain fall due to climate change.

Members might be also interested to know that my monitoring of neighbouring badger setts has identified that badgers are back on the Heath and happily excavating new homes in at least three places. This knowledge together with a wildlife survey to be done as part of the new management plan should give us a much better idea of how the Heath is being used by wildlife and guide us in the best way to manage the Heath for wildlife as well as visitors.

I would like to finish by thanking our hard working Cttee and volunteers, also thanking our members for continuing to support us. Thanks also to the Town Council for their support and encouragement and the use of the Rose Room for our AGM and the Council Chamber for our meetings

Richard Warton

Chairman

15/05/2018