

FRIENDS AND VOLUNTEERS OF COCKINGTON COUNTRY PARK

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT THE VISITORS' CENTRE COCKINGTON ON 15th OCTOBER 2018

PRESENT

CHAIRMAN (NEIL STANLAKE)

VICE CHAIR (ROBIN EMDON)

SECRETARY (MARY PHILLIPS)

Councillor Nicole Amil, Damian Offer (Chief Executive TCCT) Hannah Worthington (Green Heart Project), Mardi Short (Head Gardener), Olwyn Barker, Trevor Barker, Grahame Davis, Ray Faux, Peter Griffiths, Rita Jackson, John Van Kuyk

APOLOGIES

Nicky Baker, Pauline Baker, Margaret Carson, Heather Mosley, Jill Read, John Read

CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

Neil Stanlake gave a warm welcome to those present.

FACEBOOK GROUP

RE gave an update. He encouraged people to use the Facebook group which has 1,000 + members, in order to raise the profile of the Trust.

LAKES

DO responded to concerns about the chalky white substance on the perimeter of the lakes which appears to leach into the water. He proposed alleviating this problem with large pebbles being placed on the perimeter.

RF is planting 30 water lilies which will give coverage and colour, maturing over 4 to 5 years.

RE spoke to worries about the clarity of the water saying that when the Mill pond was dredged it took years to settle but has now cleared.

There are some carp thriving in the bottom lake and there is a problem with rogue angling which is difficult to manage.

LONG TERM VOLUNTEERS

There had been a dip in the number of LTVs but a recent recruitment drive had successfully found 3. One is placed with MS (Chris) and two more with Chris Lingard. Katie is the longest serving but due to leave at Christmas time. HW says there are still 2 places to fill.

TRAFFIC IN THE PARK

DO has had a meeting with representatives of the Church and TDA in order to take a united approach to the problem. He offered to provide a map which will highlight the areas of entitlement to park legally. The church will issue passes and make it clear that Wedding/Baptism guests must use the paying car parks.

Further suggestions from this meeting included camera enforcement with parking charges and changing notices to include 'Permit Holders Only'.

The Chairman reminded the meeting that there had been incident regarding the Horse and Carriage encroaching on the cricket outfield and hopes it was a one-off.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

NS gave thanks to the Secretary Mary Phillips and Membership Secretary Jill Read.

He reported on a significant Clean Up at Hope's Nose. 42 black bags were filled. It's a regular exercise but he said it was the worst he's ever encountered.

He gave sincere thanks to the volunteers who turned up to help on a very hot day.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Nothing to record.

TCCT CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

DO reminded the meeting that the Green Heart Project funding finishes in June 2019. It was important to use what remains in the Budget wisely. It is uncertain what happens when the funds come to an end. Cockington will receive no further funding. There will be a review of the project to see what has or has not worked and a need to sustain what the project has delivered.

OCCOMBE FESTIVAL

It went well but the profits were down. It ran more smoothly than ever.

HANNAH WORTHINGTON GREEN HEART

A full report is attached with these minutes.

She thanked Katie and Jennifer for their enthusiasm and hard work.

The Dog Day was very well attended and raised £800. There was some discussion around making a charge but the feeling was that people will use other entrances to avoid payment.

There is a real effort to make Cockington accessible and enjoyable for all via Heritage Ability Project. (See report)

The Letterbox Trail has been successful.

HW sincerely thanked all the volunteers as without them nothing would be achievable.

The Visitors' Centre continues to do well and the Supervisor Rebecca Jack has settled in well and is a welcome addition to the Team.

RE thought that Cockington Park needs more Events, for example a Cockington Market

HW said Jennifer and the LVTs were working hard at the moment towards Christmas activities over the 4 weekends up to 22 December.

HW wanted to thank Richard Bennett for hand crafting a special sign for the outside of Gamekeeper's Cottage.

There will be a Volunteers' Christmas event on 3rd December.

All other matters relating to Green Heart are detailed in the report.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

CHAIRMAN

NS regretfully tendered his resignation He said that after 2 years in the Chair, it was time to give someone else a chance .

He proposed Robin Emdon for Chairman. The nomination was seconded by Rita Jackson and Robin took the Chair.

The Chairman thanked NS for his invaluable service, which was seconded by those present. Jill Read was proposed as Membership Secretary (in absentia), seconded by Trevor Barker. Mary Phillips was proposed as Meeting Secretary and it was seconded by Olwyn Barker.

The Chairman stated that we are The Friends and Volunteers of Cockington Country Park but are grateful for the collaboration with Local Councillors, the TCCT and the TDA. RE wanted the emphasis put on the word 'Friends'. He also looked forward to developing relationships with the Church, the TDA and The Drum.

AOB

MP welcomed Grahame Davis who had recently moved back to his home in the village.

RE mentioned the refurbishment of the Drum to take place in the early New Year. He suggested that we invite their representatives to our meetings.

DATES OF NEXT YEAR'S MEETINGS (2019)

All on Mondays:

February 11th

May 13th

September 9th

October 28th

Friends of Cockington Country Park AGM 15th October 2018

Green Heart Project Update

Volunteering:

- A volunteer team taking on organising Christmas activities at the Visitor Centre with support of Jen and Rebecca - please talk to either of them if you would like to be put in touch with the group and get involved.
- Volunteer team taken on planting and maintenance of garden area around the Visitor Centre with support from Katie and Hannah - please talk to either of them if you would like to be put in touch with the group and get involved.
- The Thursday group continues to make a big effort in helping to complete the work still required around the Lakes area. There are still some areas of vegetation to cut back, bramble to remove and ditches to clear. Please spread the word – although we have some new volunteers join us, we are always looking for more help 😊
- Thank you to Gary Collins for the work he has done on renovating some of the wooden and metal interpretation panels and the 'Friends of' noticeboard.
- Thanks to the group of volunteers who worked hard to repaint and repair the benches on Tuesday mornings in September.
- One of our volunteers, Richard Bennets, who is a retired sign-writer, has produced a hand painted sign for the Gamekeepers Cottage - a name plate to fit outside the building.
- Discussions and planning are taking place to run volunteering days on Saturdays or Sundays in the New Year. These will be run four times a year and will be open to any volunteer wishing to help with a practical task in the park. Tasks will range from general maintenance to 'projects', e.g. working to repair/improve a particular location or facility in the park.
- Volunteer feedback: The new monthly get-togethers at the VC seem to be enabling improved communication between volunteers and TCCT staff.
All volunteers are welcome to attend. The purpose for the get-togethers is partly social but also to provide a chance for volunteers to become involved in different aspects of the Green Heart Project as well as a chance to put forward ideas for events, activities, visitor service areas, etc.
- Around 40 Green Heart volunteers attended the afternoon tea held at the visitor centre on Monday 2nd October. The tea was a little way for the Trust and Green Heart Team to say thank you to all our volunteers for all the support and effort they have put in to helping us care for the park and carry out various tasks as part of the project.
- The TCCT Volunteer Christmas Party is to be held on 3rd December at Occombe Farm. Emails/notices will be sent round to all volunteers in good time.

Visitor Centre:

- The centre has had a footfall of just-under *50 thousand people* this season, a big increase on last year.
- In excess of *£500 has been raised* from donations for the Cockington Country Park maps we have on the counter.

- The new shelving that Gary Collins built and installed this season has been a huge improvement to the centre making the shop more secure and creating a more professional look to the retail side of the VC.
- The Green Heart Team would like to thank all the VC volunteers for their time and effort. Rebecca says it best: 'They are all brilliant and I wouldn't have been able to have had the Centre open seven days a week throughout the season without their support.'
- Opening hours for the VC from end of October TBC. The centre will be open at weekends over December for themed activities as well as sales from the shop. The VC will then re-open at February Half Term, 11am to 3pm.

Signage:

- Installation of posts around Lakes is to be completed in October. Most of the posts are now in, and only remains for the information panels to be attached and directional arrows for the short circular waymarked 'Lakes Walk'. All this thanks to the help of the Thursday morning practical volunteers.
- Production of the three planned noticeboards has commenced. The main noticeboard outside the visitor centre should be installed before the Christmas school holidays; this will act as an information point for when the VC is closed, as well as promotional area for Trust events and activities in the Park.
- Once the noticeboard by the VC is installed we will be able to look to also install a visitor feedback box – feedback book is located in the VC which is only accessible during opening hours.
- We are investigating signage options for the end of the watermeadows since the existing signage had to be removed due to safety issues earlier this year. Temporary signage will be placed here in the meantime.

Events & Other Activities:

- Some 250 letterboxing trail sheets were sold this summer holidays from the Visitor Centre. Despite a few teething problems with the stamps and one act of vandalism, the trail received excellent feedback from those taking part and from VC volunteers, who felt it was easier for them to manage than previous activities.
We will be looking to run another spring themed trail in the Easter Holidays.
A letterboxing trail is also being offered for visiting school groups.
- The third annual Cockington Dog Day raised some £800. We will be looking to see whether it is viable to continue to run the event in future and will provide an update for you.
- Jen and Katie raised £100 on Sunday at the Apple Day – thank you to them and the volunteers who assisted.
- The Green Heart Raffle will be drawn on 30th October – tickets still left if you would like to buy any or are able to sell any last minute to friends and family, etc!
- This has been the 21st year that we have won the Green Flag Award! We also became a Green Heritage Site – also administered by Keep Britain Tidy & supported by Historic England. (Criteria and link to website included at end of update.)
- As you may have heard, Heritage Ability - a project we are working with to improve access to the Park for visitors who are disabled, deaf, sight impaired or have learning difficulties – won a prestigious National Lottery Award last month. We are very proud to be working with

Living Options – the charity which runs the Heritage Ability Project – and believe that we are making some fantastic steps towards improving how accessible the park is to everyone. Our new BSL tour is now available and we will shortly have a ‘Visual Story’, a guide for those with learning difficulties, Aspergers, sensory impairments, etc. that provides information on what is here and what to ‘expect’ on a visit; a great help to many people as it helps them prepare for their visit and can help alleviate some of the stress involved in visiting a new place.

We hope that we will continue to see a greater cross section of visitors coming to Cockington to enjoy this special place as a result of these and other elements of the Heritage Ability and Green Heart Project.

And finally:

The Trust would like to acknowledge the support of the Friends and Volunteers of Cockington Country Park. With only 9 months of the Green Heart Project remaining, we still have a little way to go to achieve all of the project’s original aims and it is hoped that we will continue to receive your input, ideas and offers of practical help as we work towards June/July 2019. Although it goes without saying, that we hope your support will continue beyond the end of the project, helping us ensure that Cockington continues to offer something unique and special to all its visitors – something that I hope you are as proud of as I am to be part of.

Hannah Worthington
Green Heart Access Officer
15th October 2018

Appendix A

Green Heritage Site Judging Criteria:

CONDITION OF HISTORIC FEATURES

- Good Conservation Standards
- Historic features given prominence
- Restoration / re-creation of landscape features

USE AND ENJOYMENT OF HISTORIC FEATURES

- Historic features intact and in use
- Historic Features integrated into the life of the site
- Information available & evidence that historic features are enjoyed by the public

MAINTAINING HISTORIC CHARACTER & APPEARANCE

- Relevance of Historic Landscape design integrity understood and interpreted
- Horticultural displays contribute to historic character
- Recognition and appropriateness of historic tree & plant collections
- New and replacement features conserve or enhance the historic character and appearance

<http://www.greenflagaward.org.uk/how-it-works/judging-criteria/green-heritage-site-accreditation/>

