

Minutes of Econet Meeting

Monday, 15th February 2016 at 7:30pm

RBC Parks Department Offices, Prospect Park

Present: Glenn Jones (RBC), Kit Brownlee (Chair), Alan Stevens, Judith Oliver, John Lerpiniere (Minutes), Dave Kenny

Apologies: Tricia Marcouse, Steve Ayres, Andy Gillespie (RBC)

Minutes of Previous Meeting: Accepted.

Matters Arising: None.

News and Updates:

CROW: A successful post-Christmas task was held when CROW invited West Berkshire Countryside Society to join them at Paices Wood. Twenty seven volunteers turned out to cut willow scrub and share Christmas fare and baked potatoes. CROW numbers on tasks have varied between 9 and 16.

Friends of Clayfield Copse: A selection of tools has been purchased to be stored locally by Peter Scudamore to avoid trips to Prospect Park.

The council team are busy carrying out the management plan but a number of trees have been marked and some taken out but by whom is presently a mystery.

Friends of Cemetery Junction: Task involving RBC tree gang, Reading Tree Wardens and 'The Friends' was arranged for early February. AS had queried Econet's responsibilities for this event with Teresa Verney-Brookes and was told it was being organised and run by RBC. GJ said it was his understanding that turnout was very low (2) and a Probation Services team who were due to do a litter pick went to the wrong location.

Friends of Mapledurham Playing Fields: Some of the orchard trees are in poor condition and in need of replacement. There was discussion about the cause of the problem and the need to identify an appropriate rootstock for any replacements. Econet has agreed to fund replacements (eight trees at about £30 each), thanks on behalf of RBC received from Carolyn Jenkins.

Some clearance work and pruning has been done.

The future of the site is still uncertain and may be for some time yet. Planning application for proposed school has not yet been submitted. Copy of Ecology survey for Education Funding Agency has been obtained and passed to TM for comment.

Friends of Mcllroys Park: Several members are regularly attending tasks which have been mostly clearing holly and path maintenance.

Friends of Waterloo Meadows: Continue with relatively small turnout. 25 *Sambucas nigra* (Elder) planted (funded by Econet).

Reading Urban Wildlife Group: The funding set aside for a pond-dipping platform at Fobney Island has not yet been claimed by TCV. TCV are planning to construct the platform on 10th March so they will be contacted. (John and Kit to contact TCV).

Reviewing Reading local plan, comments to be submitted by 7th March.

TCV: Buffy Harris-Jones is in place to cover maternity leave of Oonagh French who is due to return in June.

Tuesday work party have been working on the canal for the Canal and Rivers Trust (CRT) including further hedgelaying alongside the canal at Thatcham with help from CROW. However this work has been suspended at least until April as it is believed CRT is having to divert funds to help flood relief.

Thursday work parties continue mainly with work for Maidenhead and Windsor Council, and various community projects within the Earley Charity area.

Friends of Fobney Island: A pond-dipping platform is planned for construction by TCV on 10th March.

Environment Agency is planning a task for its staff. RBC with EA are planning fencing and signage improvements.

CROW have started coppicing work to the south of the island.

BBOWT are organising Mink trapping.

Berkshire Ornithological Club organised and funded a Barn Owl nest box now in place on the south shore.

Health and Safety: Reminder that insurance requires risk assessments are under taken for all tasks. Risk assessments for forthcoming tasks are to be found via the relevant programme entry on the website and should be adhered to. Please contact AS regarding any queries, amendments, shortcomings, etc. relating to these documents.

Finances: Financial position remains healthy with the Christmas Sale raising £1,700 net. Total receipts for the year so far (ends 31st March) amount to £3,000 with expenditure accounting for a similar sum.

Income includes two donations each for £150 from Wargrave and Ruscombe Parish Councils for work undertaken by CROW.

Changes which mean TCV no longer administer our insurance resulted in a considerable reduction in the premium, £350 compared with over twice this amount last year; this was further reduced by a contribution of £200 from TCV Reading Office from funding they receive for this purpose from the Earley Charity.

Other expenditure includes £630 for tools and PPE for Clayfield Copse and £50 for Waterloo Meadow's trees.

Publicity and Events:

Christmas Sale 2015: Excellent result despite poor weather, raising similar amount to previous year.

Christmas Sale 2016: BBOWT sale at Thatcham Discovery Centre in addition to that at Wildmoor has been agreed. Thatcham sale would be Sunday only.

There has been some discussion on whether this year's sales should be over the weekend of 3rd/4th or 10th/11th December. Preference of meeting was for Caversham Court sale to be on 10th December. TM is keen for all sales to be the same weekend to simplify publicity but would also like Caversham Court sale to coincide with the St Peter's Christmas fayre and is contacting organiser.

Two new banners required for this year's sale (and also for next year's Bean Pole Day), JO to design.

Bean Pole Day: 23rd April at Caversham Court. CROW will cut poles at Clayfield Copse on 20th April. TM confirming attendance with previous years' stallholders; WI to attend for first time. JO seeking sponsorship to cover publicity costs.

GJ agreed Reading allotment holders could be contacted this autumn with information regarding the purchase of bean poles in readiness for next year's event.

Reading Greenfest: Proposed event to be held in conjunction with Waterfest on Saturday, 11th June. Econet invited to planning meeting. General feeling was that we did not recruit new volunteers from such events and whilst it was an opportunity to spread information about our work the proposed location, the square by the Old Town Hall, would be too busy to bring along slowworms to generate interest.

Battle Library Coffee Morning: Kit has agreed to give talk on Econet's work following invitation from library.

Other Business: AS has been in contact with RBC Parks with aim of improving communications with Econet hopefully for the benefit of both.

AS suggest Econet should join "Love Parks" and the National Federation of Parks and Open Spaces. Aims discussed and agreed for Econet to sign up.

Date of Next Meeting: Monday, 12th September at 7:30pm