

'econet'

Thursday 13th June 2002
Prospect Park Environment Centre

Minutes

Econet is a network meeting of volunteers who are involved in practical conservation work in the Reading area. Meetings take place quarterly and are open to all volunteers. They are an open forum for discussion on all issues.

Present

| | | | |
|-----------------|-------|----------------|-----------------|
| Tina Gower | RBC | | |
| Steve Ayers | FOMPF | Julie Wickham | RBC, FOWM |
| Kit Brownlee | RUWG | Peter Scudmore | FOCC |
| Tricia Marcouse | RUWG | Phil Bagge | Caversham Globe |
| Andrew Noyes | | Philip Allen | FOMP, BeC |

Apologies

| | | | |
|----------------|--------|---------------|--------------------------|
| Mike Cox | FOWM | Judith Oliver | FOMPF |
| Sheila Walker | SCOMIT | Richard Coles | BeC |
| Derek Bartlett | FOBW | Sandra Ayers | FOMPF |
| | | Dave Kelly | FOBW, Caversham Globe |

The Insurance Problem

There were still problems with insurance cover for local groups as a result of BCTVS' problems with their insurers. The current cost of cover is very high: £160+, plus £30/40 for power tools. Many local groups are very small with a nominal subscription. Raising subscription rates to cover insurance costs would be prohibitive.

RBC has promised to do what it could to support Local Groups. The Grant Officer currently has sufficient funding to support an estimated 10 local groups at £100 per group. Groups not entirely within the borough would get pro rata funding. This would be funded by Community Grants now, and by Annual Grants in the future.

The Reading Insurance officer has said that groups were not covered by the Councils' insurance. For this to happen each task would have to be overseen by a member/employee of the Council, who would have to be physically present. The resulting costs would be inappropriate.

Concern was raised that insurance costs would rise annually at considerable a rate. The meeting was assured that costs were likely to be steady for the next two to three years.

Groups currently insured with the new BTCV scheme are: RUWG, BeC, Green Gym, Crow. Groups currently not insured: FOMC, FOBC, FOBW, Caversham Globe, FOMPF, FOPP & FOCC. Caversham Globe and FOMPF currently have sufficient funding to pay into the new BTCV scheme.

Various ideas for funding local groups were discussed, amongst which were charging for tasks and the formation of an umbrella group to which local groups could be affiliated for insurance purposes.

It was thought that groups could reasonably charge £5 per day per volunteer. Green Gym charge £20 per 1/2day for the group and CROW £3per volunteer per day. However, the meeting was reminded that most work was done for RBC and that there were problems with delayed payment by the council.

The formation of an umbrella group was also not without problems. Such a group would need an accurate membership list, to keep accurate accounts and to purchase insurance. Volunteers would have to be found to run such an organisation.

It would need funding by affiliation fees and/or a grant from RBC. There was possible funding from a Community Grant or an Environmental grant. Current Globe Groups are fairly informal and would need to formalise their membership, as would all other affiliated groups. A Membership list would be needed for each group. Tasks would require a register with volunteers name & address and next of kin, a copy of the insurance schedule and a Risk Assessment. Increased training might be needed.

The meeting was reminded that those currently carrying out Tasks should be preparing risk assessments etc. for each task.

Christmas Tree Monies were paid out

Events/Activities

Globe October : A Celebratory event in the Town hall, with refreshments. This will be an information sharing session with presentations and displays. As there are only six Globe groups, "Friends of" groups and R/As will also be invited. An opportunity for recruitment.

Waterloo Meadows: A Grass identification training day to celebrate its LNR status. Plus a bird walk by Martin Sell. Tina to check out grass cutter.

Environment Centre open day 22nd June: An adjunct to the Water fest

.Refreshments: BBOWT,

Walks: Plants 11:30 am, MKL

Birds 2:30 pm, MS

Activities: Creating a Bog Garden, all day, Go Reading

Treasure Hunt

Under the Microscope: Litter Critters / Pond Life

RUWG (Kit /Anne Briers)

Feely Boxes

Sales: Goods BBOWT
Plants BBOWT
Pea Sticks, Bean Sticks

Displays: Go Reading
BBOWT
BeC
RUWG
Local Groups

Other: Motorised Buggy (Tina ex Dinton)
Bird List
Photo History of the Park, (Before & after restoration by FOPP)

Promotion needed: Leaflets, to be handed to dog walkers etc prior to the event. Press
Release (Tina)

Bog garden needs Plants: Trish (RUWG) to provide: Meadow Sweet, Iris, Bog Primula,
Water Avens, Rushes, if available from allotment.

Pre-day action: dig out (digger organised), obtain & mark out sleepers
Obtain rubble, pond liner, wire for trellis, power drill & bit.

Next Meeting: 12th September 2002