

Meeting of ECONET

24th February 2020

Parks Department Offices, Prospect Park 7:30pm

Present: Steve Ayers, Phil Allen, Alan Stevens, Trish Marcouse, Ruth Coxon (TCV)
Dave Kenny, John Lerpiniere, Judith Oliver (minutes), Mike Cox

Apologies for absence: None

Minutes: The notes of our meeting in September 2019 were not available to view.

Matters arising: The Christmas tree cutting and selling happened to plan.

Reading Biodiversity Action Plan

Econet's role and status as a wildlife conservation group in Reading:

A long discussion ensued re. communications with RBC Parks Dept. which seems to have become moribund, aggravated by cuts and changes of staff. Currently there is minimal chance that a new post within RBC can be funded. We need to improve our own links with the likes of TCV and share our work party objectives and outcomes. Trish believed that in the longer term we might be able to use the review processes built into the Biodiversity Action Plan. The site owners (primarily RBC Parks) will be accountable for improvements and Econet activity can be part of that process.

Also, under Climate Change Action Plan (CAP), Management plans are required for each site. Many of the existing plans need updating

Trish agreed to talk to her CAP contacts (Ben Stanesby & Carolyn Jenkins) re the above and how Econet requirements might be accommodated

News and updates:

CRoW: Variety of tasks in an almost full program, including extensive hedge laying at Balmore Walk and Fobney Wetland Local Nature Reserve. Attendees since start of 2020 averaging 14.

Waterloo Meadows: Also hedgelaying. The Sustrans track is being upgraded i.e. widened and resurfaced. A grass border either side will be sown with wild flower seed that Trish is able to supply. Attendees 3 – 5.

Clayfield Copse: Successful seed gathering walk with local primary school in October, seeds planted in pots in the school garden. Adult walk had few takers. Planning guided walks for Meadows Day on Sunday 5th July and for Wild about Reading on Saturday 30th May. Dawn Chorus walk on 3rd May. Tasks included moving dead trees from the ride, managing the ride, clearing brambles from a bluebell area. Discussion is ongoing with TCV re. sharing tasks on site. Average attendees 6, 10 at recent tasks.

Mcllroys: Christine now moved on. Tasks, thinning holly, improving ancient pathway, laying hazel etc. Numbers 4 – 5.

Mapledurham Playing Fields: Recent tasks have focussed on reducing the impact of Ivy which is smothering some very old apple trees. Next time we'll be looking for bean poles and continuing with Ivy work. Numbers 5 - 6, plus a special

wood chip day when 20 people attended. Work on the school building has commenced.

Cemetery Junction: No contact made.

Caversham Globe /Tree Wardens: Chestnuts being felled along prison walk to be replaced by Sweet chestnuts, Street Tree project running out of money. Econet agreed to fund circa £250 for 3 replacement yew trees at Reading Old if a Co-Op grant application is unsuccessful.

Reading Urban Wildlife: Pleased with their crocuses along Hewitt Avenue!

TCV: Under Ruth Coxon, their new Woodland Improvement Team (WIT) have 3 years of woodland related tasks at Clayfield, Blundells Copse, Bugs Bottom and two site's in Wokingham funded by Network Rail.

Health & Safety: Nothing to report

Accounts: We have circa £15k in the bank. This healthy balance offers protection should the Christmas tree sales fail due, for example, to poor weather.

Christmas Tree Sale 2020: Saturday 5th December, cutting on Friday 4th. 40 'trees' were not sold last year as they were poor specimens. Need to be more stringent quality control by the cutters.

Bean Pole Gardening Event: Saturday 18th April will be without box maker, hand crafted walking sticks, tools sharpener and children's activities but otherwise there is good response from the other stallholders of 2019. We sold out of bean poles very quickly last year so a greater number of bundles would be useful!

Tools: Nothing to report

AOB: Friends of Caversham Gardens are holding some events and may be needing a pond dipper.

Date of next meeting: Monday 14th September at 7:30.