

**Meeting of ECONET**  
**22<sup>nd</sup> January 2007**  
**BTCV, Bridge Street, Caversham 7:30pm**

**Present**

Alan Stevens (Treasurer)  
Peter Scudamore  
Margaret Jordan  
Mandy Lacy BTCV  
Paul Forrest-Jameson BTCV

John Lerpiniere  
Paul Fincher (Web Master)  
Jenny Cottee  
Steve Ayres

Apologies: Dave Booth, Tricia Marcouse

In the absence of the chairperson Alan S and John L did a double act, including minutes.

**Matters Arising**

Jenny C commended Alan and Paul F for the standard of the web site.

A new **tool store** is in place at Prospect Park. The container is shared with RBC and Tools for Self Reliance. It is very crowded, not yet organised and difficult to negotiate for required tools as everything is on the floor. In time this should be rectified by RBC who would welcome suggestions as to layout. At present only Alan S has keys.

The **grant application** was submitted to RBC. Letter received in December confirming the recommended level of funding is £500 (medium priority). Applications are due to be considered on 12th February and ratified on 20th February. We should know whether our application has been successful by the end of February.

**News and Updates**

**Mapledurham Playing Fields.** Last work party had their work cut out after the recent storms, with many fallen trees to clear. Most were dead Elm covered with Ivy but other trees were lost such as a productive Crab Apple. On going work includes taking out Sycamore. More bird boxes are required for the site, these can be supplied from surplus at the tool store. (*action John*)

A number of trees on the site have been registered in the national database of veteran and ancient trees ([www.tree-register.org](http://www.tree-register.org)) by the **Friends of Mapledurham Playing Fields**. Our ancient trees are regarded in Europe as our most important ecological habitat, ahead of lowland wet woodland, heath (of which Britain has 80% of world resources), rocky cliffs and so on. The Mapledurham trees are on a boundary bank and are associated with old ridge and furrow farmland which can be identified from aerial photographs (GoogleEarth).

**Conserve Reading on Wednesdays (CROW)** have carried on with a solid programme, half in Reading half outside the borough, and even worked on December 27th (coppicing at Withy Copse, Tilehurst) for fresh air and exercise as an alternative to more Christmas cake and chocolates.

**Clayfield Copse.** On Wed 7th February 10:00am, David Rees of the Oxfordshire Woodlands Group, is joining CROW to coppice Ash for binders (e.g. for hedgelaying) as a saleable product for which David has outlets. A doubt has arisen as the area in question is outside the Copse and is the subject of a forthcoming RBC consultation, negotiations are in progress with RBC but best to check before turning up although a similar task should be possible in the unlikely event of prohibition.

On Sun 4th March 10am David is returning for a walk and workshop looking at woodlands as a community resource. This has been organised on behalf of the **Friends of Clayfield Copse**. Listening to David is a treat for those who like their minds stretched, perhaps he has the answer to global warming!

**Blundells Copse. Tilehurst GLOBE** will advertise CROW's hedgelaying task on January 31st as it will be of interest to local people. A Bluebell search is planned in order to take out alien Spanish Bluebell which weakens native English stock. A large Sycamore was ring-barked to control it (and provide valuable standing dead wood) but seems to be thriving! It was concluded that such trees usually take about three years to die.

Jenny C asked whether surplus bird boxes could be made available for sale to raise money for **Tilehurst Globe**. This was agreed. (*action John*)

### **Health and Safety**

A chain saw would have been useful at Mapledurham Playing Fields after the storm but the Group is not insured for this. A specialist would need to be called in, probably at expense. More **manpower** would have been an alternative, it was suggested that on such an occasion a last minute email to ECONET members may have helped.

There was no word of progress on H&S advice for the public on Reading sites as mentioned at the last meeting (Kit B). (Paul F-J has experience of similar provision!)

Paul F-J has provided us with the latest version of the BTCV generic guidelines of **risk assessment** (hard copy), these are held by Alan S. These may soon be available in electronic format.

BTCV is now starting to use an interactive system to do risk assessments, Paul F-J hopes this system may eventually be made available to the groups.

Risk assessment and other **courses** were again considered but no recommendations made, it is up to individuals to make requests as they feel the need then things could be arranged. Paul F-J has offered the Group a free RA course but apart from Jenny C, no interest has been shown.

Paul F-J explained the current BTCV position with running courses, support funding is no longer available so they need to be cost effective although various discounts would apply to ECONET.

### **Accounts**

The CROW account has been closed and the balance transferred to ECONET. The ECONET bank balance now stands at £3,300 approx..

Combined ECONET and CROW accounts for the current year, April 2006 to March 2007: Income to date is £695 (grant, task charges and interest) with a further £270 (£305 estimated by year end) of task charges to be invoiced. Expenditure to date is £635 (insurance, BTCV membership, task expenses and tool purchases) with a further £220 estimated to be paid by year end.

Insurance renewal papers were received late and our cheque has not yet been presented. However we have confirmation that our payment has been received and we have cover. (Our insurance expired on the 31st December). Delays are thought to have been caused by changes in BTCV personnel. [Certificate of insurance and policy documents received 23rd January. Alan S]

### **Publicity**

Renewal of **website** fees arises November 2007 and will cost in the region of £100. Paul F will continue as web master and will deal with this.

It was considered that the excellent publicity **brochure** which had evolved over recent years is not cost effective and it is hard to see if it brings any new participants although about 1000 had been distributed over the year. Brochures cost around £400 although BTCV could now do it cheaper. People become involved by word of mouth, through the Volunteer Centre or finding the website, awareness is also created through the local newspapers. Alan S showed a simple black and white A5 leaflet which clearly explains ECONET on one side and CROW on the other. This was considered perfectly adequate and at present there are just plans to print a few of these to leave for collection at the Reading Volunteer Centre.

In addition a colour **poster** could be produced quite cheaply at BTCV to be displayed at Reading Library instead of the usual brochures. Alan S to send electronic leaflet to BTCV and give some thought to a poster.

Alan S will also have ECONET added to the Volunteer Centre database which can be view over the Internet.

**Newspapers** should be kept in mind and although some special events can be profiled in advance, the option of 'live' photo opportunities keeps our work in the public eye.

Paul F-J said BTCV is happy to promote local groups and maintains directories of groups available on the website (ECONET telephone number is incorrect - Alan S to get corrected).

### **A.O.B.**

It was pointed out that the Group can no longer be affiliated to BTCV, as Clause 5 of the **constitution** states, but is a member of the Community Group Network. It was therefore agreed that the clause be amended to a more general wording "The group shall apply for the appropriate membership of BTCV [formerly British Trust for Conservation Volunteers], and shall observe the conditions of that membership".

**Rescue**, the traditional cleanup event, will this year be a week earlier 10th and 11th March. RBC is meeting (tomorrow) to decide venues. There is currently no information on the RBC website. Jenny C has been in contact with Chris Cliburn

regarding McIlroy Park. There is an ECONET clean up task at Waterloo Meadows [currently scheduled for the 17th March - Alan S].

Word has it more emphasis on the value of volunteering should mean a gradual increase in attention from RBC in the future hopefully bringing a few more volunteers forward. Watch this space!

**Date of Next Meeting.**

Monday, 21st May 2007 at 7.30pm Environment Centre, Prospect Park (all being well with the new building).