

Meeting of ECONET

1st March 2010

Parks Department Offices, Prospect Park 7:30pm

Present:

Alan Stevens
Dave Booth (RBC)
Dave Kenny
John Lerpiniere (Acting Chair)
Judith Oliver
Oonagh Kelleher (BTCV)
Peter Scudamore
Steve Ayers (Minutes)
Tricia Marcouse

Apologies:

Kit Brownlee

Minutes of Meeting held 7th September 2009 & Matters Arising

Amend reference to Corwen Road flats not Coven, otherwise accepted as a true reflection of the meeting.

Dave Kenny has some small Hornbeams which can be planted at Clayfield.

2009 Christmas tree sales raised £360 and was well supported. For 2010 BBOWT would like to publicise earlier than last year. The supply of trees is uncertain with possible sources at Padworth, Wokefield, Wildmoor & Ceasar's Camp. These will need to be assessed with a decision to BBOWT by August.

News & Updates

Conserve Reading on Wednesdays (CROW) Had to cancel a few tasks due to snowy weather but otherwise have had a full programme of events. Have bookings right through March and April 2010. Tricia advised that some tree-tie work is required at Green Park (for which a £40 charge could be raised). The Clayfield wild pears could do with some guarding, Dave K has some part spirals that may be suitable

Mapledurham Playing Fields Several paths were blocked by trees and shrubs which had fallen foul of the weight of snow and ice. The main paths were now clear and the brash incorporated into habitat hedges (a hybrid of dead hedging and habitat piles!). A large area of bramble was cleared 'roots and all' to enable small trees to flourish. It was good to see a large number of self sown oak regeneration in the borders. About 30 of these had been guarded and staked, and other species will be planted between them.

Balmore Work carried out by Caversham Globe. A contractor had caused concern by over zealous cutting of good plants, but hopefully these will recover. 5 new trees will be planted in the Spring (Field maple, Cherry & Hornbeam).

McIlroy Park Coppicing and holly cut-back had taken place. There had been a slight drop-off in attendance.

Waterloo Meadows A continuation of general maintenance of the meadow areas.

Southcote Allotments A pond has been created in an area prone to flooding and where there is not general public access. It may not hold much water during the dry months. CROW are visiting on 10th March to plant a hedge and Alan suggested putting up some bird boxes that were obtained from BBC Breathing Spaces.

RUWG Have been surveying the wetland edges along the river systems to identify what they feel should be retained or improved.

BTCV Have obtained funding through the Earley Charity and plan to do more work around Reading. There are 2 vacancies for volunteer officers but so far there are not many candidates. RESCUE takes places on Sunday 14th March where they will be clearing up in Prospect Park and maybe plant a 100m hedge.

A query was raised over the 'University Group'. A representative had come to CROW events but the contact seems to have been lost and there is no co-ordination with their initiatives. Alan will attempt to get an email contact on the Econet circulation.

Health & Safety

No issues were raised.

Accounts

Year end projection is for a positive balance of £2650 - little change on the year.

| Expenditure | | |
|--------------------------------|------|--------------|
| Insurance and related payments | | £500 |
| Tools | | £445 |
| Volunteer Expenses | | |
| Travel Expenses | £300 | |
| Tea/coffee, etc. | £160 | |
| Perks | £10 | £470 |
| Publicity (including website) | | £60 |
| Administration | | £60 |
| Total | | £1535 |

| Income | |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| RBC Grant | £500 |
| Christmas Sale | £360 |
| Task Charges, see note below | £640 |
| Gifts, bank interest, etc. | £70 |
| Total | £1570 |

Note: The Charges figure includes £360 due from West Berkshire Council which has been invoiced and which we anticipate receiving in the current financial year. There is a further £160 of charges relating to the BeWILD project which has not yet been invoiced (the final task is not until the 17th March) for which we are not expecting to receive payment this year.

At least £80 in charges were lost because of cancelled tasks arising from the bad weather during December and January although this was partly offset by savings in related expenditure.

Treasurer's expenses of £45 were agreed.

The Globe groups face a potential shortfall of money for insurance costs and there was a short debate about coming under a group (such as Econet!) thereby sharing and reducing the costs.

Econet and the 'Friends of' groups

The Friends of Mcllroys Park have agreed in principle to merge with Econet transferring their funds and closing their bank account. At the meeting the Friends of Clayfield Copse agreed to do likewise. It was confirmed that the Friends of Mapledurham Playing Fields do not have funds (or a bank account). Once this process is complete tasks at these sites can be run as 'Friends of ...' tasks rather than 'Econet tasks run on behalf of the Friends of ...'.

The Friends of Waterloo Meadows retain their own account. John will explain to Mike Cox the implications of this on how the insurance policy might be affected (i.e. might be construed to NOT be part of Econet and therefore have no insurance cover). On this basis it would be best for Waterloo Meadows to also merge with Econet, closing their account and transferring the funds to Econet.

Publicity

We will consider a pitch at Forbury Fever 2010.

Tools and Tool Store

The tool store is now shared with Tools for Self Reliance rather than RBC. The situation has thus improved.

Mapledurham are in need of 2 pairs of good loppers to replace its ancient bendy-types!

Complaints & Safeguarding Procedures

Following good work by Alan, we now have a documented procedures to handle these situations.

AOB

RBC Tree Strategy: This is in draft and covers "public" trees which are RBC's responsibility. Tricia will draft some comments for individuals to comment on prior to submission by the 2nd April. This will be a formal Econet response.

Judith will attend a Small Woods forum which seeks to understand how public woods are managed and what assistance might be offered in their management.

Tricia suggested that planning officers would be assisted if there was a collection of 'best practices' in terms of improving biodiversity/support of the BAP. RUWG comment on plans now, but the improvements ought to be incorporated into planning applications as a matter of course. Various contacts in the planning community were suggested and Tricia will pursue the idea of a Construction Policy for Biodiversity.

Date of Next Meeting

Monday, 20th September 2010, Parks Department Offices, Prospect Park at 7.30pm. This will be the AGM.