

AGM of ECONET
14th September 2020
In the garden of 81 St Peter's Ave, Caversham

Present: Steve Ayers, Trish Marcouse, John Lerpiniere, Judith Oliver, Mike Cox
and Peter Scudamore

Apologies for absence: Alan Stevens

Minutes: The notes of our meeting in February 2020 were review and agreed.

Matters arising: Trish updated us on the potential to use the Climate Change Action Plan (CAP) site-management review process. The CAP is still out for consultation, so confirmation of this cannot yet be determined.

Our Bean Pole event was a casualty of COVID lockdown.

Size of our Work Parties:

The potential for larger work parties is most appropriate for CRoW tasks, however it is important that we have an Econet-wide agreement. Covid guidance relating to our volunteer work can be interpreted in many ways. To date, the Rule of 6 has been applied. Newbury groups have held much larger sessions. Their rationale is the statement that larger groups are permitted "for work, and voluntary or charitable services". However, there is no definition as to the scope of these services, and debate continues as to whether it includes voluntary ecology work tasks.

We have received information from BBOWT, TCV and our insurers regarding their Risk Assessment positions. This has been used in our decision making

It was felt that we need to understand how we can increase the opportunity for volunteer numbers, whilst maintaining a safe working environment.

After much debate the meeting agreed the work groups should remain as 6, but that two groups of 6 are permitted as long as they

Have separate task leaders

Have arrival times at least 15 minutes apart

People remain socially distanced and use hand sanitizer before and after

Do not share tools

Bring their own refreshments (use hand sanitizer before eating)

Liaison with the site owners is required so that we understand their specific COVID-related needs.

Steve will ask Alan to update our Risk Assessment documentation accordingly.

NB: Currently national rates of infection are rising, so we will keep abreast of what changes are put in place locally & nationally.

This is a collective decision, with no one person being solely responsible.

Election of Officers

Steve Ayers was elected as Chair.

Alan Stevens was asked to continue as Treasurer and Webmaster until his move away from Reading. However, at some time a transition to a new officer(s) will need to take place.

Trish offered to take on some of Alan's tasks if they became too onerous.

Accounts: We have circa £15.3k in the bank. Thanks were given to Alan for his work in maintaining our financial transactions. TCV have received lottery funding which means that our community network membership for 21021 will be free. Trish mentioned that grant money used by RBC to cut & collect wildflower meadows may be coming to an end. If so, perhaps Econet could sponsor some of this work. The actual cost will need to be determined.

Zurich have given a 3 month extension to our insurance policy, renewal is now April 2021

Mike advised that RBC had mentioned a potential charge for the use of the tool shed at Waterloo Meadows. It's gone quiet, but if they raise it again, he will try to get them to offset the cost against the work the volunteers do at the site.

Health & Safety: Nothing to report

Christmas Tree Sale 2020: Approval already given for the cutting day on 4th Dec 2020. There had been discussion with the Church regarding how to capture visitor details, managing on-site numbers & a one way system. However, post our meeting the Church have decided not to hold their Christmas event. RBC still to decide on whether Cav Court can be used this year. A key date is 3rd November, this is the latest date to get publicity into Caversham Bridge. Agreed that RSPCA, BBOWT & Bees will not be invited this year. Normal charging to apply. BBOWT are willing to lend us a/some contactless card-payment machines. Peter was willing to man the cash bucket. Donations to other groups to be decided at a later date.

Bean Pole Gardening Event: was set for Sat 17th April 2021

Tools: Nothing to report

AOB: The meeting asked whether the programme could be reinstated on the website. To prevent people from 'just turning up' it should be annotated BY INVITATION ONLY.

Mike mentioned that some First Aid-ers will need to renew their certification. Steve will ask Alan to review the position and identify suitable venues/dates.

Steve will forward the September WIT update from Ruth Coxon to the attendees

Date of next meeting: Monday February 22nd 2021 – venue to be advised.