

CLAUSENTUM FEN CONSERVATION GROUP

MINUTES of Annual General Meeting held on Sunday, 10th February 2019 at St. Faith's Hall

Present:

Di Jepson, Brian Millett, Hilary Bailey, Pamela Sanderson, Ivor Snook, Janet Roland-White, Christopher Balfour, Ian Tait, Sarah Langford, Peter Crowley, Tony Hollingsworth, Tim Walker, Nick Radford, Denise Hentall, Marcus Swalwell, Sheila Price.

Committee: Co-Chairs Jonathan Sleath & Marian Hollingsworth. Anna-Maria Holt (Treasurer). Mike Gibbons (Conservation). Ann Balfour (Sustainability)

Apologies for absence:

Fiona Mather, Guy and Fizzy Warren, Lysbeth Sleath, Liz Crump

Marian as Co-Chair welcomed everyone and reviewed what had been achieved over the year. The aim was to conserve and improve the biodiversity, also bring everyone together with those aims in mind. Some informative slides were shown.

We were all surprised by the amount of water remaining over the summer despite a record dry season. The bund and pond area were improved by lowering the steep banks and redistributing soil. Some seeding was done but a surprising amount of growth has resulted from the seed bank such as reeds and bullrushes. The regeneration has been rapid and impressive.

There have been community working parties which resulted in the removal of many invasive plants e.g. himalayan balsam, goosegrass and redshank before they were able to seed. Clearing the streams has encouraged water flow. The need to have a balanced approach was recognised.

Individual efforts and skills have been appreciated. Marcus for organising and overseeing the installation of the pipe work from St. Michael's Brook. Matthew Greening for water species surveying and Tim's monitoring of moths. Jonathan and Lysbeth with scything. Barry and Brian helping with boundary fences and many other volunteers. Everyone was thanked for their help and interest and Marcus and Mike were thanked for the initial realisation of the scheme.

We are now aiming to concentrate more on Zones 1 and 2 where a glade habitat is to be opened up. Some planting along the northern boundary would help to discourage fly tipping.

Marian handed over to Co-Chairman Jonathan who continued by showing interesting slides which demonstrated what had been going on over the year. Night camera shots of a water vole and an otter were particularly appreciated. Some surprising plants were recorded both on land and in water, also invertebrates. Dragonflies have been very much in evidence. Monitoring of water levels, flow levels and temperature have all been ongoing, Graphs were shown.

Hydroseral succession was explained which should help us to manage the Fen for the future. Growth over a short time was demonstrated on a slide. There was discussion on how to manage growth to preserve biodiversity. Scything different areas at different times over July and August, but leaving some areas unscythed, is the recommended ecological approach to create a mosaic of habitats. Jonathan said some areas of scrub would be helpful.

Jonathan thanked everyone for their contribution.

Anna- Maria as Treasurer proposed the minutes of last year's AGM and they were seconded by Janet. They were approved. She then gave a summary of the financial position. There is a balance of £255.20. We are not anticipating the need for any large expenditure and therefore have enough for current commitments.

The Committee was re-elected for the coming year with the addition of Tim Walker - proposed by Mike and seconded by Marcus and Brian Millet proposed by Marian and seconded by Ivor. There was then general discussion as to who was responsible for trees, some of which overhang the road. The City Council and County Council are both involved. Mike said we should continue to ask for more trees to be removed on the grounds of improving biodiversity. Ivor thought more should be done with regard to safety. Marian reminded that WCC had visited three weeks ago and had not permitted any further felling.

Mike then gave his conservation report. He explained the SINC and the need to respect this and to do everything possible to increase and preserve biodiversity by careful and sensitive management of the site. Some invasive plants would need to be controlled. He reported on the amazing number of birds seen or heard numbering 55 species. He expressed his view that work should be undertaken in collective work parties. He thought that selective planting could create more diverse habitats, especially on the islands.

Planning and timing of work parties need to be flexible to respond to the changes as the Fen develops. It was agreed that people should be helped to understand the importance of the site and Marian showed the most recent signs with the new dragonfly logo based on a wood sculpture by Alex Jones. The signs explain the sensitivity of the central Fen, where we are encouraging responsible access and control of dogs.

Ivor asked how many young were involved. Di suggested too many younger people around might cause difficulties. The dog problem was mentioned. Tim followed Mike in suggesting no intervention should be undertaken all spring and summer. Ann felt that as we are currently at such an early stage this was too inflexible. It would be more possible once a sustainable framework was established. Sarah and Jonathan agreed that this applied to major disturbance that would disturb the wildlife rather than the small scale disturbance required to maintain a mosaic of habitats. Hilary asked what 'bund reduction' meant. (She now has a copy of the 5 year plan. This was on display with the 2018 annual plan) There was some discussion on membership. Anyone interested can join. We want to keep it informal and without subscription fees. Ian Tait said the change from last year was amazing and congratulated everyone on what he thought was a terrific achievement for a small community.

Marian thanked everyone and closed the meeting.