



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - MILLPONDS ACTION GROUP

Monday, January 28th 2008 at The Foundry, The Commons, Pembroke at 7.30 pm

Minutes

1 Welcome by Chairman

2 Present:

Cllr Rosalie Lilwall (PCC) , Cllr Pearl Llewellyn (PCC), John Hayes (Chairman), Linda Asman (Secretary), Stuart Asman (Treasurer), Cllr Rose Blackburn (Pembroke Town Council), David Holmes, Jacky Birthistle, Rosey Mitchell, Elizabeth Gossage (Development Officer 21c), Irena Kruszona (Wildlife Trust), Cllr Arwyn Williams (PCC), Maddy Berridge, Nikki Anderson (Wildlife Trust), Pauline Stone, Thalia Campbell (CPRW), Nathan Walton (Wildlife Trust S & W Wales). (17)

3 Apologies

Pat Watts (Swan Rescue Pembrokeshire), Karen Houser (Development Officer, Pembroke 21C), Jill Holmes, Trevor Theobald (Countryside Section, PCC), Malcom Stone, Bethan Cox, Philip Williams, Jean Hambly (8)

4 Minutes

Minutes were read, proposed and seconded by Stuart Asman and Jacky Birthistle

5 Matters Arising

Little Gates – John brought attention to the Little Gates footpath issue which has yet to be resolved. Nathan Walton (Reserves Officer) gave an update on action being taken by the Naturalist Trust which leases the Upper Pond and Foreshore, owned by Crown Estates. He has met with John Skinner, solicitor for the Crown Estates, who in 1998 visited Mark Francis and established the boundary of the reserve. This was marked on the lease. A meeting is to be convened to establish the extent of the footpath with Mark Francis: Nathan will be accompanied by John Skinner, a Police Constable and the PCC Access Officer. Hopefully the situation may be resolved amicably. Failing this, enforcement procedures will be initiated.

6 Chairman's Annual Report

Chairman John Hayes first paid tribute to County Cllr John Allen whose keen support for the Millponds will be greatly missed as will be Olwyn Deibert, staunch member of WWNT who was always interested in developments on the Millpond. He then reported on some of this year's major changes and achievements

- First, the web site developed by Linda Asman was a great success and growing better all the time. Thanks to Linda for all her efforts.
- Second, work done by Salix this month on improving the pond. Our thanks go to Elizabeth who has had to take this on in Karen's absence.
- The new Newsletter is ready for distribution.
- The walks have continued but in the woods this year instead of around the pond. We had the Boxing Day walk in the Holyland Wood this time and it was well attended.

- We had a joint event booked with the Parks for pond dipping but had it up the woodland stream because of the state of the litter in the main pond.
- The Otter Training Day for the Otter Survey, set up by Nikki and Bethan Cox, was a great success. Otters are seen quite regularly again on the pond and we are keen to have records of any sightings.

Species on & in the Millpond

- Fish: large shoals of fish are still present hence the high numbers of little grebe and cormorants. There are still some large carp & roach in the pond.
- Birds - new species on the pond this year was a spoonbill & Greylag geese on the top pond and Firecrest in the woods. Still many Cormorants (22 feeding), 30 Dabchicks; Water rail and Teal are coming down from the Upper Pond more often and the Kingfisher is still a regular visitor with at least two still around. Coot numbers in winter are good and still increasing slightly with 50 birds. The Upper Pond is still one of the best sites in the county for wading birds: Black tailed Godwits, Greenshank, Redshank, Ruff, Wood sandpiper, Dunlin, Snipe, Woodcock, Green sandpipers, breeding Reed warblers, Sedge warblers, Reed buntings etc

Improvements

Salix have been on the pond as promised to create some extra vegetation in the east end and along the walkway, this has all been agreed and worked towards by all the organisations involved.

Plans have had to be modified all the time because of funding or Health & Safety issues, but we now have more vegetation which is the important thing. Also if we can get this end of the Pond tidied up, the intention is to do more Pond dipping with the youngsters.

The main aim of this group is to get people working together to improve the habitat as stated in the objectives of the original LNR summary plan;

- 'To maintain and enhance the mosaic of aquatic and related habitats.'
- 'To maintain and enhance populations of protected and notable species.'
- 'To enhance the educational and recreational value of the site'

The next step is to work out what we want to do next. Our wish list put together in the early days was to sort out the pathway, benches, litter bins, notice boards, town signage etc, so it is now up to us how and what we want to tackle next.

Bats

- The bat surveys have been undertaken this year and were well attended as was the bat walk. The numbers of bats using the pond area is very impressive and highlight why we must protect the ponds and surround woods.
- Bat monitoring- several evening bat monitoring sessions were carried out using our equipment under the guidance of Dave Harries from the Bat Group. We intend to continue this survey for a few years to get an understanding of bat use over the pond. We have recorded pipistrelles, Daubentons, Horseshoe, Noctules.

Swans

- We still have some challenges to sort out; such as how to control and reduce swan numbers to ease the pressure on the habitat.
- The new vegetation will be fenced to protect from the Swans.

South Quay Development

- There will be development on the Castle Pond at some stage in the future but the council have assured us that it will be sympathetic to the environment and to what we are doing on the main pond. However, 21C has not had the consultation as promised.
- We will watch this space to make sure there is nothing planned that will damage the habitat and will look to see if any developer can help with things like a fish pass or waterfall etc

Litter

Litter going into the pond is still a problem, from trollies, bottles and bread bags. 21C has some litter collecting equipment which we can use, and Nikki has been co-ordinating this work.

Funds

We bought some pond dipping equipment of our own and still have money for several mini bat detectors for use by children with the money we had from PAVs. We are waiting for the updated equipment to be released.

Upper pond

- Environment agency work on the top pond has developed well and you can hardly see where the digger had been.
- Little gates-despite two public inquiries which found in favour of the public right of way, access is still being obstructed. The WWNT is working to achieve a solution with the involvement of the PCC and Crown Estates.

Holyland Woods Project

- Going well thanks to funding from the main supporter Cydcoed. The car park is almost complete apart from some landscaping. We have removed a couple of Sycamores from the old bridge walls and cleared an area of woodland by Jack Scones Lane and started tree planting this year.
- Information boards are now required.
- We need to review the dog walking situation if fouling on the boardwalk continues.
- The new species of fungi for Wales recorded by D.Harries and friends was back again this year.

Castle Pond

The Castle Pond sub group has made some useful contacts and is working with PCC to bring about improvements. Thanks for everyone's efforts.

7 Treasurer's Annual Statement

The balance of the account stands at £3,939.79 on the 1st January. The only major item of expenditure since the last AGM being £450.70 spent on Pond Dipping equipment. John mentioned that the intended expenditure on mini bat detectors has not yet been made due to the fact that the company involved in making them is presently redeveloping them. When this is done they will be purchased. Elizabeth Gossage made the point that £3,000 had come from the Town Council and was restricted to being spent on the Millponds Project.

8 Project Officers Report

Elizabeth Gossage, Pembroke 21C Development Officer, presented the Report in the absence of Karen Houser, Project Officer, who is absent on sick leave. Please see accompanying file.

9 Appointment of Officers

The following officers were elected.

- a) Chairman: John Hayes
- b) Vice Chairman: Irena Kruszona
- c) Secretary: Linda Asman
- d) Treasurer: Stuart Asman
- e) Election of Committee Members
 - Pat Watts (Swan Rescue)
 - Trevor Theobald (PCC/LNR)
 - Rose Blackburn (Town Council)
 - Rosalie Lilwall (County Council)
 - Nikki Anderson (Wildlife Trust)
 - David Holmes
 - Gill Holmes
 - Jackie Birthistle
 - Thalia Campbell (CPRW)
 - Pauline Stone

10 AOB

- Elizabeth brought up concerns of Pat Watts regarding the present work being undertaken by Salex on the Millpond. She had complained to the PCC that Salex were blocking the emergency access for boats and that they had rutted the grass with their vehicles and left behind pallets which had then been thrown into the pond by vandals. These have now been retrieved and they will be reinstating the grassed area. John Hayes pointed out that there is access for boats and that the fencing is only temporary to prevent swans trampling everything. He also made the point that if anyone represents a group and is on the PMAG committee, that person should take matters to the committee to be dealt with first, not the PCC.
- Nikki brought up the issue of the removal of the barley bales on behalf of Pat Watts. John is going to inquire if Salex could do this as they have a boat. Otherwise he will look into borrowing a boat. We could really do with a boat to pick up litter especially on the north side of the Pond – this would also involve training. We could also do with an electric motor.
- Nikki also brought up another query of Pats regarding the provision of a feeding station for the swans on the Millpond. John was emphatic that this should only be provided on the Castle Pond.
- Irena brought up the question of responsibility for rubbish in the Commons stream particularly at the Monkton Bridge end where it becomes trapped in the gates. Is it the responsibility of PCC? C Cllrs Pearl and Rosalie confirmed that the council will remove what they can reach and that Maintenance will turn out if contacted regarding litter blocking the bridge. Rose advised informing the Town Clerk and he would deal with the matter and pass it on to the County Council.
- Nikki wanted to set a date for a Millpond litter clearance before Easter.
- Pauline Stone wanted to know the legal position regarding boats on the main Millpond as youngsters have been canoeing here ignoring warnings that they shouldn't do so. Historically boats have been used on the Millpond but now the only restriction seems to be a bylaw preventing this between April and July to protect nesting birds. Pauline felt the notice needed repainting as it is very old. John said that there was a general consensus for no boats on the Millpond but it could be brought up with the Technical Committee. He will pursue it with Trevor Theobald.
- C Cllr Arwyn Williams brought attention to the Seafair Festival which is to take place in June to coincide with the Pembroke Festival. Boats will come up river as far as Castle Pond and there will be Festival Events on the Quay.
- It was proposed also that an Open Meeting of the PMAG be held sometime in March – it will give an opportunity to increase public awareness and invite questions and suggestions.

11 Vote of thanks

The meeting finished at 9.15 pm.

**The next meeting of the Millponds Action Group will take place on Monday April 28th
7.30 pm at the Foundry House, The Commons, Pembroke.**