



PEMBROKE MILLPONDS ACTION GROUP

Monday, 27th July 2009 at The Foundry, The Commons, Pembroke at 7.30 pm
Advertised as Open Meeting

Minutes

1 Welcome by Chairman

2 **Present:** J.Hayes, I.Kruszona, J.Crum, J.Birthistle, P.Stone, J.Major, R.Blackburn, D.Holmes, J.Brookman, B.Potter, M.Jenkins from the Probation Service

3 Apologies

P.Watts, L.Asman, S.Asman, J. Holmes, N. Walton

4 Minutes

JH apologised for the confusion over the minutes of the last meeting on 27th April 2009 and expressed thanks to Jill Holmes for volunteering to take the minutes on the evening. IK and Jo B had also added notes. The minutes were accepted as a good record of the meeting.

(a) Minutes of the Woodland steering group meeting of the 29th April 2009, taken by JH, were given out and read.

5 Matters Arising

Secretary – Linda Asman has notified us that she does not want to do the role anymore, JH expressed his thanks and stated that he has asked her to re-consider her decision and he would take the minutes tonight. He asked for a volunteer to come forward as Secretary if LA does resign - so any volunteers? DH will ask Jill Holmes if she will do it if required.

JH described the role of the secretary and the number of meetings we are required to hold which is only four per year. The role of the secretary is to deal with all correspondence in and out of the committee and to ensure that the views of the committee are represented accurately - letters would normally be passed to the Chair for signing.

We should ask Linda if she wants to stay on the committee as website developer because she has done a tremendous job with the site.

PMAG and Woodland Steering group – JH described the role: he pointed out at the Steering group does not replace this committee; it is a management tool for ensuring we achieve the goals set out by this group and the funders; and to keep the focus on various aspects of the project to ensure timely completion and within the budgets set by the funders.

(a) Fence still be erected in the woods to protect the Badger sett.

6 Correspondence

None to report.

7 Chairman's Report

JH described the role of this elected committee and how it also consists of other bodies identified as being partners for the Millpond project from the very beginning.

Dates for 2009

AGM 26/1/09, committee – 27/4/09, 27/7/09,26/10/09 all these are last Mondays in the month

The role of this committee is to suggest ideas and strategies for the ponds. The role of the project officers is to seek funding and take those ideas forward for this group and with 21C, as they pay the project officers with money granted by environment Wales to develop the ponds for wildlife and the community. The constitution of the group lays down the required make up of the committee and the structure.

We have received the funding for the role of project officer for a further twelve months. This role will be split by JB and NA as a job share with a total hours of 21.

The main drive for the officers to complete is the reed bed development, which needs to be progressed by the end of September.

Other projects they will be looking for funding for are, outside classroom for schools and groups and a pond dipping platform.

JH talked about the ponds and reported the water level as high which also carries more silt down.

The pond is looking good again with lots of water life, water fleas, damsels, dragonflies, fish and birds and plants. The pond is looking at its best at the moment with very clear water, lots of fish and water fleas, lots of good vegetation such as Chara, curly pond weed, fennel pond weed, horned starwort have been present in good quantities which means lots of food for other wildlife. The planted reeds are doing well.

Litter in the pond is still a problem with larger items and bikes being thrown in frequently.

Bats: We did plan three bat counting sessions this year. The first on the 25th June was cancelled on the evening due to the violent thunderstorm. The one on the 22nd July was attended by JH, Jo B, IK, JC and we counted over 50 Daubentons out of the Tower. JH used the thermal imager to see where the bats exit the building. The next evening is planned for the 19th Aug.

The window in Barnard's Tower has now been secured with two horizontal bars.

The litter collecting teams have been busy all through the year (the first Saturday of the month).

We had a planting session of snowdrops, blue bells and wood anemones and ferns along Blackhorse walk so we can see how they develop in future, we can put in more snowdrops next year if the group want to.

We completed the boat handling coarse for three people and we have the boat which will eventually be stored in the cleaners shed on the mill bridge. We have purchased buoyancy aids for working on and around the pond.

The Main Millpond was used for the festival event of pond dipping which is a great event and it shows people how much life is in the pond, a list of species found on the day will be kept as a record. The development of the dipping platform and the classroom will allow us to organise more events.

We bought some pocket identification cards for birds and Butterflies for wardens to use to aid species recognition.

The Upper Millpond is doing fine and we have had some discussion with the reserves officer about future improvements to the pond if we can get the money.

We looking to improve the margin vegetation around the castle pond - this could be done by volunteers transplanting material from the commons stream when required. The idea of fencing the edge was discussed and would be of benefit to the wildlife.

JH apologised for being behind with the Newsletters. Requested any ideas for future topics or we would recycle articles.

Dates for 2009

AGM 26/1/09, committee – 27/4/09, 27/7/09, 26/10/09 all these are last Mondays in the month

JH has given several talks to various groups to inform people what is on the ponds and taken walks through the woods with several groups.

We are still working in partnership with other groups which is the main aim of the PMAG to achieve the aims of the local nature reserve status. We have been working with Environment Wales, CCW, Environment Agency, WTSWW, PRT, Otter consultancy, Salix, Aquaclear. We are looking to continue the reed development this winter and next winter to improve the habitat. We can reduce the cost of the project by enlisting volunteer labour.

Volunteer wardens – We are still looking to increase the numbers. There has been some geology training and the catchment area of the ponds. JH did a walk on woodland species. Further species identification will be useful. We would like to look for training for strimmer use etc for some of the management tasks required.

Additional training on the use of the Bat computer software will be useful.

JH would also like to see the volunteers leading a few walks.

We can also use the volunteers to assist with the reed establishment if they are willing.

Little Gates issue is still to be resolved. If you do have problems from the land owner, the community police officer would like you to report it to him – Ken Small mobile 07772113294 and the PCC rights of way officers Mathew Cloud and James Nevitt 01437 775370.

Otters - A survey was jointly funded by the project and carried out by the Otter Conservation officer Geoff Lyles who recorded lots of sites along the ponds and streams. Report awaited. Geoff confirmed that there should be a wildlife corridor along the far bank of Middle Millpond, and the developers and home owners should be aware of this, as a proviso had been made when the land was made available for development. Trevor Theobald at PCC will be writing to the owners of the properties to inform them of this.

Notice board and wipe boards put up by Nikki to record sightings of anything, if you are passing, call in and see or add to them.

A dawn chorus in the woodlands on the 17th May was arranged for anyone who was willing to get up a 0400, none did. If we do another it will be booked and paid in advance.

Woodlands – This is included, as we now have amalgamated the woodland group into the Steering group as the woodland project is virtually complete. The members of the woodland steering group have been invited to join the joint PMAG & Woodland steering group. We have replaced the notice boards and fitted vandal proof plastic covers. Volunteers strimmed the site and PD stabilized the boardwalk and weeded around the new saplings.

We put up new bat boxes, we still need to do some work on the paths and car park as recommended by the access officer - this work could be carried out by volunteers.

Moth trapping is due to take place in the woodlands – JH to inform people of dates.

We were nominated for the Green pennant award which is run by the Civic trust and we are waiting to hear.

Another busy year ahead but I think the ponds and environment will benefit - so a thanks to all involved.

8 Treasurer's Statement

None given as SA is on holiday. JH does not believe we have had any transactions in or out since the last meeting.

9 Pembroke Millponds Project Officer's Report

Get Jo to mail it to me.

10 Castle Pond Focus Group

.Nothing to report other than to question what happened to two swans removed from the pond. No representative from swan rescue present. JH stated that it was understood that they had a license to remove an aggressive bird off the pond.

It was suggested that the Swan Rescue group representative on PMAG reports annually to the group about bird movements and problems that have occurred on the millponds.

Little Gates

IK gave a brief update she had received from the Wildlife Trust, which stated they would not be pursuing it at present because of the financial difficulties of the Trust.

Discussion on the situation confirms we are not happy with this situation. The agreed suggestion is because the problem does not rest with this group but between the Trust and Land Registry and Crown Estates that we should write to the PCC Pathways officer requesting clarification as to the location and demarcation of the agreed right of way. The group can then request better viewing facilities. The access across the disputed land should be the Trust's responsibility, as it would be required for their access to their reserve.

Jo B to discuss with PCC pathway officers.

It was felt that if this does not get resolved, then the matter should be aired in the press.

Volunteer warden scheme

Discussion as to the roles and expectations of the voluntary wardens.

This will be raised at the next wardens meeting and fed back to the committee. One suggestion made by JH was for volunteer wardens to undertake user surveys / observations of how the millponds and woodlands are used by the community.

In order for volunteer warden roles to be explored and schedules of work to be organised, JH confirmed that it is necessary to have a Management Plan. This needs to be arranged, whereby outside expertise is brought in to produce the plan. Such action needs to be approved and activated at the next Joint Steering group, so that the project officers can make the necessary arrangements. Input to the Management Plan will also be expected from PMAG, the Steering group and volunteer wardens.

Agreed schedule of meetings to be produced. Venue will be discussed - suggested field meeting or Foundry house dependant on the weather.

Next meeting agreed for 10th Aug on the Mill bridge at 18.30 or in the Foundry if it is wet.

Wildlife projects

Future projects are still Otters and Bats. I would like to look at Swifts and Housemartins and Coots. A useful project would be the Swan feeding and numbers.

Habitat creation work. Aquaclear work on the top pond – get the machine in to cut a bittern edge and dig a trench in front of the reeds and create an island with the spoil.

Pump mud to form a Sandmartin bank.

Plant Tenby daffs.

Dig in pipes to make otter holt in the marsh.

Next phase of the reed bed work – discussed options and cost of Salix work, we should go with Salix supplying materials and we will assemble and position. Project officers to order materials. Aquaclear work- project officers to get firm price and set date for work.

Website

Well used and very good, and the blog is used well., Thanks to all contributors and thanks to Linda Asman for a lot of hard work setting it up.

11 AOB

Safety equipment around the pond - life belts are missing. Project officers to liaise with PCC to find out who is responsible for checking it and maintaining it.

Do we still put the newsletters in the town hall notice board? We still need to get the newsletters into the information board at the town hall and a copy for the council.

Probation service

M.Jenkins of the probation team gave a outline of work that could be undertaken by offenders on community service. They are currently working on Foundry House and could give us eight people for one day per week to work on the ponds or the wood. They have 7 strimmers, strimmer certificates and training. They are all supervised by experienced staff members; and they conduct their own risk assessments. They are allowed to do litter collections. They do work on other reserves.

It was suggested that cleaning the commons stream and millpond would be good job for them. They are covered by their insurance but may need cover for our work,.

Project officers to check with EG for insurance.

PMAG open meetings

JH discussed the PMAG meeting and suggested that the open meetings are put as additional meetings where he will show slides of the pond and discuss the project, so that people are aware of what is going on and can raise suggestions and ideas or comments - committee to vote at the next meeting. Concern had been raised that meetings are difficult to attend in the holiday periods - JH stated that the timings were agreed at previous meetings by the committee because we had issues previously in moving meetings too many times to try to accommodate people.

Meeting ended 21.30

The next meeting of the Millponds Action Group will take place on Monday 26th Oct 2009, 7.30 pm

at the Foundry House, The Commons, Pembroke.