



FRIENDS OF ASHENGROUND AND BOLNORE WOODS

16TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING,

SUNDAY, 17 MARCH 2019

ASHENGROUND COMMUNITY CENTRE, 15.00

AGM MINUTES

1. Apologies

The Chair, Lorraine Maynard (LM) had received apologies from Adrienne and David Waite, Stuart and Drusilla Meier, and Phil and Angela Stannard.

2. Minutes of the last AGM, held on Sunday 17 March 2017

The AGM agreed the minutes without comment.

3. Chair's report

LM announced the resignation of two Committee members and invited others to step forward. The Committee meets five times a year.

Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) had installed several new information/notice boards around the woods with three more expected in Catts Wood, Bolnore Wood and Pierces Wood. FoABW had contributed to the text and photographs.

LM thanked FoABW members for their membership and ongoing support; Bolnore Village Residents Association for use of Woodside for Committee meetings; Kim Berry and Debbie Martell for their photographs; Linda Howard for the photography afternoon – low turnout as bank holiday; Alex Hutton for the bat walk – huge turnout; Max Wood for the fungi hunt – a lot of hunting; the conservation volunteers, particularly for improving the paths; MSDC for supplying the woodchip; the Mid Sussex Marathon marshals, particularly those who endured abuse from motorists; and the Monday Club and Network Rail/BAM for installing benches and bat boxes.

FoABW events planned for 2019 included a photography afternoon with Linda Howard on 30 March and a children's bug hunt on 30 June with the MSDC ranger. There was also the possibility of a birds of prey event and a bat walk. FoABW was planning to purchase some bat detectors for the latter.

LM had received a number of interesting wildlife sightings in the woods and highlighted a downloadable app on the FoABW website Surveys page which enables easy reporting.

Network Rail had removed fourteen mature trees, some diseased, along the railway embankment and was boring drainage tunnels to channel rain water from the Ashenground area into the stream in Pierces Wood. The work involving two 16 tonne machines was scheduled for completion by June 2019 and Network Rail had committed to restore the area including planting new trees and installing protective fencing.

A member asked what would happen to the temporary surface and LM replied that some of it would be used in the restoration of the site.

4. Treasurer's report

Peter McKerchar (PMcK) referred to the accounts published on the website. The bank balance was just over £8,500 although FoABW had committed to purchase a new mower with assistance from MSDC. This would enable the conservation group to achieve more than before and make the management of Pond Meadow easier enabling more frequent mowing to limit the brambles.

Outgoings for the last year had included two newsletters, various events and co-funding training two volunteers for a mowing qualification required by MSDC. FoABW had received a £1000 contribution from Crest for 2017 but not yet for 2018.

A member asked about costs of maintaining the mower and PMcK noted that FoABW expected MSDC to cover the maintenance costs and to assist with the costs of training the additional volunteer mowers required.

The AGM agreed the accounts.

5. Membership

PMcK noted that membership was down at just under 150, the number of members resigning, moving or passing away partially offset by new members.

6. Conservation during 2018/19

Patrick Burke (PB) thanked the conservation volunteers – ten regulars plus occasional extras. Over the last year, the group had met twice monthly in the winter and monthly in the summer. Projects had included removing invasive weed in Pond Meadow; building a hibernaculum and stag beetle habitats; improving paths with woodchip supplied by MSDC; tidying up a clearing in Ashenground Wood; assisting Trust Conservation Volunteers (TCV) with pond clearance; and manually cutting back scrub in Pond Meadow and the buffer zone beside the bridleway. Over the summer, two volunteers had obtained the mowing qualifications required by MSDC. Very little mowing had been undertaken since, as MSDC's machine broke on its first outing.

7. Purchase mower for conservation work

Discussed above

8. Network Rail drainage works within the woodland

Discussed above

8. Mid Sussex Marathon Weekend update

Michael Bradley (MB) explained that the standard route through Ashenground Wood for the [Haywards Heath 10-mile run](#) on Sunday 5 May 2019 had been revised as a result of Network Rail's Drainage Works and the path closures.

MB explained the new route and appealed for [volunteers](#) to marshal runners through the woods. Email christine@activehousesolutions.co.uk

AOB

A member thanked the Committee for its good work noting in particular the newsletter and the information leaflet on the Network Rail drainage works.

Election of Committee

Two members had resigned from the Committee: Adrienne and David Waite

The following members were willing to stand on the Committee:

Incumbents: Lorraine Maynard (Chair); Peter McKerchar (Treasurer and Membership); Patrick Burke; and Chris Jones

New: Gill Rogers

The AGM agreed the Committee.

The AGM closed with refreshments and was followed by a presentation by Jeff Hayden from the Sussex Badger Trust.

Fourteen members attended the meeting.