

Minutes of AGM of the Friends of Halsey Field April 2023 at 7.30 pm in the Community Room of the Fire Station

The Chairman welcomed the attendees to the meeting

Present: Chris Ridley (Chairman), Mike Ridley (Treasurer), Dennis Furnell (Secretary), Diane Wilson, Stephen Wilson, Katie Tyssen, Anthea Lovatt, Monica Phillips, Jennie Lesley, Grant Thorne, Jean Bluck, Steve Lings.

Apologies: Sherief Hassan, Barry Watson, Phil Byford, Juliet Chodzko

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2022

DW found a couple of typos in the Minutes. These have been corrected and the Minutes were signed by DF as accurate.

Matters arising, if not covered in the following agenda.

Re: Boxmoor Trust taking over the site:

CR explained that David Kirk is still unwell and currently undergoing treatment, so it has not been appropriate as yet to arrange a meeting with him. SL commented that the Box Moor Trust is still interested in acquiring Halsey Field but doesn't have the money to buy it, would not be interested in a lease arrangement and may have difficulty finding the manpower to look after it at the moment. DF pointed out that grazing would be difficult and expensive to arrange because the present fencing is in bad repair and would need replacing, and animal safety could be a concern, as the site is so near to a housing estate. SW added that it could perhaps be possible to negotiate an arrangement for the Trust to acquire the site, similar to the case of the Brickworks in Bovington.

MR related that, although Richard Roberts, Chairman of Herts County Council, seemed extremely interested when told about Halsey Field at the "Wilder Hertfordshire" meeting last May, and said that he would like to visit the site, he has subsequently failed to respond to emails and also to a letter suggesting dates to visit the site. We therefore infer that broaching the suggestion that HCC might be inclined to pass on the land ownership to a large established wildlife charity (e.g. the BMT) will not have a favourable response at the moment.

Re: Developer Fairfax's proposals for housing near the site.

MR informed the meeting that the Fairfax planning application to build houses in the Gade Valley near to the Halsey Field has now been withdrawn, and as there is now no obligation by the government to build a certain number of houses in the area, there may not be so much urgency to build houses in Dacorum. CR commented that we have frequently been told at our Neighbourhood Action meetings that the proposed development is not in the Local Plan, and none of the councillors want it. Furthermore, DF said that Mike Penning is against it. However, SW

pointed out that the Local Plan is now out of date, so planners may still find ways of building through various means, as there are less cut and dried grounds for refusal. It was explained that the threat to the Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation, (SAC) has led to a moratorium on planning consents in the borough, but this will not be a permanent situation. There was general agreement that the various mitigation policies, eg SANGS, ELMs, Biodiversity net gain, etc. will have little effect in enhancing biodiversity, or even averting its loss.

Cheque Signatories

SW has not yet been made a signatory on the Halsey Field chequebook, but it was agreed that this will be done very soon. The bank will require the Minutes of this meeting to be shown. Steve Lings proposed that Stephen Wilson should become a signatory on the Halsey Field chequebook and Dennis Furnell seconded this proposal. This was accepted *nem con*.

Lined pond

CR has had no opportunity to ask Ciaran Mullen about making a pond on Halsey Field, but we are intending to ask Frankie Downes about this matter when she does her presentation about the updated management plan. DF endorsed the principle of installing a pond on site, and SL suggested it would be better to have several small ponds lined with puddled chalk, rather than one large lined pond.

AOB: Safe storage of power tools

It has been decided that all expensive items will be stored in the treasurer's garage so that any theft would be covered under house insurance. Less expensive items such as loppers, bow saws etc. will be stored in the Polehanger Lane garage.

Chairman's Report

The Chairman reported on:

- Management of the site,
- Working with CROWS,
- Butterflies and mammals on Halsey Field,
- Events,
- Grants,
- Community involvement in 2022-23.

Please find the full Chairman's report appended to these Minutes.

Comments on the Chairman's report:

CR commented that although it had seemed as though Head teachers would be keen to use the Children's leaflets with their pupils, the subsequent response when schools have been approached has been disappointing.

SW noted that the apparent lack of response from headteachers to the children's leaflet could be due to the sheer demands on teachers, and possible extra staffing costs involved in taking children out of school. However, he reported that he had very favourable reactions to the leaflet from other non-teaching organisations such as the Boxmoor Trust and from Lea Ellis, the Wilder Communities officer from Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust.

SW will send to all DBC councillors after the elections, copies of both the adult and children's leaflets in order to raise the profile of HF. He suggested that the Scout groups may be keen to use the Children's leaflet, as they are well staffed with volunteers, and the activity could count towards the children's Environmental badge. CR agreed to contact the local Scouts group about this.

Treasure's Report

Here is a summary of the Treasurer's report which MR showed us in the meeting.

Main points:

	2022/23	2021/22
Opening balance:	£1607.00	£1107.62
Closing balance:	£532.71	£1607.00
Grants:	£1715.00	£1000.00
HMRC Tax rebate:	£188.39	nil
Donations:	£199.00	£276.00

Major purchases: Moth trap and accessories, Honda Generator, Barn owl Box, Petrol strimmer and blade, Electric hedge trimmer, Wildlife camera, Health and safety equipment.

Item donation: Long-arm hedge trimmer

Comment:

The apparently large excess of expenditure over income is a consequence of receiving grant money in 2021/22, but purchasing the items was delayed until 2022/23

Planned expenses for 2023/24:

- Replacement loppers.
- Anti-vibration gloves for brush cutters, Strimmers, hedge trimmer.

A spreadsheet showing all the income and expenditure items, and financial statement is attached to these minutes.

Election of trustees for the year 2023/24

All the existing committee members have agreed to continue in post, and no new names were put forward. The existing trustees were re-elected *nem con*, as follows:

Chris Ridley (Chairman), Mike Ridley (Treasurer), Dennis Furnell (Secretary), Diane Wilson, Stephen Wilson, Steve Lings, Sherief Hassan, Barry Watson.

Frankie Downes, a Land Management Project officer from HCC Countryside Management Services (CROWS) to talk about the updated management plan for Halsey Field

Unfortunately, the updated management plan has not yet been signed off by Herts County Council, so FD was unable to give her presentation. Steve Lings very kindly offered to give a short talk about gardening for butterflies, instead.

He reported that the butterflies and moths in Britain were in serious trouble. This was due partly to Climate Change, as butterflies are having to cope with more extreme weather events, and also to intensive farming techniques, and a general tendency in farming, estate management and gardening for excessive tidiness. Steve pointed out that our gardens were the largest nature reserve in the country and if everyone did just one thing for butterflies they would fare better. For example, the caterpillars of the Large and Small White Butterflies like eating Nasturtium leaves as well as cabbages, so if gardeners planted Nasturtiums this would be a big help to both species. Planting Buckthorn would help the Brimstone butterflies and these trees are grown easily from cuttings. They need to be pruned every three years, to provide fresh growth for egg laying. Although butterflies are unlikely to use a small patch of nettles in a garden, as they prefer a very large patch in full sun, this plant is loved by several species of moths, ladybirds and hoverflies. Leaving a lawn to grow is a big help to butterflies and other insects. There is no need to leave all the grass long, and some short grass can also provide a different habitat. Leaving some long grass has the additional advantage that snails will use it to hide and feed and will be less inclined to eat garden plants. However, Steve stressed there is no need to leave the whole garden wild. Many cultivated plants are a valuable source of nectar and pollen for bees and other insects and provide food for caterpillars. He has promised to supply a list of 'dos and don'ts' to advise the Friends of Halsey Field about how to help butterflies, moths and other insects in their gardens. He stressed that although people like to plant nectar and pollen rich flowers in the garden, just as important are the caterpillar food plants e.g. Garlic Mustard, Honesty and Bird's-foot trefoil etc.

Any other business

Mike suggested we should send some questions to Frankie Downes in advance of her talk, so that she could consider the answers before she meets us. He invited all present to think of any questions they would like

to ask her, and email them to him or CR, so these can be collated and sent to Frankie.

Mike's questions are attached to these minutes

Date of the next meeting

This was not discussed but will be in accordance with constitution.

Meeting ended at 9.25 pm.