

Holt Copse Conservation Volunteers

Minutes of the AGM for Season 2019/20

Held online via Zoom - 23rd February 2021

Present :	Colin Melhuish, John Robinson, Pip Robinson, Mike Saynor, Liz Reed, Derek Harding, Valerie Givan, Arlene Du Preez, Cathy Boddy, Robin Ashton, Bernard Paddison, Hilary Jenkins, Chris Doddington, Diane Humphrey Evans, Ruth Rudwick, Nigel Howarth, Nicki Smith
Apologies :	Jessamy Wilson, Juliet Davis
Minutes :	The minutes of the previous AGM were made available prior to the meeting and accepted by those present as a true record.
Matters Arising :	<p>MS offered thanks to RA for his work in rejuvenating the contents of the display board.</p> <p>MS stated he had not yet applied to Waitrose for inclusion in their community matters scheme. VG commented that Waitrose were not actually running the scheme at the present time.</p>

Work Party Summary 2019/20	<p>The progress report was distributed prior to the meeting and CM gave an overview of the highlights of the year, this being our 20th year of working in The Copse.</p>
CM	<p>Although the season was cut short by the national covid-19 lockdown only two work parties were lost and attendances for Saturday work parties were improved and still very healthy for midweek sessions.</p> <p>The full report is included below.</p> <p>SUMMER ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drainage improvements completed by Burrows contractors adjacent to the lower footbridge.• Rustic bench seat installed in The Copse in August (and removed September due to anti-social behaviour in the vicinity).• Wokingham in Bloom judging in July.

AUTUMN/WINTER ACTIVITIES:

Another busy year in which we undertook several main projects:

- The re-coppicing of the lower section of compartment 1.
- The completion of the hedge laying alongside The Copse and Jubilee Avenue.
- Preparation of an area in Joel Park for a wild flower meadow.

The working season was prematurely cut short by the imposition of a nationwide “lockdown” in order to halt the spread of the covid-19 infection.

WORK PARTY STATISTICS:

Work party statistics were mostly improved upon again this year. There was an increase in average attendance for both Saturday and midweek work parties compared to last year with 38 individual members active over the season (up from 34 last year), including four youngsters doing their D of E volunteering with us.

There were 12 Saturday work parties equating to 215 ‘person mornings’ and an average turnout of 17.9 members (up from 168 and 14 last year)

There were only 10 midweek work parties this season equating to 93 ‘person mornings’ and an average turnout of 9.3 members (down from 102 and up from 9.2 last year).

PROGRESS ACHIEVED:

Work began in the autumn at the lower end of compartment 1 coppicing hazel and thinning out holly. This compartment was last coppiced by us 20 years ago, and hazel re-growth has been rather slow. This was the main task for the winter occupying most work parties. 250 hazel were subsequently planted in and around this area along with half a dozen small English oak. Hazel plants were financed by a grant from HAWC. Dead hedges were constructed around the compartment.

Bramble, willow, small red oak and birch were removed from the area alongside Connaught Avenue in Joel Park in preparation for establishment of a wildflower meadow. This occupied several sessions. Area is to be treated with glyphosate and rotavated by WTC contractors in the spring.

Maintenance was carried out in compartments 3, 6 (last year’s coppice) and the top end of compartment 1, removing bramble and holly re-growth.

We continued clearing laurel and holly in compartment 7 (behind the play area) and a tangle of fallen trees was (mostly) cleared up.

A couple of half sessions were spent clearing the regrowth of willow scrub and brambles on Connaught Avenue in Joel Park.

	<p>The hedge laying alongside Jubilee Avenue was completed over several sessions in parallel with the main coppicing tasks with a further 40m of hedge being laid.</p> <p>The laid hedge alongside “The Bermuda Triangle” (compartment 11) was trimmed down to head height.</p> <p>The lower footbridge over the ditch between The Copse and Joel Park was repaired.</p> <p>We also spent some time in compartment 3 clearing up and stacking timber after a large oak tree fell during stormy weather.</p> <p>The annual nest box survey was once again carried out over several sessions (see separate report).</p> <p>This winter Mac, the WTC groundsman, has kept the paths blown and in good condition and so our involvement with leaf blowing has been minimal this time (one session only).</p>								
<p>Treasurer’s Report. DH</p>	<p>The Treasurer’s summary of the annual accounts had been circulated prior to the meeting and these were accepted by those present.</p> <p>DH read through the accounts highlighting major income and expense items. Income this year was predominately provided by WTC and donations from the Haines Hill Charitable Trust and The Wokingham Society for installation of a rustic bench, and HAWC for purchase of hazel whips. Insurance premium was as usual reimbursed by WTC.</p>								
<p>Election of Officers : MS</p>	<p>Due to covid-19 restrictions in the spring/summer 2020 no AGM was held prior to the start of the 2020/21 season and subsequently no election of officers was held. Fortunately all officers were prepared to continue until elections could be held.</p> <p>Elections for officers will be held at the forthcoming 2020/21 AGM. This course of action was accepted by those present.</p> <table data-bbox="363 1451 1182 1599"> <tr> <td>Coordinators</td> <td>Mike Saynor and Colin Melhuish</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Treasurer</td> <td>Derek Harding</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tools Management</td> <td>Colin Melhuish / John Robinson</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Refreshments</td> <td>Pip Robinson</td> </tr> </table>	Coordinators	Mike Saynor and Colin Melhuish	Treasurer	Derek Harding	Tools Management	Colin Melhuish / John Robinson	Refreshments	Pip Robinson
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<p>Website, Flickr and Other Publicity: CM/RA</p>	<p>CM gave an overview of our online presence, that being Flickr, the HCCV website and our Facebook page.</p> <p>The website is essentially our static ‘shop window’ to the world. It gets updated with work party dates and new documents such as AGM minutes, progress reports and surveys. The website blog is updated regularly to mirror the news updates added to our Facebook page.</p>
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	<p>Flickr is used as our photo archive. Photos of the wildflower area clearance from this season have been uploaded by LR.</p> <p>The Facebook group sees more activity year on year with 30 members and more contributions from members other than CM. It is hoped that our Facebook page will increasingly be the forum in which members can discuss news and ideas concerning The Copse.</p> <p>RA gave thanks to local resident Mary Grice for providing the photos for the newly rejuvenated display board.</p> <p>RA asked for ideas for future displays as it is important that the display contents are changed regularly to retain the interest of the public.</p> <p>Post Meeting Note: CM has started a thread on our Facebook page wherein members can post their ideas for discussion.</p>
<p>Bird Boxes: MS</p>	<p>MS had distributed the report on the use of nest boxes for 2019 prior to the meeting and confirmed that usage was much in line with previous years.</p> <p>MS offered thanks to all those that had helped out with the survey and cleaning of the nest boxes this year.</p>
<p>AOB :</p>	<p>CM confirmed that due to ongoing covid-19 restrictions it would not be possible to resume normal work party activities in The Copse this winter/spring 2021. However as restrictions are lifted it should be possible to organise some summer activities such as a litter pick, wildflower walk or bat walk. CM will inform of these via email when national guidance allows.</p> <p>MS will contact WTC and other contractors concerning resuming work on preparing the wildflower area in Joel Park. It was agreed that chemical treatment of the area was beyond the capability of HCCV to perform safely/legally and that stump removal and rotovating would require the services of a contractor.</p> <p>MS proposed that the 2020/21 AGM be held during the summer in his garden and a barbeque would be organised. This proposal was enthusiastically received and further details will be communicated in due course.</p>