

## Holt Copse Conservation Volunteers

### Minutes of the AGM for Season 2022/23

Wokingham Hockey Club, Cantley Park – 17th April 2023

Present :	Mike Saynor (Chair) Colin Melhuish (Secretary), John Robinson, Pip Robinson, Liz Reed, Derck Harding, Valerie Givan, Candy Taylor, Nikki Smith, Sheila Hunt, Judith Lane, Jessamy Wilson, Chris Doddington, Steve Thorn, Cathy Boddy, Rowan Tizzard, Chris Stapleton, Arlene du Preez, Tim Manser, Hilary Jenkins, Jean Saynor
Apologies :	Paul Hucklesby, Thanuja Mallikarachchi, Ian Hydon, Juliet Davies, Jose Gallart, Guy Grannum, Peter Amor, Karl Boddy
Minutes :	Minutes of the 2021/22 AGM were accepted by those present as a true record. MS thanked CM for taking the minutes.
Matters Arising :	RA and CM refreshed the contents of the display board over the summer months with a display of our hedge laying photos and accompanying explanatory text. The display has just recently been updated once again and is now showing photographs of our nest box survey activities. MS thanked RA and CM for their excellent work in this regard.

Work Party Summary 2022/23  CM	<p><b>SUMMER ACTIVITIES:</b></p> <p>MS &amp; CM hosted the Thames &amp; Chilterns in Bloom judges in July and showed them around The Copse and Joel Park. (More of this later.)</p> <p><b>AUTUMN/WINTER ACTIVITIES:</b></p> <p>A full season but lost three WPs due to bad weather (1x Sat, 2x midweek) hence overall statistics are down slightly.</p> <p><b>WORK PARTY STATISTICS:</b></p> <p>There were 11 Saturday work parties equating to 190 'person mornings' and an average turnout of 17.3 members.</p> <p>There were 10 midweek work parties this season equating to 72 'person mornings' and an average turnout of 7.2 members.</p> <p>The average figures are slightly up for Saturday WPs (from 16.7) and slightly down for midweek (10.2).</p> <p>The number of active members was the same as last year with 35 recorded over the season. We also welcomed six new faces this season, one of whom was a DofE youngster.</p>
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We were also assisted by the ladies (and gentleman) from the Newbury Building society doing their community volunteering.

**PROGRESS MADE:**

In terms of overall progress 14 of the 18 jobs identified for the season were completed.

(Some "woodwork" jobs to be completed when conditions are dry in the spring/summer)

We undertook four main projects this season, those being:

1. Laying of the Reading Road hedge
2. Eradication of yellow archangel in compartment 2b
3. Complete coppicing of compartment 2b
4. Begin coppicing compartment 1b

An additional 12m section of the Reading Road hedge was laid. Slow progress due to the neglected nature of the hedge which was last laid in 2003. Additional hazel and hawthorn was planted along the laid section.

LR lead the yellow archangel bashing team and successfully completed the task in compartment 2b.

Coppicing of the eastern/lower section of compartment 2b was completed. Brambles were cleared and additional hazel whips were planted. Large elders were pruned to head height. The canopy of large holly trees was lifted.

Good progress was made coppicing compartment 1b. Many poles & binders were harvested and an extensive dead hedge was constructed. The canopy of large holly trees was lifted. A number of small hazel whips were also planted.

**Many maintenance jobs were also carried out:**

Both of the laid hedges along Jubilee Avenue were trimmed. The Bermuda Triangle hedge was repaired with some new poles & binders.

The recently planted hedge alongside the Bermuda Triangle was "weeded".

Scrub was cleared from alongside Connaught Avenue.

Some brambles were bashed in compartment 3 (alongside compartment 1b) and some large hazels coppiced.

A very large hazel was coppiced in compartment 7a.

The lower footbridge was repaired/re-made using plastic planks and scalplings.

The young oak trees on Holt Lane were pruned.

Four English oak trees were planted under suitable gaps in the canopy in The

Copse.

Leaves were blown from the main paths by MS over several sessions.

The info board adjacent to the playground was repaired (new top rail fitted)

The annual nest box survey was carried out (see separate report). Two additional wooden nest boxes donated by Ian Hydon were installed.

#### **OTHER NEWS.**

We were honoured by another Mayoral visit in February with chocolate bars and Wokingham in Bloom pin badges awarded to thank us for our contribution last year.

Over the summer the display board hosted a photographic guide to hedge laying. The display has recently been updated by RA and CM with a guide to our nest box survey activities.

CM offered thanks to LR, Steve and Gareth for the end of season bacon rolls, ST for the chocolate birthday cake and RT for feeding us with many and varied wonderful cupcakes.

CM will organise a date for the usual leader's inspection of The Copsc in September.

CM will circulate dates for the 2023/24 work parties by the end of the summer.

MS thanked CM for organising the work parties this year.

#### **SUMMER WORK 2023.**

The following tasks have been identified for the summer months: (MS and CM to arrange dates)

- Install paving slabs in front of the rustic bench and the bench adjacent to the lower footbridge.
- Gather bluebell seeds and sow in areas of patchy growth.
- Improvements to the path linking the upper entrance on Jubilee Ave to the lower footbridge.
- Repair/re-make the upper footbridge using scalplings and plastic planks in a similar way to the lower footbridge.

<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. There was significantly lower income and expenditure than in previous years due to a lack of major projects being started this year. At the end of our winter working season the account balance currently stands at £459.63 but there may be some significant expenditure in the summer months as further path renovations are being planned.</p> <p>MS thanked DH for his tenacity in setting up our new bank account with Metro Bank in Reading.</p> <p>Our current agreement with Metro Bank requires two signatures on each cheque that we issue. In order to facilitate on-line payments DH proposed that this agreement be changed to require only one signature per cheque or transaction. This proposal was accepted by all those present. DH to follow up this change in requirements with Metro Bank.</p>										
<p>Election of Officers :</p>	<p>There were no new nominations for election of existing officers but all were prepared to continue in their posts through next year.</p> <p>Officers were re-elected en bloc.</p> <table data-bbox="357 1048 1185 1196"> <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> <p>CM proposed that an office of Membership secretary be officially instated and that LR might like to fulfil this role. LR accepted the challenge and was proposed by JW, seconded by VG and duly elected.</p> <table data-bbox="357 1451 890 1491"> <tr> <td>Membership Secretary</td> <td>Liz Reed</td> </tr> </table>	Coordinators	Mike Saynor and Colin Melhuish	Treasurer	Derek Harding	Tools Management	Colin Melhuish / John Robinson	Refreshments	Pip Robinson	Membership Secretary	Liz Reed
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<p>Health &amp; Safety issues LR</p>	<p>LR reported that our safeguarding guidance was in place and that member's emergency contact information has been updated throughout the working season.</p> <p>MS thanked LR for doing an excellent job in looking after our past Duke of Edinburgh youngsters, preparing our safeguarding policy and keeping track of the emergency contact information.</p>
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<p>HCCV and Wokingham in Bloom MS</p>	<p>MS reported that Wokingham in Bloom had a very successful year winning a regional gold award in the large town category with Holt Copse winning gold in the parks category. There were also gold awards won in the “It’s Your Neighbourhood”, “Community Involvement” and “Pride of Place” categories.</p> <p>Holt Copse is viewed as an important element of Wokingham’s submission as it ticks many boxes in the RHS judging process, including wildlife and community involvement. This year Holt Copse was allocated 45 minutes of judging time rather than the 10 minutes that we usually get. This allowed the judges to see much more of the work that our volunteers do and the varied projects that we get involved in.</p> <p>MS also praised Marianna Pentek at WTC who worked extremely hard to put together the successful Wokingham submission last year.</p>
<p>Publicity: CM</p>	<p>CM outlined the uses of our social media platforms, those being Flickr, the HCCV website and our Facebook page.</p> <p>Flickr is used as our repository for photos taken throughout the season and are freely downloadable for publicity use. CM has uploaded photos from this season.</p> <p>Our Facebook community has been fairly active this year and currently stands at 42 members (up from 35). III has volunteered to help promote our Facebook page. CM, CB, NS and IH will liaise to investigate the possible use of other social media including Instagram and TicToc.</p> <p>The HCCV website has been updated with the 2022 AGM minutes and progress report. The blog page has been updated to mirror the Facebook posts made by CM throughout the year. Work party dates for 2023/24 will be added when available.</p> <p>RA and CM have updated the contents of the display board with a photographic display of our nest box survey activities.</p> <p>CM reported that “Silk Purse Videos” (Quentin Clark) has been filming a series of excellent short videos for Wokingham in Bloom documenting Holt Copse throughout the year and featuring MS as narrator. Quentin is keen to receive video clips from HCCV members and has posted a “how to” guide on our Facebook page. Members are encouraged to take a look at this guide, bring their phones/cameras to work parties and take plenty of photos and video clips.</p>
<p>Bird Boxes: MS</p>	<p>The report on the use of nest boxes for 2022 was distributed prior to the meeting.</p> <p>MS reported that only approximately half of the boxes were checked this year. This was partly due to the higher number of cancelled work parties this year. An earlier start to the nest box survey was recommended for next year.</p> <p>Both owl boxes were used this year (one having being moved to a new location) and most of the round-hole boxes were also well used.</p>

	<p>MS thanked RT for her willingness to ascend the ladder this year. It was also proposed to lower some of the boxes next year to ease the checking and cleaning process.</p> <p>Jose has been mapping the nest box locations during the survey this year using the what3words app so that in the future they may be easily located by anyone.</p>
AOB :	<p>Following on from the highly enjoyable BBQ held two years ago MS proposed that he was minded hold another such event this coming summer if there was sufficient support for the idea. This proposal was greeted enthusiastically by those present and MS agreed to fix a date for the event.</p> <p>After the formal part of the meeting finished a display of embroidered panels was made available for those present to see. The panels were crafted by HJ and depict aspects of Holt Copse and its natural history each month of the year. This fabulous display of highly skilled needlework and collage drew much interest and was enjoyed by all that saw it.</p> <p>CM gave a slide presentation illustrating the work that HCCV has done in The Copse over the 23 years that the group has been in existence and the many faces that have contributed to its success in this time. The presentation was well received and caused much hilarity at times.</p>

Minutes submitted by: Colin Melhuish (Secretary)

Minutes approved by: Mike Saynor (Chairman)

Signature: Michael Saynor Date: 23rd May 2023