

THREE BROOKS NATURE CONSERVATION GROUP
Minutes of general meeting
Held on 8 September 2005 at the Jubilee Centre, Bradley Stoke

Present:

Hannah Watts (Chair)

David Baker

Gwen Clark

Martin Collier

Emma Creasey (Secretary)

Richard Cridland

Sara Messenger

Kayleigh McCairn

John Morris

Caroline Stealey

Sharon Ubank

In attendance: Paul Humphreys

Apologies received from: Steven and Rachel Callow.

Minutes of the last meeting (13 April 2005)

1. The minutes were approved.

Matters arising

2. The following paragraphs from the minutes were discussed:

3 - Dewfalls Drive newt pond: John advised that this pond is not in fact being filled in but will be retained and managed as part of the building contract. However, the newts are being moved as the building work will cover much of their habitat. Council contractors are to plant up and maintain the new ponds in the reserve for the first 18 months after their creation - after this, the group could maintain them.

11 - Electing two further officers: This is likely to take place at the next Annual General Meeting in April. Sharon expressed an interest in the Education post if Graham Cappell did not take it on.

15 - Leaflet and publicity: The Committee, with John, have begun work on a new leaflet, in tandem with developing a website for the group. The domain name www.three-brooks.info has been registered and currently links to a page on the Bradley Stoke Town Council website, which Lesley Osbourne at BSTC is maintaining on the group's behalf. The group has featured in the first two editions of the new Bradley Stoke Matters newsletter. Gwen Clark was thanked for making door-to-door deliveries of leaflets which have resulted in several new people joining the group.

17 - Frequency of meetings: The group had previously suggested that they should meet four times a year; however it was agreed that general meetings, in addition to the AGM, should only be held when there was a particular issue to discuss and not just “for the sake of it”.

20 - Bank account: Steve has opened an account with HSBC. Sara confirmed that the group needed to be a registered charity to claim Gift Aid and certain grants - however the group could still claim other grants without charitable status.

21 - Tools: B&Q offers voluntary groups up to £500 worth of tools under its Better Neighbour Grant Scheme. Emma will be writing to the Stoke Gifford B&Q to ask if they will donate tools to the group under this scheme.

22 - Fisheries proposal: Several members of the group had expressed concern about this proposal. John had been unable to find out more information from within South Gloucestershire Council; he confirmed that the existing platforms at the lake had been constructed with the possibility of fishing in mind, but there seemed to be no policy on this issue. If fishing were allowed at the lake, a club would have to be responsible for it - however group members felt that this was not a sufficient control against careless fishermen. A pond in Yate had suffered problems with entangled swans and this seemed an all too possible outcome for Bradley Stoke. It might be possible to put through a by-law that forbade fishing, although several members felt that putting up “no fishing” signs would invite people to fish who were not previously aware that there were fish in the lake! As the matter did not seem to have advanced within the council, the group agreed it was best left alone unless they heard of further developments.

28 - Wildways walk at Keynsham: Hannah had attended this which had been a good opportunity to meet members of other groups. Vandalism and motorbikes appeared to be common problems.

Amendment to constitution

3. The proposal to amend item 6c of the constitution to “A quorum for a committee meeting shall be three members” was universally agreed. **Action: Emma to make changes, sign new version with Hannah and email to Lesley Osbourne for website.**

Election of Vice-Chair

4. No members present wished to stand for the position of Vice-Chair. However, Sharon Ubank volunteered to become an ordinary committee member, proposed by Sara and seconded by Hannah.

Agreement of work plan for next 6 months

5. Paul asked members if they had any specific wishes for the group’s work and suggestions were as follows:

- Workdays should be well planned and allow members to get on with positive work.
- The group should visit a variety of places on the reserve, including Sherbourne's Brake which had not yet been used for a workday.
- Footpaths badly needed to be improved in the woods and around the lake.
- It would be nice for the group to have coffee together sometimes as they had after the last workday.

6. John explained that several groups had responsibility for managing the reserve; these included both the environmental and educational departments of the council as well as Three Brooks. A management committee would be set up to bring these groups together, so a Three Brooks representative would need to be identified. This meant that the group were not responsible for the whole management plan, but should identify the activities it was possible for them to do.

7. After some discussion the following programme was agreed:

1 October - Bramble Bashing. The brambles on the plantation side of Savage's Wood would be cut back and "scallops" cut into them to increase light and benefit wildlife.

5 November - Coppicing in Sherbourne's Brake

3 December - Planting up gaps in the hedge along Savage's Wood.

7/8 January - Hedgelaying Weekend - of the hedges in the grassland between Ellicks Close and Primrose Bridge. As a weekend event, this needed to be well publicised to the wider community and numbers confirmed prior to the event.

4 February - Coppicing in Webb's Wood.

4 March - Coppicing in Sherbourne's Brake.

1 April - Irrigating the marshland next to Sherbourne's Brake, i.e. digging ponds and ditches.

Activities for the following six months would be agreed at the AGM in April.

8. Future activities for the group included:

- i. Thinning the plantations along the path adjacent to Savage's Wood, where the group had previously removed tree guards, and underplanting with scrubby species. The plantation next to Savage's Wood should be thinned by the council.
- ii. Removing montbretia and other invasive/non-native species. This could be done during other workdays.
- iii. Scything the patch of grassland in the corner between Webb's Wood and the school, which is particularly rich in wildflowers. All other grassland areas would be managed by the council.

9. John pointed out that while the path improvement work badly needed to be done, it was expensive and required a lot of heavy material to be conveyed into the woods. It might be possible for the group to get a grant with which the council could do the work but with the group's involvement. Wheelchair accessibility was also a consideration. **Action: John to speak to a street care manager at the Council.**

10. Paul volunteered to lead a youth group in making signs to put up next to the newt ponds asking people not to put fish in them and explaining why. David offered to monitor the ponds for fish.

ESC

11-09-05