

**Minutes of Friends of Haddon Wood
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Held on Thursday, 15th May, 2014 at the Skittle Alley, The Manor, Ditcheat**

Present: FHWC, Lydie Gardner, Liz Gould, Tim Russell (WT), Jill Brummel, Alf Brummel, Chrys Henning, Mike Henning, Sally Glass (WT), Margy Cockburn

Apologies: Stewart Gould

MINUTES

ACTION

1 Chair's Report

HH welcomed all to the meeting before outlining events from the Friends group's first year:

- **April** – the launch of the blog. Please see <http://friendsofhaddonwood.wordpress.com/>, read to keep informed – and do comment to make the authors feel wanted.
- **June** – Michael Leach's brother, Simon (a botanist of note) carried out a survey of existing plant species. Please go and look because currently we have stunning displays of tall buttercup, with sprinklings of campion and other natives
- **Pond** - Roger Hutton found maps of land drains from the time when his later father, Bill Hutton, had farmed the site. These dictate the current site designated for the pond. One of the many paths MC has mowed throughout the site, marks the periphery.
- **October** – the great storm brought down a few trees in the hedge line, in a couple of places on the western boundary. MC, NT and the rest of the committee cleared the timber and left piles of deadwood for additional wildlife habitat.
- **November** – for the second phase planting, there were less people, but more trees were planted – probably due to better planting conditions this time round.
FHWC have 200 willow and alder, currently heeled in off-site, waiting for their final destination (below the pond once it has been dug and the spoil spread around)
- **November** – Yellow Rattle was sown in half a dozen strips in the areas planned for wildflower meadow. The plant would weaken the existing grass to give any wildflowers sown a better chance of establishment. Sadly, none has germinated – either there, or in any of the varied experimental conditions tried by GS and NT. HH has contacted the seed supplier, Nick Mann of Habitat Aid, who said this was typical for the mild winter, although the seed may germinate next year if we have a proper winter in 2014.
- **29 November** – Mary's bench, beautifully made by Stewart Gould, was installed at the top of the slope in F2
- **December** – contractors completed remainder of the planting, including Yew and Holly in F4 and F5
- **Outstanding matters** -
 - Last kissing gate by the Chapel
 - Hedge gap at top of F2 – to be piped, filled and levelled
 - Gateway between F2 and F4 – surface to be completed
- **Otherwise**
 - More and more people enjoying the wood has meant more and more dogs and – inevitably – dog poo. After

much discussion the committee decided, reluctantly, to put up notices asking walkers to address the problem. Committee members pick up what they see because it's not always possible to see their own dogs' offerings and hopefully others will do the same.

- **Sunday 8th June 2014, Alhampton Open Gardens** – in aid of Haddon Wood. This year we have nine gardens including, for the first time, Paul Nicholls, Sarah and David Kerr at Mill House + the turbine.
- **Thanks to**
 - **Tony Hall** – for computer-generated plans, maps, posters and logo
 - **Fellow committee members:**
 - **Jo, Treasurer** – experienced, meticulous and with the patience to battle with the bank for six months to open an account for FHW
 - **Mark** – whose hard work (all in his own time and at his own expense) mowing and rolling meandering paths and glades throughout the area, have made such an enormous difference to walking in the wood, plus general muscle and building skills
 - **Rose** – for her expert professional photography, installing signage and monitoring gates and her contacts (such as Judy and Peter Westgate who showed us round their woods)
 - **Nell, Secretary** – qualified horticulturist with extensive address book of useful contacts and for setting up and writing the blog
 - **Gert** – as of right and with a wealth of horticultural knowledge and experience
 - **Nick** – our third horticulturist, with added expertise in interpreting official forms and applying for funding, specifically for charities, plus muscle

In summary, Haddon Wood has become, in a remarkably short time, a very important part of many peoples' lives and is a wonderful legacy for future generations.

2 Treasurer's Report

Report attached below – though it is worth noting here that the bank account took several months to open despite everything from the FHW side being in order. In summary:

- The account balance for 2013-2014 stands at £736.35, being the proceeds from Alhampton Open Gardens in 2013
- Those for this financial year will include very generous donations in memory of Bill Hutton, plus another generous but anonymous donation of £500
- As the pond will be more expensive than originally thought, the FHW will continue to fundraise to meet the shortfall

3 Possible lease of Haddon Wood from the Woodland Trust

Report attached below – Nick reported on an in-depth conversation with Justin Millward (of the WT) who had explained that the WT intended to double the amount of broadleaved, deciduous woodland by the end of

this century. They are keen to lease woodlands to avoid massive costs, though any lease from them would be negotiable.

For pros and cons please see attached *Lease feasibility.docx* though Nick's recommendation would be to wait for the 5 years of the current management plan, until, say, 2018.

Sally Glass volunteered to supply WT costings for a similar sized site over 10 years, which offer was gratefully accepted.

Sally G

To be discussed further.

4 Election of Officers

HH outlined the necessity and procedure for electing committee officers and therefore, following the FHW Constitution, all committee members resigned.

Having heard that all were willing to stand again, Margy Cockburn proposed that the previous members be re-elected, seconded by Lydie Gardner: Unanimously approved

Secretary: Nell - Proposed by RH, seconded by Lydie Gardner: Unanimously approved

Treasurer: Jo – Proposed by HH, seconded by NMH: Unanimously approved

Chair: Hil – Proposed by Rose, seconded by Liz Gould: Unanimously approved

5 A O B

1. Margy Cockburn proposed that grateful thanks for the committee's work be minuted
2. HH reminded all of the imminent thistle-pulling day, with possible strimming and spraying of re-growth. Sally G raised the issue of Health & Safety, whilst pointing out that if the FHW leased Haddon Wood, the same concerns would not apply
3. Lydie Gardner asked if there could be a picnic table, to be funded from the grant application to Councillor Crossley. Sally Glass said there was no WT specification for such a thing and after some discussion of the merits of that versus a brush-cutter, the vote was unanimously in favour. Liz Gould volunteered to ask Stewart to look into costs of materials with Land Logic Timber on Ditchat Hill.

Liz G

There being no further business, HH closed the meeting just after 8pm.

Friends of Haddon Wood



TREASURER'S REPORT

There is very little to report on our first year of accounts as it took several months for the Friends of Haddon Wood account to be opened, we finally banked the proceeds from LAST YEARS Open Gardens in Alhampton in November 2013. Now that the account is open we are now pursuing a grant from Mendip District Council for £500.

Our Balance at the end of the financial year £736.35

Looking forward to the year ahead we will once again be opening our gardens to the public and donating the proceeds. We have also been informed that Bill Hutton's family have kindly given all donations from his funeral towards the new orchard in his memory, a figure not yet disclosed. And we have already received a generous donation of £520 from one of our neighbours in recent weeks.

I would like to clarify the Woodland Trust fundraising for Haddon Wood during the initial setting up of the woodland.

Locally & Nationally the WT received donations & grants totalling approximately £50k

Approx' £30k was allocated for tree planting and completing the access works

Approx' £20k for community projects which include the pond, the wild flower meadow and the orchard & ongoing maintenance for 5yrs

Unfortunately the pond will cost more than originally allocated so the FHW are continuing to fundraise to make up the shortfall.

Fundraising locally by the FHW will be ongoing to enable us to hold future events, possibly lease the wood and/or start new projects that will benefit local people.

Feasibility of a lease on Haddon Wood

This set of notes was written after a conversation with Justin Milward, The Woodland Trust's Regional & Local Government Officer (South West & West Midlands); Land & Property Manager (West)

Background

It is the Trust's stated intention to double the amount of broadleaved deciduous woodland in England and Wales by the end of this century.

It is also their stated intention, as they create this woodland, to lease it to local authorities (parish councils in particular), community groups and private individuals for management. It is their corporate intention to engage the public and put woodlands in community management.

Justin explained that this was not to save The Trust money per se, but rather to enable employees and site managers to move on and create new woods. It means no exponential increase in employee numbers as woods are created. And therefore no exponential increase in the cost of management. **I think this is a sensible and economically practical approach, It's what I joined the trust as a member to see happen. It would also be fair to say that the woodlands will probably be better managed by those with a direct interest in them.**

In all leases the basic covenant would be that the land remains as amenity broadleaved deciduous woodland with public access. The details of leases would be negotiable dependent on individual circumstances.

Advantages of a Lease.

As we thought, and as my experience of working for a land-based charity has taught me, the principle advantage of a lease is security of tenure for the leaseholder / tenant. Large funding bids from various sources such as Lottery, local authority, ESF etc. are then accessible. Some of these funds last between 3 and 7 years and the funder can see that the organisation running the funded activity has tenure of the land for the full period of funding. This is particularly so where capital bids for infrastructure are made. This is probably more applicable to organisations such as The Forest of Avon Trust which has full time employees running forest school and other educational activities and who will make bids to run activities costing several hundred thousand pounds over 7 years.

Where the wood is leased by a community group, the community has a direct input into decision making and management.

General Logistics

Running costs for the wood need to be drawn down by the leaseholder.

Any community group seeking to procure a lease should:

- Constitute itself as a registered charity and preferably also a company, or
- Should work in partnership with a local authority (at parish or district level) who can underwrite funding bids and hold major funds, or
- See that the Parish Council should lease the wood on behalf of the community group.
- Have a member of its committee with a legal interest in land and conveyancing or ensure this can be covered.

- Put public liability insurance in place

Logistics specific to Haddon Wood

- Roughly 75% of the grants will have been drawn down at planting, leaving 25% for ongoing management under the 5 year plan.
- The leaseholder would make applications for revenue grants for ongoing management beyond this.
- Justin will check if any / how much of the unspent 50,000 would transfer to the leaseholder should they take a lease now.
- The Committee of the group that leases the wood will need to take a proactive role in site management, or employ a part time worker (e.g. even if only for 1 day a month or equivalent hours) to ensure this. **Not that we don't take a proactive role already – but it needs to be formalised. We might be too busy to undertake urgent, priority tasks that would currently be undertaken by The Trust's site manager or registered contractor.**
- Justin pointed out that between the ages of 5 and 15 years old, there is little major work to do in a new wood. After this there could be major thinning works that would need funding. However, that might be different when you consider that Haddon Wood has a large orchard that will need formative pruning, feeding and mulching etc. and relatively high maintenance after 5 years.
- If a lease is taken while the wood is still in its infancy (before 5 year management plan ends) liabilities might be higher risk. I.e. re-grading the car parking area would be the remit of the leaseholder - at their expense. There might be other 'snagging' work to do that could prove expensive.

Action points / decisions to be made.

- The Friends of Haddon Wood need to decide what **specific** activities they want to undertake in the wood, and in particular the orchard and fuel coppicing areas. The wildflower meadow will look after itself, as will the pond eventually. The orchard is a different matter. Will any of these specified activities need more than small funding bids (over £750)? If so a lease would be useful, if not, a lease now might be too early. Particularly as £20,000 is already ear marked for the 3 non-woodland projects.
- Are we willing to take risks on liabilities and unexpected 'snagging' before the initial 5 year plan is complete?
- Are we ready to become an incorporated organisation now – if not, what is the time scale on this?
- Would the Parish Council be interested in leasing the wood?
- We need to find out what initial covenants were placed on The Trust's ownership by Anne Haddon. – Is it possible for the trust to lease to a private individual if they wished? This has happened in other instances.

Overall, I would recommend that it is too early to seek a lease and that we should wait till the 5 year management plan is up. However, if the friends decide they will need major funding for activities in the orchard / coppicing areas which might require employees or contractors (however infrequent), seeking a lease now would give financial advantage.

Nick Truman
| May 2014