

MINUTES of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the FRIENDS OF ASTON'S EYOT held on 25th October 2012 at 7.30pm at the Gladiators Club Hall, Iffley Road, Oxford.

Present: Anthony Cheke in the Chair together with 21 others, of whom a list has been retained.

Apologies were received from Eke Morgan, Virginia Hodgson, Jane Fisher, Oliver Tickell, Tim Healing, Richard Pantlin, Pamela Webber, Elise Benjamin, Mary Rodd, John Tanner.

Minutes of the last AGM were summarised by Thelma Martin.

Arising from the minutes it was noted 1) Christchurch had displayed a notice prohibiting camping, but that it had been rapidly destroyed. 2) FoAE had prepared an information sheet for rough sleepers with addresses of agencies offering practical help. 3) Local Archaeology were not interested in the site. 4) The Council had not done the four mowings, citing bad weather. Ruth Ashcroft would remind them.

The Annual report was presented by the Chairman, outlining a successful programme of work and activities, despite poor weather. Gratitude was expressed to those members who had written in support of grant applications. The report was supported by an exhibition of photographs of Friends' activities on the site assembled by Tim Lee and Penny Bassett.

The Treasurer, Laurence Burrell, presented the accounts for the year, with thanks to those who had paid subscriptions.

Election of Committee: There being no further candidates standing, and no objections the committee was elected for the coming year, being Ruth Ashcroft, Laurence Burrell, Anthony Cheke, Tim Lee, Claire Malone-Lee, Thelma Martin, Kate Patullo, Mike Tait, Greg Webster.

Subscription: It was agreed by the meeting that the membership subscription should remain at £5 standard, £3 concessions for the coming year

Claire Malone Lee gave a brief summary of the dangers facing the plant species, some locally uncommon, along the path by the Thames where the Eyot remained at the old water-meadow level and a discussion ensued as to how protection might be given without inconveniencing Eyot users unduly. It was agreed that the committee would look into ways of protecting plants, notably Meadow Rue ,perhaps by using piles of brash and the diversion of the low-lying path a little inland around a tree which already formed an obstacle.

Ruth Ashcroft sought volunteers to raise plants for the shady areas of the plantation which would do better than seed and offer better protection from deer damage. It was also proposed to put scabious and knapweed so raised into the Kidneys Field area to improve the provision of June/July nectar plants.

Proposed Eyot Bridge: This was raised by Anthony Cheke as a potential threat to the Eyot, during the construction phase and as a route. It would require a slope for cycling of 5, or preferably 3 degrees, which would result in an approach slope of 100 or 160 metres to give adequate river clearance. There was no sign of when the feasibility study, suggested by the meeting to be a waste of public funds, would be completed. The likely cost of the project has risen to approximately £17 million from the £2.2 million suggested on a similar plan 27 years ago. Christchurch have expressed no opinion as they have not been consulted. It was suggested that the money for such a project may well not be forthcoming from any source, and could be better used in other ways to promote safe cycling if it were. It was considered essential to remain vigilant on this issue. Sarah Wild on behalf of IFRA said that local feeling was split, there being some in favour of a bridge, but most against and suggested a joint FoAE/IFRA effort to find out exactly what was planned. This was agreed in principle.

Mike Tait raised the issue of the aim of the Friends to have the area as a Local Nature Reserve to protect it. Anthony Cheke said he had explored this but it would mean approval by TVERC, who charge more than we have for the process. Data is being collected on plant, bird, mammal, reptile and invertebrate species to provide material should we be in a position to obtain a grant for the procedure. It was emphasised that the Eyot had great diversity, but little in the way of spectacular species, as yet. It was also noted that the area was open to protection as it was part of the flood plain..

Paul Jepson sought to reinforce the importance of the whole Isis river corridor, and had written a Vision for it which he planned to put on the internet. Anthony Cheke felt a meeting of owners and managers of the land along the river would be valuable and had approached BBOWT in this respect.

Cllr Williams reminded the meeting of the commemoration of the half-centenary of Donnington Bridge on 27thOctober.

There being no further business, the formal meeting closed at 8.55pm.

Thelma Martin

Minutes Secretary.