

Minutes of AGM held on the 24th October 2013 at the Gladiators Club, Iffley Road, Oxford.

Present: Anthony Cheke, in the Chair, with 20 others of whom a list has been retained. One further attendee after the close of formal business.

Apologies: from Ian Wright, Gwen and Amos Clarke, Pamela Webber.

MINUTES of the last AGM were circulated. It was noted that there had been no further mention of the construction of a bridge across the New Cut.

THE ANNUAL REPORT was presented by the Chairman, and circulated to the meeting, outlining a successful year's programme of work and activities, supported by an updated display of photographs curated by Tim Lee and Penny Bassett illustrating work done on the Eyot. It was noted that the Council had not carried out its obligation to mow paths, having done one cut instead of four. A competition among members to find photographs for the 2014-2015 Calendar was announced.

THE TREASURER'S REPORT was presented by Laurie Burrell, copies of the accounts having been provided for members at the meeting. The non-grant expenses of the Friends amount to approximately £600 per annum. 2012 -2013 was a successful year in which profits from various sources came to about £1000, which was used to buy seed, tree guards and to employ a contractor to put up large nest boxes which needed to be placed at some height. We have a small surplus of £300.

The meeting agreed unanimously to retain the subscription at £5, and £3 for concessions

FUTURE PLANNING Ruth Ashcroft reported that the plantation having been thinned successfully, the next problem was that it was likely to need further work of some kind. It was noted that Ash Die-back had reached Kidlington, and so the plantation, being 80% Ash, was likely to suffer, and we may need to wait and see if it was affected before deciding on action. Extra light in the plantation had led to an excess of nettle growth which would be scythed. The two knotweed patches would still be treated in different ways for comparison purposes, and it was reported to be very much weakened. The meadows would continue to need mowing and raking to maintain them. AC pointed out that the increase in flower meadow area had aided the butterfly population greatly.

Mike Tait asked about plans for the Kidneys, which were to enhance the flower content of the large grassland area and remove some brambles to open up an area of river bank as it once had been.

Jackie Ingram asked about the use of small motor bikes on the kidneys, which would be discouraged, and also about the removal of Himalayan Balsam wherever seen. A discussion ensued in which it was emphasised that any removal should not allow the plant to root from stems or to spread seed.

Long term plans included creation of a patch of plants bearing seed as winter bird food. The Orchard also needed tackling, and during discussion it was suggested that the National Apple

Collection at Brogdale be contacted for advice about such old, neglected trees. Sycamores would need to be removed or they would overtop the fruit trees. It was emphasised that we were not looking for a commercial-type orchard, but wished to retain it as part of the Eyot and a community resource. We could plant varieties of fruit unsuitable for commercial orchards.

The third long-term plan is to try to improve the ditch between the scrapyards outflow and School Corner. Parents of schoolchildren have complained of its stagnant state, despite good filters at the scrap yard. The Environment Agency are not interested in such streams in the absence of mass fish die-off. We will ponder if, and how we could improve the flow. We could tell if there are nitrates and phosphates in the water, and petrol film is visible, but we do not know what all the pollutants are - it could be simply run off from fertile land causing stagnation. It has also been suggested that to encourage newts, particularly if it is confirmed that there are Great Crested Newts on the Eyot, we should excavate fish-free ponds. This would require a Digger.

From the floor, the perennial problem of dog faeces being left on paths was raised. It was agreed that bagging of waste and then leaving it on site was the worst of both worlds and dog walkers would continue to be encouraged to remove it to one of the three council bins nearby or to deposit unbagged material away from paths. It was the opinion of the meeting that we should not be too hard on dog walkers as they were the main users of the Eyot, although we are anxious not to return fertility to the verges as native verge flowers do not thrive in these conditions.

The Chairman proposed a vote of thanks to Claire Malone-Lee who nobly clears dog faeces from paths and also to all those who had helped with activities during the year.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS The Committee members were all prepared to stand for re-election, with exception of Mike Tait, who was stepping down for health reasons. Penny Bassett, co-opted last year was standing in his place, proposed by AC and seconded by LB. There being nine candidates for nine places, the Committee was declared to be elected.