

**MINUTES of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the FRIENDS OF ASTON'S EYOT
held on Thursday 10th November 2020, by zoom.**

Present: The Committee: Anthony Cheke (co-chair and meeting chair), Ruth Ashcroft (co-chair). Laurence Burrell (treasurer) Claire Malone-Lee (membership secretary) Susie Jakobsson-Thomas (meeting facilitator, recording the meeting), Adam Gibbon, Thelma Martin (minutes secretary), together with 23 members of whom a record has been retained.

Chairmen's welcome to the meeting.

1. Apologies were received from Bernadette O' Reilly, Virginia Hodgson, Setareh Campbell, Penelope Newsome..

Minutes of the last AGM were approved, and there were no matters arising.

2. The Treasurer's report was presented by Laurence Burrell, copies having been circulated with the notice of meeting. Increased membership had produced additional funds, and the Midland Counties Co-op had given a grant of £750, of which some £250 remained. FOAE had a reasonable balance but caution was required as the grant would not be available next year. In answer to a question it was explained that the purpose of the grant was the purchase of tools.

Discussion of an increase in membership fees, which have been unaltered since the inception of the Friends, was deferred until the next AGM because of the financial consequences to some of the coronavirus pandemic, and because increased use of the Eyot had produced a 15% increase in membership and a 35% increase in donations.

3. The Annual Report was presented by Ruth Ashcroft, copies having been circulated to members with the notice of meeting. The following points were highlighted: that lease negotiations with Christchurch will still continuing, having been delayed by working arrangements over lockdown; a comprehensive tree policy, explained to the members in detail, was now in place to deal with the results of Ash die-back or any other precarious trees; the creation of the new Plantation path; the maintenance of wider paths to allow for social distancing to minimise conflicts of the interests of walkers, runners and cyclists. The following were thanked for their work, The City Council's Steve O'Farrell who had mowed three times this year instead of two, and had helped to keep the main paths wide; work parties from Oxford Conservation Volunteers, Goodgym, and Elsevier, and those who has come in small socially distanced groups or as individuals to pull nettles which had been very persistent because of the weather conditions in the summer, and to scythe. There had been two Duke of Edinburgh's award candidates. In an attempt to gauge the effect of deer grazing on flowering species a fenced enclosure had been created in the main meadow, cowslips and dandelions had done better inside the barrier in spring although the result was less obvious later in the summer.

Sewage pollution in the ditch, and by extension, the river was discussed, being of concern as it had not been prevented despite much pressure from residents and some, though not enough, action from Thames Water. FOAE are working with Iffley Fields Residents' Association, local wild swimmers, and the campaign group End Sewage Pollution(mid-Thames). Cllr Linda Smith has supported this with a motion to the City Council successfully passed to press DEFRA for effective action by having the Thames at Oxford designated to have bathing water status

Claire Malone-Lee presented a plant report, circulated before the meeting, explaining that the planned 2020 comprehensive survey had been postponed because of Covid. She thanked the patch champions for their work, and was encouraged by the interest of mothers with young children becoming involved, following conversations on the Eyot. She confirmed that the protection of nectar source plants appeared to be vital for them to thrive, especially in areas where nettle pulling

had left them room to grow, but also exposed to browsers, and, on occasion, picnickers sitting on them.

Anthony Cheke presented, with supporting photographs, sightings of wildlife on the Eyot, also circulated in advance. A Nuthatch had been seen for the first time. But the sparrowhawks had not bred on the Eyot this year. Unusually, there had been seen four weasels (two deceased) and Rabbits, now a rarity, Muntjac, and Roe deer remain present. A badger survey showed a reduced number of active sett entrances. The Oxfordshire Badger Group will begin vaccinating them against TB next summer. The Freshwater Habitats Trust have tested the ditch and Christchurch meadow ditch for traces of Great Crested newt DNA. Marbled White butterflies continue to be seen on the meadows and a Brown Argus was identified as a result of close examination of a photograph, as it resembles a female Common Blue. No otters or mink had been recorded this year although one member said she had seen 2 otters, possibly mating, close to the University pool area. All members were encouraged to report sightings to Anthony Cheke or to the website.

4. Election of Trustees and Committee members. All the committee had stood down as they were required to do. The following, standing for election as Committee members and Trustees were elected, nem. Con.; Anthony Cheke, Ruth Ashcroft, Laurence Burrell, Susie Jakobsson Thomas, Adam Gibbon, Thelma Martin. Claire Malone Lee and Rosemary Cameron were elected as non-trustee members. Penny Bassett, remaining in Australia, did not put herself forward for election this year. The Chairmen noted the death of Committee member and Trustee James Martin in April. Members were reminded of the Committees powers to co-opt, should they wish to assist.

5. A.O.B. There was no further business.

6. The Formal meeting closed at 8.30pm, followed by

7. Footage from the Trail Cameras shown by Sarah McFadden.

Thelma Martin.