

**MINUTES of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the FRIENDS OF ASTON'S EYOT
held on Thursday 7th November 2019 at the Gladiators Club, Iffley Road, Oxford.**

Present: The Committee: Anthony Cheke, (co-chair and meeting chair) Ruth Ashcroft (co-chair), Laurence Burrell (treasurer), Claire Malone-Lee (membership secretary) Penny Bassett, James Martin, Susie Jakobsson Thomas, Adam Gibbon, Thelma Martin (minutes secretary) together with 14 others of whom a list has been retained.

Chairman's welcome to the meeting.

1. Apologies for absence were received from Janet McCrae and Virginia Hodgson.

2. Minutes and matters arising: The minutes of the previous AGM having been circulated, there were no matters arising from them which did not appear on the agenda. Acceptance of minutes proposed, seconded and accepted nem.con.

3 Annual Report: Ruth Ashcroft presented the 9th Annual report, of which a copy is retained, answering questions from the floor as they arose. Charitable status as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation had been granted after much work by members, and Christ Church would now be approached to grant a 21 year lease.

All those who had helped in any way during the year were thanked, including Elsevier for their volunteering days. A member suggested that as FOAE was now a charity, his firm could now offer a volunteering day.

Incidents of anti-social behaviour were fewer than last year. There had been much local consternation about a rave creating noise nuisance, and the lack of ability of Police and Council to act to stop it. As a result, the local police team have undertaken to come past at weekends at the most likely time for such activities. The process whereby long term illegal campers were removed was explained, emphasising that offers of assistance were made via St Mungo's Outreach before removal was initiated by The Council using provisions under the Public Health Act 1936. Conservation and management work, largely to maintain what had been done so far, was explained. The water quality in the ditch was improved after the source of foul water drains incorrectly plumbed into surface water drains was detected and corrected.

Christ Church had removed trees along the ditch and overhanging branches which were deemed hazardous. There followed a discussion about the removal of Ivy from trees and the nature of the relationship between Ivy and the supporting trees, and the value of Ivy as a food and shelter source for wildlife. It was accepted, that in some cases, FOAE would consider cutting Ivy stems. It was emphasised that a third of the trees in the plantation had been removed to allow space for the others to recover from long-term neglect. No signs of Ash Die-back had yet been seen, but Ash trees outside the plantation now had "buddy" trees of other species planted near them in case they succumb. There was as yet no resistant strain of Ash.

We continue to monitor vertebrate and invertebrate species, and flora. The Badger Group will begin a vaccination programme for Bovine TB which will take place over 4 years.

Claire Malone Lee thanked the Patch champions for their work and asked for more volunteers, especially for the Woodpecker Path area. She would restart regular plant identification on the Eyot and welcomed anyone who wished to join her.

4. Treasurer's Report: Laurence Burrell presented his report, and explained small anomalies, in particular the large payment to Oxford Conservation Volunteers, who charge £150 per session, but had not presented a bill for 2 years, and the one off assistance with the moving of the website host. The closing balance was still adequate, but FOAE will look to increasing income. Acceptance of report proposed, seconded and accepted nem. Con.

5. Subscriptions: These stand at £5 and £3 for concessions. It was agreed to look at the level formally next year. It was suggested that those should be the minimum levels, encouraging higher payment by those who could afford it. A £10 subscription for adults was suggested, but countered by a fear that others might be discouraged. A “Family rate” membership was suggested and met with approval. The issue of Gift Aid was also raised from the floor in the light of FOAE’s new CIO status. It was not ruled out, but was at present considered too onerous a process for the relatively small amounts we receive.

Claire Malone Lee sought help to identify two payments, one identified at the meeting as coming from Adam Gibbons’ mother, and the other from a Bridget Fraser The latter not being known, Sarah Wild offered to put a request on the Resident’s Association Facebook page.

From the floor, there was a suggestion of an app. which, on scanning a QR code, went straight to a “just giving” page. A member kindly offered to make a steel strongbox for donations on site, but this was, regrettably, considered unsafe.[AC asked him to sketch out his design in case it could be made vandal- proof; it could be emptied up yo twice per day by dog-walking committee members]

6. Elections of committee and trustees: All having stood down, but all being willing to stand as either trustee and committee member or committee member alone (Claire Malone-Lee), re-election of existing trustees and committee members was proposed by Jackie Ingram, seconded by Sarah Wild and carried nem. con.

Volunteers to serve on the committee, particularly after the departure of Sue Rowe were encouraged and the power to co-opt explained.

7. AOB and further discussion: The Friends’ views on the use of bikes on the Eyot was canvassed. The view expressed was that the cinder track had been used for many years for such traffic, but riding on the grassed paths and other areas was discouraged and caused damage, and mountain bike trails were considered inappropriate in a wild area. The nearby skate park had provision.

It was pointed out that there should be a Safeguarding policy. Ruth Ashcroft explained that she was undergoing DBS checking to cover vulnerable persons at events, but that all youth events must have their own supervisors. A General Data Protection policy exists.

Sarah McFadden asked for assistance with the Trail cameras. She was thanked for taking them on when Sue Rowe left, but explained that she did not have the time to devote to the task and to the database which Sue had built up.

8. Close of formal meeting: Following the proposal of a vote of thanks to the committee by Jackie Ingram, the formal part of the meeting closed at 9.20 pm.

9. Brief Highlights from the Trail Cams.: Sarah McFadden showed wildlife footage from the camera locations on the Eyot and in the Convent Garden. Activity confirmed that all the white badgers (not albinos) were male.