

Friends of Linslade Woods
Minutes of AGM held Friday 6th April 2018 at The Foster Institute, Linslade.

Committee members attending:

Ken Barry* (KB)	Press Officer
Malcolm Chaney (MC)	Treasurer
Brenda Harvey* (BH)	Committee member
Sue Phillips (SP)	Committee member
John Creasey (JC)	Greensand Trust ranger, acting chair
Steve Halton (SH)	Central Beds Council representative
Magdalena Cosgrave (M)	Secretary

Apologies: David Munn, John Trotman, Ray and Shana Turner, Victoria Harvey, Judith Knight

***Judith Knight (JK)** - **membership secretary** sent her Wildlife and Membership reports which were communicated to the attendees by **KB** and **BH** respectively.

JC - acting chair, opened the meeting at 7.30 pm and welcomed the 19 people attending.

The minutes of the 2017 AGM were approved unanimously.

Committee members gave brief reports as follows:

MC - treasurer, presented the accounts*. These had been previously distributed to all attending and a copy will be available on the website. Thanks to C H Porter for his assistance.

Also, Speaking as a member of the FoLW volunteer group, **MC** reported on the new galvanised fence fixed just recently on the Stoke Road to finish off the fence project just down opposite the Globe entrance.

DB - site warden, asked if there were any projects earmarked for the surplus balance in the account. **MC** - treasurer explains that, at present, there is a pause on projects as there may be some money becoming available if the housing planning permission is positive. However, **JC** - as acting chair, proposed that members put forward any ideas for its expenditure.

KB - press officer, on behalf of **JK** read her report on Wildlife Sightings, summary here: Most sightings are of birds – approximately 50 species. Also, foxes, rabbits, grey squirrels, moles (or rather molehills) and several species of bat - important as an argument for the opposition of housing the development. The highlight is Roe Deer. We are reminded to start looking for the many overwintering butterflies and to please continue to record sightings and send them to **JK**.

KB - press officer, talks about the 2017 newsletter and leaflet prepared for distribution at the Canal Festival during the summer.

JC - acting chair, thanks the FoLW volunteers for the 500 hours of toil that help maintain the paths clear of brambles and rubbish and also do their bit when small scale felling is required. He also mentioned the Scout group who also participated in some wood clearing activities.

SP - committee member, speaks about the various community activities in which FoLW participate, Christmas Tree Festival - held in All Saints Church 2017, Green Flag award, Britain in Bloom - woodlands status. **SP** also comments how she and **MC** are now members of the wood watch scheme which enables them to be recognised by the high visibility

jackets when patrolling the woods and hopefully help to keep antisocial behaviour in check.

BH - committee member, on behalf of **JK** - membership secretary, reads her note as follows:

“ **Membership** - We have approximately 45 members; some are honorary members and some are life members! It would be good to get more people to join, partly because we act as a useful pressure group in matters like nearby developments, and the CBC local plan. Our voice is heard!!

My apologies for not sending out subscription renewals yet – I am temporarily laid low (horizontal in fact), and will send them out shortly. People who join after September are not required to pay again till the next but one spring! “

BH also asked the assembled group if anyone would care to share the post of Secretary with Magdalena and **JC** - acting chair, asked if anyone would be interested in becoming the official Chair for the group. To date there has been no response.

Dave Booth presents 2017 Site Wardens' report - summary (full report on the website)

During 2017 nine Site Wardens working as Greensand Trust Volunteers made over 300 patrols, involving around 500 hours of volunteer time, during which around 8 black plastic bags of litter were collected and a number of incidents of fly tipping in the Stoke Road lay-bys were reported to CBC and several incidents had to be dealt with;

- a few bonfire sites had to be tidied up, and a major incident of several trees being burnt by flammable fluid caused alarm,
- a large deep hole was dug in the new woodland which the Ranger and Dave Munn filled in,
- four tree shelters or dens, and several partly built ones were dismantled by the Wardens - deemed unsafe for other users,
- after high winds, Wardens cleared branches from paths and the Ranger dealt with two fallen trees, one in the Stoke Road lay-by the other near the Stoke Road entrance,
- incidents of vandalism include the 10th Anniversary FoLW bench in the new picnic area and the adjacent old seat, letters in red paint daubed on a tree near the bridleway, blue paint sprayed over most of the wooden plank walls at Knaves Hill entrance and a load of liquid plaster was tipped over the path - the Town Council arranged for all of it to be spray washed away. One of the Old Wood Conservation signs was completely taken away and another was nearly removed. A replacement was donated by Dave Booth.

Contractors Activity:

- In March Contractors brush cut the briars in the ditches at Alwyns Gate. This has improved the drainage, and the briars and the habitat they create are growing back.
- In December a contractor for one of the radio mast companies was seen, near Knaves Hill entrance, unintentionally damaging the noticeboard - it is awaiting replacement,.

Wildlife:

- The Rookery has 15 nests with 10 in use.
- Sightings of deer, mostly Muntjac continue, and Roe deer are now being seen more often.
- Badger activity continues but is in decline.
- Sparrowhawks successfully bred again in the old wood.

In July a medium sized Elm tree in the old wood suddenly lost its leaves and Steve Halton confirmed it was the re-emergence of the Dutch Elm disease.

It is hoped that this Ancient Woodland will gain Local Nature Reserve status in the near future to give it further protection. Steve Halton is guiding it through the legal minefield.

Visitors:

There has been an increase in the number of visitors, year on year, since 2007 when this record began and showing a marked rise from 2009 when CBC bought the wood.

Election of Committee:

The Committee was unanimously re-elected

Guest Speaker:

Steve Halton, our Central Beds Council representative, ecologist, artist and poet gave a beautifully illustrated talk about his engagement in all these activities. Demonstrating his passion for wildlife in his stories about his youth, his preparation for a life in nature conservation and how he has been able to weave this passion into his working life. The photographs selected for the talk were truly stunning but the most impressive was his book of sketches and notes we were privileged to look at after the talk.

A thank you to Mike Sumpter for looking after the website, Steve Halton for his fascinating talk, John Creasey for his support and willingness to be acting Chair and Dave Munn for all the valuable assistance he gives in the woodland work and in reporting any problems he finds.

The meeting finished at 9.30 pm