

Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG)
Wednesday 11th May 2011, from 7 pm, at the Forest Town Miners Welfare

Committee members present: Alyson (Acting Membership Secretary); Dave (Acting Vice Chair); Shlomo (Acting Secretary); Josh (Acting Treasurer) (4)
Others present: Betty; Alan; Malcolm; Pauline; Colin; Val; Christine; Margaret; Rose; Michael; Megan; Barry; Jes; Richard; and Paul (15) (and Andy Lowe) (1) [20]
Apologies were received from: Lorraine (Acting Chair); Helen; Jeff and Jodie (4)

All present were welcomed, and apologies were announced. The first half of this evening's meeting consisted of an update, based on the Business Plan, and in the second half we discussed our future activities and how we might fund them.

Updates (based on the FTNCG's Business Plan)

- We continue to work closely with the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT)
 - + Andy Lowe has met with us several times, including:
 - 28th March meeting at Mansfield District Council (MDC) with Ajman Ali where we discussed the possibility of acquiring a buffer around Spa Ponds – MDC has no budget for this, but is otherwise supportive.
 - 5th May meeting that gave rise to a "To do list" that is being worked through.
 - + The Notts Wildlife Trust's Spring 2011 Magazine and Action Newsletter is now out – and our Group is to be featured in the next issue. Lorraine is drafting an article.
 - + For £33 the FTNCG will join Notts Wildlife Trust.
- Membership drive and fundraising
 - As of this morning we have 24 members who have each paid at least £2.
 - We ask members to encourage friends and family to join – membership forms are available in hard copy and from the website, at:
http://foresttown.net/nature/FTNCG_Membership_Form_2011.pdf
- Raise profile of the Group, e.g. local press articles, public meetings and other events to attract members
 - We intend to promote the Spa Ponds Walk via the Chad, and once we've agreed a Forward Programme we will contact One Stop magazine.
- First public meeting was planned for Wednesday 23rd March 2011
 - This meeting was held, minutes distributed by e-mail and will be uploaded to website, hard copy available on request.
- Follow-up meeting planned for 11th May 2011 – and here we are!
- Outdoor event to take place in Summer 2011
 - We'll be gathering from about 9 am on Saturday morning 4th June, setting off from the Whitegates at 9:30 am – after a series of Health & Safety issues are called to walkers' attention (see discussion notes, below).
- Explore opportunities for environmental grants, start-up grants and match funding
 - Our application to The Chestnut Fund for a start-up grant was successful, and the full £150 has gone towards our public liability insurance (see below).
 - We are working towards a Local Improvement Scheme application (to be submitted in conjunction with the Forest Town Community Council (FTCC)), and
 - We are drafting a letter, asking for funds, to be sent to all four of Forest Town's Mansfield District Councillors (Nick Bennett - Kingsway, Mick Barton – Maun Valley, Martin Wright – Holly, and Denise Moody - Newlands).

- Open a Community Directplus account with the Co-operative Bank and apply for Customer Donation Fund money – Account opened, application in due course.
- Establish and maintain a Group website and utilise social networking to enhance communication and online presence, to support networking, disseminating local nature conservation information and details of relevant activities
 - The FTNCG now shares a website with the Forest Town Community Council and the Forest Town Heritage group, at: www.ForestTown.net
 - We welcome photographs and other content for the website, and/or links to flickr galleries.
 - Alyson agreed to manage a FTNCG Facebook Group.
- Establish and maintain a “skills database” for local nature conservation volunteers, and work in partnership with the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust and other organisations to offer educational programme and training to enhance relevant skills, to build the capacity of the Group
 - Secure, password-protected, database has been established.
 - We are awaiting details of the BTCV work programme for this area.
- Submit constitution and accompanying policy documents to Mansfield District Council in order to gain formal recognition as a “Friends Group” – Documents submitted via Andy Lowe, we are awaiting formal recognition from MDC.
- Join BTCV to enjoy benefits of relevant insurance policies, start-up grant funding and other support – Done. Our public liability insurance starts on 1st June 2011. It was noted that it will be important to secure names (signatures) in advance of setting off on the 4th June walk, and to inform walkers of any Health & Safety issues as we assemble at Whitegates. Barry kindly volunteered to ask for permission from Whitegates re: use of their car park. Christine suggested we make sure membership forms are available, as well as a first aid kit. In the future we should make clear that children must be accompanied by a responsible adult. Andy explained that there is an opportunity for volunteers to be CRB checked (free via MDC).
- Reflect, review and enhance Business Plan and seek endorsement from members at the April 2012 Annual General Meeting – A bit early for this!
- Maintain a record of income and expenditure, for independent auditing, to present to members in advance of the April 2012 Annual General Meeting – Josh, as our Treasurer, is maintaining our accounts.

Josh gave an update on the FTNCG accounts, as follows:

- As of 10th May 2011 the FTNCG had received £48 in membership dues and a further £28 in donations, and £150 other income in the form of a £150 Chestnut Fund grant. Expenditure was limited to £35 BTCV membership (for the year ending 18th April 2012), and £156.76 for public liability insurance for the year ending 31st May 2012. This leaves £34.24 in the account – just enough to pay for NWT membership.

Other updates

- Permission granted for 215 dwellings on Clipstone Road East and Crown Farm Way.
- Motorbikes still cutting across Spa Ponds, nr “Packhorse Bridge”. It was suggested that this issue should be: followed up with Jon Wragg (re: enforcement), raised at FTCC meeting, and called to the police’s attention as a hotspot Andy Lowe to discuss this with NWT’s Charles Langtree; NWT has met with the EA, who will come to look at the site
- Contact made with Ian from the Save Sherwood Forest group – possible future links.

FTNCG Forward Programme

- Future FTNCG meetings planned for: Saturday 4th June; and Wednesday evenings 29th June; 10th August and 21st September (see handout / posters)
- Focus of future meetings could be on: Special Protection Area / local birds; Save Sherwood Forest; winter clearing at the Rushpool site (with support from NWT); evening walk for nightjars, birds of prey.

Projects and how we might fund them (including fund-raising and applying for grants)

- Contact Councillor Martin Wright re: funding
- Chase up Jon Wragg (MDC) re: bikers action enforcement
- Police have a motorbike team – but local people must report the crimes!
- Approach new MDC Councillors (Denise)
- Issue of motorbike access via public footpath – Richard suggested this issue should be raised with NCC, and with MDC's legal team
- Richard raised the matter of soakaways. It was agreed that the issue fell outside the scope of the FTNCG, and within the FTCC planning sub-committee. Andy explained the rationale behind the SUDS (sustainable urban drainage scheme). Soakaways are being used instead of sewers and this places maintenance burden on homeowners.
- Wishlist for Forest Town (to improve community green spaces):
 - Gloves and litter pickers
 - Paper and ink, office / stationery
 - Projector and screen
 - Next year's membership and insurance
 - Site maps for Forest Town (ask Kira Besh at MDC?)
 - Signage and benches
 - Commission an (EMEC) ecologist study of Forest Town
 - Interpretation boards
 - Purchase land
 - Identify where footpaths are (booklet for local walks) – see healthy walks
 - Publicity / advertising / promotion
 - Replacing gorse with heather at Rushpool (not Rushpool Farm) – could be good place for a lake
 - Country Park, with visitors centre (like Portland Park) / community centre
MDC is the only LA in Nottinghamshire without a country park – we can assist MDC in achieving this – is there a forward plan for these areas?
 - Facilities at Spa Ponds, e.g. benches, interpretation
 - Work with local Councillors and Mayor
 - Learn from other areas / groups (e.g. Portland Park, Brierly Forest)

Any Other Business / Closure

- Megan gave her apologies for 29th June FTNCG meeting and 4th June Spa Ponds walk
- Alyson gave her apology for 29th June FTNCG meeting

Next meetings:

Saturday 4th June Spa Ponds walk – gathering at Whitegates from 9am, setting off 9:30am

Wednesday 29th June meeting from 7pm at the Forest Town Miners Welfare

Wednesday 10th August meeting from 7pm at the Forest Town Miners Welfare

Wednesday 21st September meeting from 7pm at the Forest Town Miners Welfare