

Forest Town Nature Conservation Group

Notes from the meeting of Monday 30th January 2012, 2 - 4 pm,
at the Forest Town Methodist Church Hall (side room)



Present (13): Lorraine (Acting Chair); Dave (Acting Vice Chair); Shlomo (Acting Secretary); Josh (Acting Treasurer); Betty; Alan; Frances; Malcolm; Rose; Colin; Megan; Barry; and Jackie

Apologies (13): Alyson (Acting Membership Secretary); Jeff (Rushpool Representative); Margaret; Christine; Val; Geoff; Pauline; Helen; Ron; Ian; Susan; Jo Hull (Mansfield District Council) and Andy (Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT))

Member updates – Roundtable discussion:

- Barry, Alan and Dave reported back as Spa Ponds Wardens. Barry and Alan have kept themselves busy picking litter (and they came away from today's meeting with new litter picking tools). They have observed camping, motor bikes, and fallen trees on the site, and have identified the need to replace a barrier for one of the pools.
- Spa Ponds could be made more secure – the site's profile needs raising in the hopes of attracting funds and attention to improve the standard of cleanliness on the site.
- Lorraine thanked all for taking part in recording wildlife sightings. Josh noted that we now had received more than 60 sightings, 40 of which have been registered in our system.
- Betty intends to report the fly-tipping on the edge of Garibaldi Wood (past the end of Clipstone Drive, and beyond the playing field) to Mansfield District Council (MDC) in person. Lorraine offered to visit the site with Betty and take photographs of the rubbish.
- Litter was also reported in and around the Rushpool Open Space. Craig at MDC could be contacted re: litter picking, and to apply pressure on ASDA to do a better job of clearing their rubbish off of the Rushpool Open Space.

Forward Programme for 2012 – Roundtable discussion:

- Malcolm suggested meetings are held every six weeks, with actions in between meetings, and all present seemed to support this rhythm. Some, like Colin, expressed a preference for evening meetings. Jackie explained that she was committed to youth work on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Megan said she likes the daytime meetings at the Methodist Church. Rose expressed her preference for the Forest Town Welfare as it is kept warmer than other venues. Dave said he would find out when Alyson (FTNCG's Membership Secretary) expects to be available for meetings in the future.

Action: Dave to find out Alyson's future availability for meetings, and let Shlomo and Lorraine know as part of organising our Forward Programme for 2012.

Action: Lorraine, Shlomo and Dave to work together to take account of these preferences and formulate a Forward Programme for Spring / Summer (and early Autumn) that will include a mix of indoor and outdoor / evening and daytime activities, including some activities at Rushpool and Spa Ponds where we will seek additional volunteer support (to carry out more physically demanding work).

- Future meetings could include guest speakers to talk about bird spotting, bats, insects and woodland. Interest was also expressed in hosting a talk about Thynghowe (the recently discovered Viking age assembly site in Birklands on the western edge of Sherwood Forest). It was suggested that meetings with guest speakers be promoted more widely, e.g. via the Chad, and that some meetings would be held that did not involve guest speakers.

Action: Shlomo to contact Stuart Reddish to arrange a talk about Thynghowe

- Lorraine expressed her hope that last year's successful guided walk around Spa Ponds with Andy Lowe could be followed up this year with another guided walk with Andy, perhaps along the Maun Valley Trail.

Action: Lorraine to discuss this with Andy, and agree a date for a guided walk.

- The FTNCG constitution requires us to hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) before the end of May.

- There may be opportunities to coordinate with the emerging NWT Mansfield & Ashfield “Local” Group (see below) for guest speakers and field trips.
- Enthusiasm was expressed for experimenting with an annual outing of our own, starting with a day trip to the Attenborough Nature Reserve during a Saturday in August. Colin offered to help make arrangements for transport (e.g. negotiate the hire of a coach or mini-bus). Participants would be asked for a donation to cover costs. It was also noted that the cafe at Attenborough served high quality food, at fairly high prices, so some may prefer to bring a picnic lunch.

Action: Shlomo to ask if NWT could arrange for a volunteer to show us around.

Updates:

Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group (Notts BAG): Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group is a partnership working together to conserve and enhance the wildlife of Nottinghamshire. The Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG) has now joined Notts BAG and FTNCG members are invited to opt-in to receiving Notts BAG updates by e-mail from Chris Jackson. Dave, Barry, Jackie and Megan all asked to be added to the e-list.

Action: Shlomo to pass on e-mail addresses to Chris

Spa Ponds: As mentioned above, Ruth and the wardens (Dave, Alan and Barry) have been keeping an eye on the Spa Ponds site, and have been clearing obstructions from the paths, including fallen trees and branches. Ruth has agreed to help us by supplying appropriate seeds to plant alongside our April Himalayan Balsam pull. Our interest in balsam pull volunteers has now been registered on the NatWest Bank CommunityForce website. ASDA, the Scouts and the Guides can be contacted nearer the April pull.

Rushpool Open Space: Shlomo contacted MDC for clarification regarding plans for a footbridge and/or access road associated with the Sandlands development opposite Rushpool Open Space. MDC are unaware of any permission for a footbridge. They explained it is likely that existing ‘pull-in’ roads will be made into an access road but they are not certain. Case Officer Simon Dufield can be contacted on 463206 for further advice. Shlomo suggested limiting contact with Simon to specific questions, rather than general discussions.

The next work party gorse clearing and litter picking event at Rushpool Open Space on Saturday 3rd March 2012 from 10 am – 1 pm will pick up where we left off in November. MDC have confirmed that once again their chipper and workers (and chipper workers) will be on hand to chip and remove gorse and take away any litter we pick. Although Ruth will be unable to join us this time, our own Dave will oversee the event, hopefully with support from Andy. All being well, the event will also provide Dave and Andy with an opportunity to make further progress with the hedge plan for the site and beyond, (e.g. identifying areas to clear during 2012 before hedges can be planted early next year).

Financial Update: Since December’s meeting we managed to buy about £350 worth of tools, and a 5 litre hot water flask, and dozens of reusable cups whilst maintaining about £650 in our bank account. This was possible only because of the success of our bid for a tools grant from BTCV’s Chestnut Fund. Our next expense will be increasing our insurance cover to include our new tools. Lorraine, Shlomo and Dave are now turning their attention to the Lottery funding bid for many more tools and other equipment.

Litter Pickers: At December’s meeting Shlomo was asked to contact Jo Hull at Mansfield District Council (MDC) regarding litter pickers. Not only has Jo managed to rustle up half a dozen litter picking tools, but she also put us in touch with a team of people prepared to undertake litter picks in Forest Town.

Friends of Mansfield Parks & Open Spaces Network: Dave and Rose will be representing the FTNCG at the next Network meeting, scheduled for 14th February 2012, from 10 am at the Titchfield Park Pavilion. MDC's Jo Hull and Andy Chambers have been informed of this, and have been supplied with Dave and Rose's e-mail addresses.

Friends of Greenwood Community Forum: The Forum brings together Friends Groups from across an area that overlaps with, but that is not the same as, the Mansfield District Council-run Friends Group Network. FTNCG is now a member of the Forum, having paid our £10 subscription for one year's membership. Forum membership benefits the FTNCG by raising our profile, connecting us with other Groups, and by giving us easier access to relevant information, e.g. about activities and events. Lorraine, Shlomo and Josh attended the Forum meeting held at the Warsop Parish Hall on Monday 9th January 2012, followed by a walk around The Carrs. The next Forum meeting is scheduled for Monday 16th April 2012.

Recording Wildlife Sightings: Our wildlife sightings form has been further improved and is available on the website. The first sheets have been returned with 40 sightings registered on our spreadsheet. Everyone is encouraged to complete forms and return them to Shlomo.

Mansfield and Ashfield Wildlife Group: FTNCG is a member of the NWT, so FTNCG members can opt-in to receive NWT e-mail updates. NWT members and others are welcome to join the re-launch event tomorrow (Tuesday) evening from 7 pm upstairs at the Bridge Street Methodist Church. £2 admission includes refreshments and a presentation on wildlife photography.

Update from Andy (Hedges, volunteers, anything else): At our December meeting Andy agreed to keep us informed about opportunities for training in hedge laying, and potential volunteers to assist with the more strenuous work. We hope Andy will be able to tell us more at the meeting on 29th February.

Next meeting: Wednesday evening 29th February, from 7 pm at the Forest Town Welfare.
Next work party: Saturday 3rd March 2012 from 10 am – 1 pm at Rushpool Open Space

Websites:

Forest Town Nature Conservation Group
<http://www.foresttown.net/nature/>

The Friends of Thynghowe
<http://www.thynghowe.org.uk/>

Friends of Greenwood Community Forum
<http://www.greenwoodforest.org.uk/>

Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group (Notts BAG)
<http://www.nottsbag.org.uk/>

Contact Shlomo if you would like to be added to our Forest Town Nature Conservation Group Facebook Group