



Minutes of the AGM and public meeting held on Monday, 9th July 2018 at 7pm at the Commercial Inn, High Street, Knaresborough

Present: Mike Pyle (Chairman), Jo Smalley (Secretary), Elsa Wiehe (Under-Secretary), HBC Countryside Ranger Sam Walker, Richard Williams, Richard Owen-Hughes, Phil Oldfield, Keith Blackwood, Paul Birtwhistle.

Annual General Meeting

1) Chairperson's welcome/apologies

Mike Pyle welcomed members of the public to the meeting.

Apologies:

Stuart Bell, Tony Gould, Matt Walker, Trevor & Hilary Hopkinson, Steve Walton (on behalf of Scriven Parish Council), Marian Kempson.

2) Approval of the minutes of the last AGM held on Monday 10 July 2017

Richard Williams approved the minutes and Jo Smalley seconded.

3) Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

4) Election of officers and committee membership

Re-election of officers:

Mike Pyle, Jo Smalley and Elsa Wiehe are happy to continue in their roles as Chairperson, Secretary and Under-Secretary, and all present were happy with their decisions and the three officers were re-elected.

Elsa Wiehe is also acting as Treasurer until the position is filled.

Committee membership:

The committee still needs a Treasurer. This role entails attending three public meetings a year in July, November and March and the committee meets a couple of weeks before these meetings, most often for tea and cakes at Jo Smalley's house!

5) Chair's report 2017-2018

Mike Pyle gave his report – and a summary of this follows below.

Use of the park:

During the year the park has been enjoyed by all ages of the community, as well as community groups such as orienteers, scouts, cubs, brownies, guides and local schools. It is fantastic to see so many people benefiting from such peaceful and beautiful surroundings.

Maintenance:

We are very grateful to the volunteer working groups which have been involved in tree care and balsam bashing events. Harrogate Borough Council (HBC) has overseen the annual hay cut and collection.

The grass cutting regime kept the paths tidy during the summer of 2017, but the start of 2018 required a complaint for lack of adequate service. The service has been satisfactorily resumed. HBC also carried out wall spraying and provided wood chips for the entrance.

Enhancements:

Following extensive consultation, the go ahead was given for the creation of a wildlife pond, made by desilting and fencing the existing permanent pond.

Thanks are due to Knaresborough Lions for the generous £1,000 donation towards the cost of the fencing, and to NOMENCA for the £500 donation to de-silt the pond (as recommended by an ecologist). The remaining money came from HBC commuted sums.

Five additional oaks were planted in early spring, carefully placed to follow the old hedge lines of the park. Additional donated native blackthorn has also been planted.

Website:

We were delighted to see the launch of our new enhanced website (www.jacobsmithpark.co.uk), which provides a first-class insight into all aspects of the park. Thanks are due to Jo Smalley for sourcing, editing and writing masses of information, and to Sue McQueen for designing such a terrific site.

Thanks:

Thank you to our committee members – Jo and Elsa – and Countryside Ranger Sam Walker. Many thanks also to the volunteers who have given their time to come to our park events – such as tree care, tree planting and balsam bashing. We are also very grateful to the wider park community who help to look after our much loved green space every time they visit.

This includes: picking up other people's dog waste, collecting litter and generally keeping an eye on the park and reporting anything they need to.

Finally, as we celebrate 10 years of JSP we should recognise the contribution of former committee members and volunteers, who worked hard together to provide a solid, visionary start for the park.

6) Treasurer's report 2017-2018

Mike Pyle summarised the Friends of JSP's financial situation - and a copy of these accounts are attached.

7) Any other business

There was no other business.

Public Meeting

1) Approval of the minutes of the last public meeting (Monday, 12 March 2018)

Richard Owen-Hughes approved the minutes of the last public meeting and Jo Smalley seconded.

2) Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

3) Maintenance

Tree aftercare:

Jo Smalley and her children have been watering the five new oaks regularly in the park throughout the dry months. Unfortunately, two of the oaks have failed to thrive and they are to be replaced by HBC in November.

Grass cutting:

There have not been the same number of cuts made this year as last year. Mike Pyle had to put in a complaint about the April cut not happening (this was later rectified in May) as described previously in his Chairperson's report for the AGM. Sam Walker said there was a new maintenance team and they had seemed unsure what to do. Apologies have been made to the Friends Group and it is hoped that future cuts will run smoothly.

Wall maintenance (spraying):

Sam Walker has sprayed the weeds growing in the wall- targeting all the areas he could reach as part of maintaining the integrity of the wall.

Hay cutting and hay raking:

At present there is no contractor willing to take the hay. As a result, HBC will flail and cut the grass, and the Friends Group and volunteers will rake and clear away sections of the top field to encourage native wildflower populations, in a small flower rich section.

Jo Smalley said that she is more than happy to coordinate volunteers again for this, and there might even be the possibility of getting businesses on board to offer support so that at least the top meadow can be raked and hay removed to enhance the diversity of its flora.

Richard Owen-Hughes mentioned that the richer soil (resulting from the grass clippings rotting in situ when no haymaking occurred) would at least encourage more nettle growth. Whilst they are not aesthetically pleasing, they are very beneficial for wildlife.

Himalayan Balsam:

Sam Walker strimmed some of the areas infested with balsam, one being the wildflower area around the wildlife pond. This is accepted practice in terms of countryside management. Mechanical control is necessary initially, to eradicate the balsam, but in the long term, it should be controlled by weeding by hand.

The Friends of JSP held several balsam bashing Sunday sessions, which Jo Smalley said were well attended by all ages. It was also encouraging that members of the park community were also hand pulling balsam, whenever they were in the park - thus adding to its management.

Mike Pyle added that this hot, dry summer had seemed to slow the growth of the Himalayan Balsam - which worked in the park's favour.

4) Enhancements

Young oaks:

The Friends Group has received donations for three of the five oak saplings from members of the public. Sam Walker is to replace the two saplings which have failed to thrive - as mentioned previously in Mike Pyle's Chairperson's report.

When discussing young trees Keith Blackwood commented that sadly a young tree planted at the top of the park (not one of the five oaks) looks like it has been vandalised.

Mike P added that the park is now pretty well planted. We probably only need to replace casualties. Self-seeded oaks are thriving. Good sign of self-regeneration.

The newly planted trees are protected from vandalism by the nettles growing around them.

Blackthorn saplings:

The donated native blackthorn saplings are unfortunately not looking like they are thriving.

Community wildlife pond project:

Since being fenced off in November 2017, the pond is thriving and has had a great summer with an abundance of wildlife making its home there, or using it as a watering hole and snack stop. Newts, frogs, toads, moorhens, dragonflies, butterflies, bats and birds are all enjoying the pond, and the feedback from the park community is very positive.

The fencing off of the pond was made possible by a generous £1,000 donation from Knaresborough Lions and HBC Commuted Sums. Mike Pyle is to continue to follow up the commemorative plaque that the Friends Group would like to organise for the pond gate, to acknowledge the support of Knaresborough Lions.

Jo Smalley said that the next stage will be to secure funding for the pond dipping platform. The boardwalk and platform (complete with handrails) will be 3 metres by 2 metres, and made of rot proof recycled plastic and wood. This will allow, in particular local children and young people, to explore pond habitats as part of science learning.

Jo added that so far, £2,500 had been granted by Knaresborough Youth Fund and local companies were holding fundraisers. She is hopeful of reaching the remainder of her target, £6,360, by seeking support from other funding streams.

Cllr Zoe Metcalfe is meeting Jo in August to discuss how she can hopefully help with funding opportunities. Richard Williams suggested Aviva Community Fund might be worth applying for. Jo said thank you and this is already on her list of possible sources. The always helpful Amanda Kennerley, Scriven Parish Council Clerk, said that although the council is not in a position to provide funding towards the project, she can give Jo some good contacts for grant applications.

Website launch:

The new website (www.jacobsmithpark.co.uk) has received some great feedback from existing members of the park community, and those new to the park. There is a wealth of information on the new site - including planning your visit with free nature trails to download, history and archeology sections and a Young Friends area too.

On average, over 7,000 views each month have been made of the park photograph galleries alone. It has been overwhelming how many photographs people are sending in for the new site, and also for the social media pages. Jo Smalley expressed a huge thanks to everyone for their support - and said we are lucky to have the web design talents of Sue McQueen on board.

Environmental award:

The Friends of JSP are delighted to have been awarded the Knaresborough Environmental Cup by previous Mayor, David Goode. In his speech David paid tribute to the hard work of the Friends and all volunteers - and the Community Wildlife Pond Project was highlighted. Jo

Smalley said that it was an honour to accept the award on behalf of the group and wider park community. She said it is not just an award for the committee team, but for every single member of the community who helps care for the park - whether that is at organised volunteer events or through visiting the park and looking out for it.

Jo Smalley told Paul Birtwhistle that his beautiful photographs of the wildlife pond had been on display at the awards ceremony at Knaresborough House - and what a lovely surprise it was to see them.

Interpretation board:

It is the 10th anniversary of JSP opening as a public park after it was so generously bequeathed for all the community to enjoy by Winifred Jacob Smith MBE. There is a wealth of history and wildlife information to connect local people, and visitors from further afield, with the park. This is why, to mark the park's anniversary and to accompany the launch of the new website, Jo Smalley has applied to the Knaresborough Lions for a grant for an interpretation board similar to the one on the Beryl Burton cycle path. This would be positioned at the front of the park.

Sam Walker has asked that he be given the dimensions of the interpretation board so he can send them to Winifred Jacob Smith's trustees.

10th birthday community celebrations and fundraiser:

Jo Smalley is waiting for HBC's event team to confirm that the 10 year birthday party can be held, on Sunday, August 19th. Jo has filled in all relevant documentation, including risk assessments. There is to hopefully be a pop-up birthday cake stand with all donations to the pond project.

Sam Walker said that if the event team hadn't replied by the following week, he would take a look into the matter.

5) Proposed date for next public meeting

The date of the next public meeting of The Friends of JSP is **Monday, 19th November at 7pm**. Venue to be confirmed.

6) Any other business

Extra seating:

Sam Walker said that two benches should be coming on Tuesday 17th July. Mike Pyle suggested that one bench was needed near the gates for less mobile visitors.

Richard Owen Hughes pointed out that we ought to remember the sledging in winter when positioning the benches. Sam Walker will meet with Mike P to discuss placement nearer the time.

Second entrance to the park:

This looks unlikely to happen now due to the hurdles faced by HBC's legal team, and also opposition from local residents. Sam Walker couldn't comment further on this, and at present, an extra entrance to the park is off the agenda.

Inconsiderate parking:

There are visitors to the park who are parking inconsiderately on Scriven Road and surrounding streets. Sam Walker pointed out that this is a matter for North Yorkshire County Council's Highways Department. Sam Walker said he does not think that double yellow lines would solve the problem of inconsiderate parking, it would just move the problem along.

Perhaps a sign on the park gate might be an answer, though there was no way of enforcing any admonishments. Mike Pyle mentioned the signage he had seen on Bilton Greenway. Sam Walker suggested Mike Pyle contacted the police for advice.

Access to the park itself is required at all times. Jo Smalley said that cars were being parked on dropped kerbs which impeded wheelchairs, pushchairs and the visually impaired. There was an incident one morning of a padlock smeared with dog excrement found locking the gate into the park. Might it have been someone's protest at all this inconsiderate parking?

Waste bins:

Keith Blackwood asked for a waste bin in the park. Sam Walker replied that he didn't see a need for a waste bin as all rubbish left at the front of the park, goes to the incinerator at Allerton Park, to be disposed of in the same place as the dog waste bins.

Jo Smalley leaves an extra black bin bag near the dog waste bins after her litter picks - and is grateful to those of the park community who pick up litter and leave it at the front of the park or put it in her bag. This includes people separating out recycling like she does to take to their personal recycling boxes at home. Sam Walker said, after Keith Blackwood flagged up if a recycling bin could be added, that he didn't think that this would be used properly, given his experience.

Dead moles:

Members of the public have been concerned that moles may be being poisoned in the park, due to the amount being found dead over the summer months. Sam Walker had been contacted and said he believed the mole deaths not to be suspicious, but part of hot weather conditions. An ecologist, who supports the Friends of JSP with advice, also confirmed that mole deaths were natural and widespread due to the hot weather, as the poor moles were struggling to find food and water sources.

Box of bees discovered in the park:

A polystyrene box full of bumble bees was found in the park by Keith Blackwood. The box's arrival in the park is a mystery but one theory is that it may have been left by a beekeeper who had collected them as a favour for a local resident - and he or she felt that releasing them in the park was a suitable idea to provide a new home. A local beekeeper came to the aid of The Friends of JSP and successfully moved the bees out of the box to a new location,

so there was no chance of anyone disturbing the box out of curiosity again, and getting stung in the process!

Ends