

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
of the Clausementum Fen Conservation Group held at
**St. Faith's Parish Hall, St. Cross at 3.30pm - 4.30pm on
Sunday 16th February 2020.**

Attendees: Sarah Lankford, Mike Gibbons (Conservation Officer), Denise Hentall, Di Jepson, Tim Gibbons, Dicky Partridge, Janet Rowland-White, Ann Balfour, Christopher Balfour, Jonathan Sleath (Co-Chair), Anna-Maria Holt (Treasurer), Clive Wood, Pam Sanderson, Marian Hollingsworth (Co-Chair), Tim Walker (Committee member), Stella Price, and Peter Crowley.

Apologies: Hazel Christie and Matt Heaver (HCC Countryside Service), Rachel Remnant (HIWWT), Fiona Mather, Guy and Fizzy Warren, Ivor Snook, Anna and Dave Stewart, Lysbeth Sleath.

1. Welcome by Jonathan Sleath

2. Review of 2019/2020 HCC and HIWWT activities relevant to the Fen.

Activities and community engagement

Marian provided an overview of activities that have taken place over the last year on the Fen and of collaboration with local Environmental agencies.

These have included:

- Removal of invasive nettles/docks in zone 4 and scything of grass in zone 3 to promote growth of more diverse vegetation and to encourage insect species. The work in zone 2 to create a glade gives increased bramble edging to promote insect biodiversity. Noted the growth of snowdrops, which are now covering that area.
- Winchester College pupils have been coming to the Fen every Wednesday as part of their Community Service. This has been very positive as a lot of Autumn and Winter work is being carried out by them before the Spring.
- Other educational activities include kick sampling in the chalk stream by St. Swithun's School pupils and help with sedge identification from BSBI members.

HCC recognise the Fen as a special site in the Itchen Valley ecosystem and have discussing with us a collaboration project linked to relocating Brook Lamprey from the Durngate area to the site, which would enable us to access resources such as input from the HCC Ecologist Megan Owen. After years of neglect, it is good to see the site recognised as a special habitat. The Fen is seen as a refuge for freshwater life during flood events.

A public documents folder containing CFCG meeting minutes, the HCC report of recent work on the bank, and the Fen's 5-year Plan has been put together and was made available at the AGM.

Marian also highlighted that we are on track with the Fen's 5-year Plan.

Monitoring and recording

Jonathan re-iterated that the site is of importance in the local area e.g. habitat for Brook Lamprey which are a protected species. The larvae lie dormant in silt banks for 6 years before they emerge as adults.

Jonathan also explained that the water chemistry had been analysed during the year, and that regular measurements of water height and flow were being made. We also undertake regular riverfly monitoring by kick sampling and contribute data to the national recording scheme.

HIWWT have recently repaired some of the breaches in the bank along the Lockburn, which resulted in a 20% reduction in the water leaving the Fen due to less water spilling out into the Floodstoc. We are monitoring the water so that if the Fen is suffering, we can work with HIWWT to open up some of the repairs.

Nitrates from modern agriculture are present in stream water from the Itchen and excessive encourage plant growth (e.g. algae, nettles) which is sometimes to the detriment of more delicate plants. Algal growth in zone 3 not really a problem unless it becomes very extensive.

We participated in National Moth Day and were joined by some keen children and their parents for moth identification and a breakfast of croissants! Thanks to Tim Walker for leading on this.

The site is home to a range of wildlife including frogs, newts, toads, water voles, water shrew, otter and water rail.

NEW on website: Sightings record

A new page will be available on the website for the submission of sightings. The portal will enable anyone, committee members and the public, to upload photos, and record location, species and other details for record purposes.

Participation is encouraged by all to help us gather data to demonstrate and emphasise the importance of this site.

3. Treasurer's Report

Income

Total income in 2019 shown as £323.00 on the balance sheet. £200.00 was awarded by the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre Small Grant Scheme as part of the Local Recording Fund for the purchase of a moth trap. We were awarded £83.00 through a successful grant application to the Chestnut Fund, which enabled the purchase of a bush blade and bush knife for the scythe. A total of £40.00 was received through donations.

Our grateful thanks to those who donated and to Jonathan for making the grant applications.

Expenditure

Total expenditure is shown as £424.72. This includes £111.72 for insurance and £30.00 for the website hosting fee. A moth trap was purchased with the awarded funds of £200.00 and a scythe blade and bush knife purchased through the Chestnut Funds £83.00

Balance

The current balance in our account stands at £153.48.

Considerations

Funds are running low and although there are no planned large expenses, we have to be mindful that TCV membership and insurance are due in March, which we expect to be circa £150. We were fortunate that TCV waived the membership fee last year due to their 60th Anniversary. Our website hosting fee for the year is also due soon. If you can donate, please do get in touch with Anna-Maria.

4. Conservation Officer's Review

Mike highlighted the need to encourage insects through stable habitats and environments as globally 70% insects have been lost in 50 years. This has led to a decline in dragonflies and other insect feeders such as swift, spotted fly catchers and cuckoos. We can help by improving the quality of the environment by supporting a mosaic of habitats and giving aquatic life a stable environment.

5. Committee

The present committee were all prepared to stand again, and no other nominations had been received.

6. Discussion/Q&As

Ann Balfour said the lack of butterflies on the site was disappointing last year.

Clive Wood, Chair of Hampshire & Isle of Wight branch for Butterfly conservation, said the site is doing well as not typical of a butterfly habitat. Need to monitor and consider desired species and larval food plants. Some formal recording is planned.

Sarah Lankford said she was pleased to see more children, the future generation, involved on the site.

Peter Crowley asked if we are monitoring footfall through the Fen. Janet Rowland White commented numbers entering have increased. Jonathan reminded us that human disturbance is normal as part of any ecological environment.

Pam Sanderson thanked the CFCG committee for all their work.

Jonathan closed the meeting by thanking everyone for attending.

