

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook

AGM 28th November 2023 on Zoom

Attendance

Present: Ann Patel, David Brooks, Emmy Smart, Holly Anderson, Jon Fairbairn, Monica Frisch, Sarah Bowden, Shona Douglas, Tom Maddox. Sheila Brookes. Nick Stanton (Chess Engage)

Actions from last meeting



Action Sue 2022 AGM minutes need to go on the website

Litter picks

Three litter-picks have taken place, our usual spring and autumn ones, plus one with cubs from 2nds Cambridge Scouts led by Monica. Sarah reported on the one last week - lots of tins, cans, bottles, 14 bags and some hard plastic. No fly-tipping but some sharps. Council form was filled in, but the bags haven't been picked up yet; we have had a problem with this over the year. Monica reported that we were approached by the scouts who wanted to do something for the community; in fact, there was not that much litter to collect, but enough, and combined with a bit of a nature walk they all had a good time.

Raising public awareness

The big news on this front is that the Mural at Sainsbury's finally came to fruition. This was a major achievement, and a lot of work this year.

Emmy's original idea was early 2014! We got a cheque for £500 from Sainsbury's in 2016 which made it easier to find more money (though we failed to get the heritage lottery money)... by then Emmy had the brilliant idea to do the project with Rowan. We finally got funding through public S106 public art funding. We worked out the design brief with Rowan, Emmy worked with Chris and Gordon from Rowan on all the project management side, and the Chris worked with the students on the design and implementation. Emmy's husband Nick was amazingly helpful on the final straight, arranging the actual transport and unveiling.

The unveiling took place in a very nice little even on 27th November. A Cambridge Independent photographer attended, and we gave them a release. We did a press release with Rowan last week, which was picked up by the Cambridge Independent -- we got a whole column -- now they have the photos we're hoping for a follow-up.

More raising public awareness - Monica produced two issues of the Tidbits newsletter; Jón maintained the website and email list and worked on a revamped version of the website which will go live soon; Caroline has been doing sterling work keeping our Facebook presence going. Monica talked about Cherry Hinton Brook at the "rededicat-

ing the rights of the Cam” group meeting in June (part of the international movement for rights for the natural world).

Wildlife monitoring


Voles: Peter Philbean did a survey again; didn't find many this year, but wondered if it was not quite the wrong time of year — though generally it doesn't seem to have been a great year for them in the Cambridge area. Do we have to be a bit more organised about vole surveys — should there be co-ordination across the city?

Riverfly monitoring: Tom and Anne did 5 monitoring visits this year; numbers are up in the most recent monitoring, almost double previous numbers. We have cased and caseless caddis fly, with cased flies using either vegetation or small stones and silt. The restoration work looks great, and is clearly providing lots of good habitat. There's a new WhatsApp group organised by Ruth Hawksley. We have a new table for monitoring work! And a gazebo!

Depth gauges: We have funding for some depth gauges, and Monica has done a lot of research. What we want to monitor is how much the water level fluctuates. We want several gauges to monitor changes in level. We have funding of £500 from Cam Valley Forum. We have three locations we'd like to put indicators, and hope to stretch our funding to three, or possibly even more. We envisage one by Dawe's lane, close to where the riverfly monitoring is done, one near St Bede's, one near the Territorial Army, and possibly one near the source at Giant's Grave. We propose to take regular photos. (Note that this isn't measuring flow; that's a different kind of kit.)

Not so good this year

MoD tree felling: The Ministry of Defense, who owns the TA land and lake between Burnside and Sainsburys chopped down the trees all along there to put up a new fence, out of the blue. Sue got in touch with Guy Belcher, the Council biodiversity officer, who got the tree officer in to check-- they should have had a permit, and it should have been looked at by an ecologist. The MoD ended up getting some sort of a retrospective permit, and the alignment of the new fence was checked to make sure it didn't interfere with the vole burrows too much, but the whole thing brought a lot of people out in disapproval.

 **Action Sue:** she rescued our nest boxes from the destroyed trees — where are they?

Anti-social behaviour: There were lots of syringes and sharps on the recent litter pick. We are in a slight problem area. Jeff Oliver, one of the photographers who is active on the brook, was attacked by a couple of youths on e-scooters, thrown in the brook with his camera.

Water abstraction: it's been a much wetter year than last, but the water threat is hanging over us all the time now.

Lakes

Tim Chilvers from Andersons couldn't attend this evening, but sent a map showing the hedgehog holes in the new fence just around the Anderson land. We won't know how effective it will be until next summer's Crossing Season (the Peterhouse fence at the

Blacklands end has been there for a year and has been pretty useless, but it is a different kind of construction).

The Wildlife Trust took upon itself to clear the cliffs at the back of the Lakes. The proposal was that this should be a "mosaic" of habitat -- but the Wildlife Trust contractor mistakenly cleared everything. The digger just chopped off the tops though, instead of grubbing out the roots, so in fact some is growing back.

Wildlife continues to thrive in the lakes. Great crested grebe nested successfully -- Holly says there are two pairs, one on the lake nearest Burnside which have successfully reared young, and another on the one nearer the allotments.

A male goosander dropped by for a few days -- the lakes are an important wildlife stopping off point.

There were early purple orchids this year -- Dave the angler put a fence around a white helleborine -- Cambridge Natural History Society knew about these -- but Andersons managed to grub them up.

We welcomed Nick Stanton from Chess Engage (interpreters between communities and developers on major planning matters) who gave us a quick update on the planning application.

At the Last AGM, the planning application under consideration was for the much detested logistics hub. At some point late last year/early this year, the developable part of the site was bought by Mission Street (who build Science Parks), but the lakes still belong to Anderson.

The familiar 3 parcels: A, where the planning application is for building on A, parcel B is opposite Marshalls, pretty much undevelopable due to landfill and the airport, parcel C is the lakes. Section 106 community money will have to go into parcels B and C, maybe administered by Andersons.

There have been 3 public consultation sessions: drop-in at Cherry Hinton Library, with the aim of making sure people understand this is a completely different application, and two more in St Andrew's Church.

Currently gearing up to submit an application before xmas. There will be more consultations on that.



There is a website (with a very long url) which Nick will email us.

He reassured us that Mission Street is in this for the long term (unlike some Cambridge applications where the "Science Park" is basically a bait-and-switch).

Nick discussed some layout issues. He said it would normally be expected that the North side, on the main road, would be the "front door", but given the Tins cycle-path and the cycle way going along the south side makes them think the south will be the front door.

Mission don't yet have a main user lined up. The idea is it will host start-up units, corporate HQ, incubator offices. Expected to be an open space, open to locals to use the grounds. Permeability in all directions, predominantly car-free.

Of Parcel C: There has been a lot of dialogue over the years -- angling club, fochb -- not much point redesigning the wheel, get on and deliver what has been proposed before.

Parcel B: "undevelopable", unspoilt, invertebrates.

Public consultations have been much better received than the previous version. He hopes there will be positive benefits -- more natural surveillance, for instance.

Questions:

Holly: brought up the fact that while Nick was imagining users of the Science Park to be accessing the Lakes comfortably, in fact the railway is a barrier between the science park and the lakes, with the current nasty little bridge. Nick said he's pretty sure there's a new bridge in the plan.

It was agreed that the issue of access (where the "front door" is, for one thing) will be discussed in detail at a proper meeting between us and Mission Street, to be arranged reasonably soon.



Mission Street: arrange a meeting with us

Monica reported on getting different answers at the meetings about the lake plans and stressed that we don't think that what had been proposed before for Parcel C was an adequate detailed plan, and didn't address many of the detailed comments we submitted. She hopes the quality of the application will be improved,

Shona: On the subject of north vs south access -- need good provision for non-car and car use from the north as well, because from our point of view the important thing is the high existing biodiversity (and potential human amenity) area of the lakes and brook in the south, and seeing the south end as the "front door" might endanger that.

Sue reminded the meeting that in the original local plan, parcel B was supposed to be used for recreation (it could possibly be used to allow better cycle path access etc, from the north), and the lakes parcel would be more focussed on wildlife/biodiversity. In the course of the current application, we now seem to be seeing the potential for things like dog-walking and cycling in parcel C reintroduced which we thought were clearly ruled out. From our point of view, we think the Lakes and Brook have a huge amount of existing biodiversity value AND human amenity -- we don't think new invertebrate habitat on parcel B is a suitable trade-off for potential damage to that in the name of "biodiversity net gain".

David: another major feature that remains to be clarified -- how it will be managed financially, and security-wise? Nick says the city council have a view about management too -- 4-way dialogue, Andersons, user and community groups and the city council.

Nick said there will be a host of ecological and environmental surveys along with the planning application which might be interesting to us. f

Treasurer's report

A healthy financial situation was reported. We have not yet spent all the money allocated for the mural, and we have funds for the depth gauges.

Election of officers and committee member

Election of officers and committee members standing for re-election was proposed by Shona, seconded by Monica.

Holly Anderson, a founding member of the Friends, is standing down from the committee: Sue thanked her and we expressed our appreciation for all her input from the very start.

Monica: Holly has been wonderfully helpful with all the wildlife stuff, and she has taught Monica a lot about the birdlife.

We hope and expect she will continue to be involved with the Friends and especially to contribute wildlife reports.

Thanks

Thanks to all the organisation who helped us this year (names on the slide).