

Minutes of meeting on Wednesday 7 November 2017 at the Cookhouse & Bar, Wolverhampton Road, Oldbury

Present

Mike Poulton (MP) – Chair, Bob Duncan (BD) – Treasurer, Lynn Poulton (LP), Andrew Cook (AC), Tom Hartland-Smith (THS) – Wildlife Trust, Jayne Wilkinson (JW) – invited guest, Anthony Wilkinson (AW) – invited guest, Josie Cook (JC) – invited guest

Apologies

Jane Tavener, Simon Atkinson

Minutes of previous meeting

The Secretary at the time, Julie Buttery was unable to attend the meeting and no official minutes were recorded. Notes from the meeting were presented by MP and were accepted by the committee as a fair reflection of what had been discussed.

Treasurers Report

BD reported that he had not received any quarterly statements since taking over the Treasurers post. The bank informed him that they had been sent to the previous Treasurer, Julie Buttery, and that in future will be sent to BD.

The current account now stands at £153.63 but the figures suggest that there was £20 that could not be accounted for. JW suggested that this could be a cheque given to JT for the annual website charge? BD to follow this up.

Local Access Forum

MP reported, or raised the following

The PROW linking Turners Hill with Portway Hill was not clearly defined and walkers approaching from Dudley Golf Course direction would not know where the exit through the hedge onto Portway Hill was.

Council response: A Sandwell Council official would contact the golf club about this matter.

Damage or loss had taken place to some of the waymarker posts along the PROW crossing Portway Hill.

Council response: Damaged and missing posts will be repaired/replaced in due course when funds are available.

Membership update

JT provided us with the following information.

Currently FORH have 87 members, 227 Twitter Followers, and 127 Facebook likes.

Portway Hill site update

MP and BD reported the following.

- ! Most of the hawthorn and bramble has now been eradicated from the Wildlife Trust land.
- ! Andy Purcell had provided us with aerial photographs taken above Portway Farm, Portway Hill, the former Darbys Hill Quarry site, Massey's Bank, near Oakham Riding Stables, Bumble Hole & Warrens Hall. Some of the photographs are now on our website and others will follow over the coming months.
- ! The path along the PROW to the rear of St Brades Close has been strimmed and opened-up for walkers. The resulting debris had been piled for burning in the open field next to the PROW. (Unfortunately, a local resident living in St Brades Close objected to this and reported the matter to the Fire Brigade and Police. The same resident, along with a small group of children, dispersed the material across the field and into the nearby tree plantation. (more on this in AOB).
- ! The dead hawthorn bush and bramble next to the PROW at the opening onto Bury Hill Park has now been chopped down and burned by BD and MP. The bush had been subjected to an arson attack earlier in 2017 when petrol was thrown over it.
- ! The PROW that runs through the canyon linking St Brades Close with the PROW on the Wildlife Trust land has now been cleared and opened-up for walkers. Dog walkers and ramblers are now regularly using this route.
- ! Cable burning incidents still occur from time to time.
- ! Broken glass and litter is a regular occurrence, particularly around the cairn and seating area on the Wildlife Trust owned land.

- ! Vandalism to the rockface has taken place. Several boulders have been prized from the rockface on the Wildlife Trust land.
- ! During August a considerable amount of rubbish was strewn across the football pitch at the top of Bury Hill Park and a fire had been lit near to one of the goalposts.
- ! A local dog-walker has kindly donated £ to FORH towards the cost of barrier to prevent travellers from accessing Portway Hill from Kennford Close. THS reported that he has approached a work colleague, Paul Stephenson about supplying posts and young hawthorns plants to help create a barrier.

Any Other Business

MP informed committee that he is to try to arrange a meeting with representatives of The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country, Butterfly Conservation West Midland Branch, Richard Southwell and FORH, to discuss the possibility of purchasing more land on Portway Hill.

THS is to enquire how much current landowners pay annually for access rights to their plot.

THS raised the question of the ownership of individual plots of land on Portway Hill and that he had found out that the parcel of land at the far end of St Brades Close is owned by someone living in Cornwall. Land Registry would hold this information but obtaining it would come at a cost.

MP reported that he believed that Dudley Golf Club were selling off some of their land along Turners Hill for housing.

JC and AC reported that they have recorded bats in their garden on both 40 and 60 kHz on their bat detector. THS said that these were likely to be Common and Soprano Pipistrelles.

MP and BD reported that whilst they had been clearing and burning the remains of the burnt hawthorn and bramble, at the opening onto Bury Hill Park from St Brades Close where the arson incident had taken place earlier in the year, they were approached by fire officers and two police officers who had received a complaint from a local resident objecting to the wood pile in the open field adjacent to his house. Following on from this, FORH received emails from the resident who had reported the incident and from PCSO 31395 Younis who responded to resident's complaint. Both emails were shown to the committee along with the response email compiled by MP to PCSO 31395 Younis. The committee decided that the resident who had complained should not be responded to personally, but for transparency, a statement by the committee clarifying FORH policy on such matters should be compiled.

Date of next meeting

A date to be confirmed in April 2018.