

FRIENDS OF CRAIGLOCKHART WOODS & NATURE TRAIL

Annual General Meeting 11 March 2014

1. Apologies and Welcome

Betty & Paul Geissler, Bill Troup, Andrew Burns, Margaret Marr, Margaret Ferguson Burns, Simon Hart, Tana Collins, Norma Malcolm, Peter Tothill, Morag Williamson

Robin welcomed everyone to the 15th AGM and introduced the committee members.

2. Minutes of 2013 AGM

Sylvia Stevenson questioned the reference in the minute under planned maintenance for a sum of around £800. It was explained that the lower figure of £502 in the accounts reflects the actual spend in 2012, the year when the City of Edinburgh Council took back over responsibility for ground maintenance. On checking previous accounts it is clear that the full year costs for maintenance have been around £800 since 2007.

The minutes were accepted as accurate.

Proposed: Ian Bertram

Seconded: Ewan Davidson

3. Chairman's Report

Robin presented an overview of the past year.

Strategic Policy

He outlined the original remit for the group which was originally confined to a small geographical area but, since 2009, has been extended to cover the whole of Easter Craiglockhart Hill Local Nature Reserve.

The Group's overarching aims are to manage and safeguard the environment, to facilitate access and to encourage people of all ages to take advantage, make use of and enjoy the Local Nature Reserve.

The LNR Management Plan sets out the development and improvement priorities from 2011 to 2016.

Projects

The focus of the group has continued to be on educational and recreational objectives focussing in particular on young people and on health promotion.

Improvement works will continue to be supported as necessary.

Robin went on to list what has happened in the LNR over the last year as follows:

- We received a Green Flag again for the 5th consecutive year.
- The Nature Trail and leaflet continued to be available
- The comings and goings of the swans were an ongoing focus of much interest in the community
- There was a successful Magical Woodland Walk in the spring which, despite terrible weather, attracted over 100 people. We have inherited another large musical sculpture at the top of the hill from the event.
- Craiglockhart Primary School continued to use the LNR every Wednesday for the Forest School Initiative.
- Two summer playschemes were held in the woods.
- The Social History Board is now in place near the pond. Thanks were expressed to the SW Neighbourhood Partnership for providing the funding to make this possible.
- A spin off from this project is that we are now working in partnership with Edinburgh Napier University to create a War Poets Trail and leaflet.
- The mystery of the vanishing Megget Burn has been solved through the efforts of the editor of the *Gazeteer of Scotland*. He has established that, after its disappearance into a culvert at the edge of the woods, it re-emerges and flows into the Water of Leith at the top of Balgreen Road.
- During the last year ground maintenance has been undertaken by the City of Edinburgh Council. While the financial saving to the community is greatly appreciated the quality and regularity of the work will need to be monitored in the future.
- We said farewell to an 'old friend': a severely diseased beech tree which had to be felled near the junction of the two core paths.

- There were 2 clean-up days, the second being a successful joint venture with the Friends of Craighouse.
- The exceptional wet weather over this winter left the paths in a very muddy state. We are very grateful to the Dirty Weekenders from Edinburgh University who did a brilliant job of scraping the paths. Thanks also to Tony Baker who, single handed, cleared a substantial length of the path.
- Ewan outlined the plans for the improvement of the curling rink and summarised the feedback from the consultation. A generally positive response has been received to the key proposals – a replacement path, a wildflower meadow, some native fruit trees, the provision of seating and the promotion of petanque. The Natural Heritage Service has already been able to access funding to carry out a ‘tidy-up’ and discussions will now begin on implementing the next phase of the plan.
- The Craighouse Partnership has withdrawn their second planning application. Yet another application expected towards the end of May. Robin remains hopeful that the potential remains for an extension to the LNR with ownership going in the first instance to the Council and possibly subsequently to the community.
- No fund raising event was held in 2013. It is planned to have several small social events during 2014. Early in the spring there will be a small community get-together to formally unveil the social history board. In the summer it is hoped to hold a Petanque demonstration and competition. It is also hoped to make work days more interesting by including a wider range of tasks and placing more emphasis of social aspects eg finishing with a picnic. It is hoped to have more joint work days or events with the Friends of Craighouse Group. The next Conservation Volunteers day is Saturday 7 June 2014.

Robin concluded his annual report by stating that the group had achieved its objectives once again.

4. Update on LNR and Ranger Service

David Kyles introduced himself and explained that he is the Natural Heritage Ranger for Easter Craiglockhart Hill LNR along with many other sites including Wester Craiglockhart Hill and the Pentland Hills. He visits ECH monthly on an inspection visit.

David went on to provide an update on the work that has been undertaken on the site in the past year and on future plans:

- An inspection after the 5 December 2013 storm showed little damage.
- Work has been and will continue to be done to improve puddling on paths.
- The causeway to the pond is breaking up and needing attention.
- Additional funding made available at the end of the financial year allowed Natural Heritage to spend £4000 tidying up in the LNR. The curling rink was scraped and dressed with a new layer of whin. The hedges at the Wickets and the pond were cut back and the laurel was removed. It will need to be poisoned to prevent it re-growing and the soil will be contaminated for 3 years. The steps and handrail were replaced and repaired. All the ditches leading up to the Glenlockhart Road entrance were cleared out.

He reported that further improvements will be made to the curling rink area, including the replacement of the slab path, after a joint dialogue with the Friends group to discuss the outcome of the consultation.

David reported that the Green Flag assessment for 2014 was not as positive as previous assessments. It had been undertaken by a mystery shopper who tried to enter the site from the Tennis Centre and found it problematic to find her way into and around the site.

Margaret Hill asked if the spruce tree at the zigzag path could be removed. David outlined Council policy on tree removal and it was agreed to discuss this again at the next LNR Management Meeting. Margaret also expressed concern about littering and anti-social behaviour by teenagers at the bench overlooking the pond. David agreed to monitor the situation.

Ian Bertram expressed concern about the height of the hazel trees at the east end of the pond. David explained that the trees had been planted to protect the smaller birds and this has been successful. It was agreed to discuss this issue as well at the next LNR Management Meeting.

5. Update of Website

Lindsay described the website and explained that he had added a history page. The website is now 4 years old and Lindsay plans to refresh it this year and make it more mobile friendly.

Everyone was urged to have a look and become familiar with the website.

www.craiglockhartwoods.org

To become a member all that is now required is an e-mail address. E-mails can be sent to the committee from the website so it is easy now to make any suggestions. Newsletters can be downloaded and members are also able to join through the website.

6. Adoption of Annual Accounts

Robin tabled the accounts and highlighted the balance of £5,274. He explained that the £183 for maintenance comprised, £112 for meadow raking, £44 for shrubs and £26 for yellow rattle seed. The £92 itemised under other was £58 for the hire of premises and £34 other expenses for the AGM.

The accounts were adopted.

Proposed: Hilda Henderson

Seconded: Lindsay Snedden

7. Re-Appointment of Auditor

Robin thanked Rob Moffat for auditing and printing the accounts and proposed that he should be asked to audit the accounts again next year.

Proposed: Will Searle

Seconded: Brian Allison

8. Election of the Committee and Office Bearers

Robin advised the meeting that, in the course of the year, two new members had been co-opted to the committee - Tana Collins, an environmental enthusiast, and Simon Hart, a forestry expert. Robin announced his resignation as Chair and from the Committee due to new work commitments but stated that all the other members had agreed to continue. Ewan Davidson will take over as Chair. There was only one nomination for a new member - Jane McLaren. Robin advised that Robin Mutch and Sylvia Stevenson, had resigned in the course of the year. He thanked them both for their support and in particular for the work they had done over the years for the summer fetes.

At this point Robin asked Ewan to take over chairing the meeting. Robin was thanked for his hard work since the outset of the group and a presentation was made in recognition of his exceptional contribution.

The committee was accepted.

Proposed: Margaret Hall

Seconded: Lindsay Snedden

9. General Discussion

Nothing was raised.

10. AOCB

Robin asked for any volunteer who would be able to provide temporary storage for a few months for our tents and canopies.

11. Close of Meeting

Ewan concluded by thanking everyone for their support throughout the year and for coming along to the AGM.

The AGM was followed by an interesting presentation by Allan Brown from Lothians and Fife Swan and Goose Study group. In his fascinating presentation, Allan explained that they had been monitoring the Mute Swan population since 1978 when there was concern that they were in decline. Ringing commenced in 1982 and this has enabled the swans to be tracked and trends identified.

The number of swans steadily increased to reach a maximum number in 2002. Since then there has been a slight decline in numbers.

Allan described the old pair of swans on Craiglockhart Pond and outlined their prolific achievement in producing 125 fledged cygnets over their 20 year partnership. They were both heavy strong birds.

There is not a large number of breeding birds in the area. He concluded by hoping that the new pair of swans would settle and breed successfully on Craiglockhart Pond.