

Friends of Leap Valley Meeting Sept 9th 2019

Held at Mary's 22 Beverley Avenue

Present: Mary, Andrew, Angie, Pete, Fred, Ann, Mike and Leonie.

Apologies from Dennis and Sarah

AGM

Treasurers Report: Funds of £274 in the Group account.

Constitution: This was reviewed and agreed. It was agreed that the AGM would in future go back to the original month of January.

Insurance Cover: We are covered under the South Glos Volunteer Agreement. There does however need to be training carried out on Water management to make us comply with new regulations. Our Workday Manager Pete will be undertaking this on Sat Sept 21st 2019.

Risk assessments: Before each work day risk assessment is carried out and the team always have the First Aid box with them in case of injury. We are mindful that there is a requirement to update First Aid competencies.

Elections for committee were held. Mary Lewis was re-elected as Chair, Andrew Jordan re-elected as Treasurer, Angie Flack re-elected as Secretary and Pete Statham re-elected as Workday Manager.

Meeting

Updates on things raised at the January Meeting.

- a) The gate at the Baugh Farm/Bridle Path end of the valley is now locked and the key is the generic South Glos one that all the workmen have. In an emergency one may be obtained from the Parish Council Office. There has been a rough route around the kissing gate made by users who can't get through it. This is endangering one of our Spindle Trees and it was thought this may have to be moved during the winter.
- b) Trees and Tree Labels were discussed. We have lost the Czar plum and we are going to replace this with a bare root specimen in November. We need to get more mulch for the trees very soon. Mary will mention this again to Lee Hayward at South Glos who said he would help if we reminded him. Update here as mulch has been delivered. The copper labels for the trees haven't proved successful as the patina that was present very quickly obscures the etching. Dymo was tried applying it to the copper but this did not stick long enough. So back to the drawing board over the winter to find a better solution.
- c) It was decided to spend £20 from funds for some more bulbs for the valley.
- d) Interest was shown in acquiring some bug boxes and maybe having some bug houses built in the newly cleared area at the entrance to the back path/stone bridge end. May liaise with Men in Sheds/Men in Bloom for this. Certainly some log piles created around the valley. Bird feeders were discussed but consensus was that it would be too expensive to keep them topped up regularly.
- e) From the £200 grant given from Downend and Bromley Heath Parish Council for new tools £146.86 has so far been spent. This has been a great help for us to renew old worn out tools.

- f) The wildflower meadow has been so beautiful. We are so grateful for the help we received in achieving this. It will be interesting to see which of the perennial varieties show next season. Marbled white butterflies that used to be in the valley have returned and we have seen many small blues. A Roesel's Busch Cricket got our treasurer very excited as this was a very special species to see. The meadow was given its annual cut on Sept 3rd so hopefully all the seeds had fallen from the plants by then. It was suggested that a wildflower patch could be created in the newly cleared area by the back path.

Workdays

Our stalwart three musketeers Pete, Dennis and Mike have achieved wonders in the valley. They go out most weeks on a Monday morning. We are all so grateful for their time and dedication. About 174 hrs work has been logged since the last meeting in Jan plus the Spring Clean in March. The grant from the Parish Council has enabled them to have a reasonable collection of tools. The brush cutter is well used and works well. Denis provides and pays for the consumables. He also arranged for the notice board to be repaired by Men in Bloom and the group made a contribution to their organisation.

- a) Paths and entrances to the valley have been maintained and cut back as appropriate. Trees have been cared for, crowns have been raised, new trees regularly mulched and weeded and areas around mature trees have been cut back. Apart from the Czar plum and one birch tree lost all new plantings have survived. The stakes and ties remain ok. The copse at the kick about end has been coppiced, cut back and generally tidied. The cut back material has been used as a dead hedge. A view has been created and maintained into the wetland area from the bench at the kick about area.
- b) A couple of areas on the back path have been cleared. Some planting and seeding has taken place. Interesting to see what emerges. This area is now known to us as Leonie's new patch.

Future work planned:

- a) Work in the stream after the required Water Course Instruction has been completed.
- b) There are a number of dead trees to be removed. A chain saw is required for this so will have to be SGC.
- c) A bench in the pond area to be made from the sleepers left after the wooden bridge was repaired. We have schools visit the valley on a regular basis and this would be a lovely area for them to congregate. This too needs a chain saw to achieve.
- d) The pond will need the invasive pennywort assessed to see if removal this year is needed. After the drought of last summer and the pond surface being covered this year in duck weed the restricted light has impeded its growth.

Mowing

As stated the orchard and wild flower meadow was cut on Sept 3rd. The valley has also now been mown with a machine that picks up and the Robo Mower for awkward areas. The gents have done a great job. The Wetland annual cut of a third, this year the northern end will be carried out in October we are told.

Bird and Bat Boxes

Fred reported one of the bird boxes at the Baugh Farm end has been predated. He and Ann will carry out a survey of the rest during the autumn.

Wildlife News

The badgers are still very active in the valley and healthy foxes often seen. No unusual birds have been spotted this year. The Egret still comes occasionally and rests on the trees over the stream but doesn't stop long. No sightings of our elusive Otters. Lovely to see the Marble White butterflies and Small Blues up in the Wild Flower Meadow.

Ownership of the woodland area at Badminton Road end

This investigation is ongoing.

Website

This is updated regularly by the secretary. It still has many hits and remains a means of valuable communication to the wider public.

Kingswood Friends Forum

Chair and Secretary went to the latest meeting of this recently formed group held in the BeanTreeCaféPagePark. The discussions were mainly around the subject of the Councils Green Spaces Strategy in which they are aiming at zero percent carbon by the year 2030. A tall order. They were interested in all our groups' participation in achieving this. There was little time for the groups to network this time which we all feel is invaluable.

Date of next meeting

This will be held at Fred's, 1 Ascot Close on January 13th. It will be the 2020 AGM.