

Friends of Leap Valley Meeting January 13th 2020 held at Fred's 1 Ascot Close.

Present: Mary, Angie, Pete, Denis, Mike, Fred, Ann, Leonie, Sarah, Julie Windsor, Julia Lettey and Ian Knight.

Apologies from Andrew, Ann Attwood, Pearl Luxon and Fraser Budd.

AGM

1. Treasurers Report: Funds of £234.86 are in the Group account.
2. Constitution: This was reviewed and agreed. It was read out by the chair and there were no disagreements with anything on the list. The AGM would now stay at the January Meeting.
3. Insurance Cover: We are covered under the South Glos. Volunteer Agreement and are able to work on South Glos. land only, in the various areas of the valley having members undertaken appropriate courses. Copies of the document were passed out to new members. Cover is renewed each March.
4. Risk assessments: Before each work day risk assessment is carried out and a work plan discussed. Various techniques and procedures following the Water Course have been implemented. The First Aid box has been updated and upgraded. There is now a laminated card in the box which indicates the location of each entry/exit point to the valley to be used in emergency or evacuation. A throw line has been purchased along with more long gloves and hand sanitisers.
5. 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 September 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 was endangering one of our Spindle Trees and it has been moved to Leonies New Patch at the entrance to the back path.
- b)** The Orchard trees and the new trees in the valley bottom have been relabelled with white plastic labels and permanent black pen as the copper labels were unreadable. We did have mulch delivered but this has all been used now and we need to get more for the trees very soon. Mary will mention this to Lee Hayward at South Glos.
- c)** From the £200 grant given from Downend and Bromley Heath Parish Council for new tools £166 has so far been spent. A new Rake is still to be bought. This has been a great help for us to renew old worn out tools.

d) A new gate has been installed at the Baugh Barn entrance to the valley to replace the broken stile. South Glos came up trumps and the work was carried out quickly with the problem of children and dogs running out onto the road on the blind corner. A signpost at this end of the of the no through road is to be sought there being one only at the Church Lane entrance. There is a problem with vehicles using this as a rat run and at speed too. Parish Council is to be contacted.

e) A new updated map of the Orchard has been made and displayed on noticeboards and the Website. It lists all the trees bar three privately planted Cider Apples. When their varieties have been discovered the map will be updated. It is not such a professional map as Vincent Veasey from the Cider Consortium did previously but was the best we could do with the skills we have and does at least show visitors what varieties there are. If anyone feels they could enhance the map we would be very happy for them to do so.

Workdays

Pete, Dennis and Mike continue to work so hard in the valley on a Monday morning whatever the weather and have achieved wonders. We are all so grateful for their time and dedication as are all the users of the area some of whom make a point of saying so.

Over 100 hours have been logged since Sept 2019. Below is a resume of those tasks undertaken.

- Keeping paths clear of bramble etc and sweeping leaves.
- Keeping the stream clear and free flowing. A fallen tree was causing a blockage and had to be removed. Maintaining the baffles and the silt trap. The baffles were adapted to include a trellis type structure as well as the wooden stakes and this has improved their performance.
- Mulching and looking after the newly planted trees. Replacing stakes and ties as appropriate. One tree near the pond was found to be broken off. It has been left to hopefully regrow. The Czar plum was replaced.
- Removal of dead trees and the tree that was growing around the red oak. Peter Davey from the Barn has been very helpful with these tasks. Thank you, Peter.
- The Spindle and Alder have been removed and re sited. Golden Delicious and Conference Pear donated to us have been planted in Leonie's new patch and various wild flower seeds have been scattered here. Newly cleared areas have been planted with saplings, foxgloves, and cornflowers etc.
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Future work planned:

- Pond. Keeping this as clear as possible while it was decided not to remove the invasive Floating Pennywort this season as there is little there. Duck week has taken over the surface. Let's hope our resident Mallard pair enjoy this.
- Bramble control. Brush cutter plus the area next to the play area.
- Hedge laying.
- Encroachment of the hedge into the wetland.
- Create a bench(s) near the pond especially for the children who come with their teachers into the valley on a weekly basis for tuition.
- NB Some members felt that they had lost touch with the valley being unable to attend workdays on a Monday. It was decided to arrange some Sunday events through the year to address this and the first has been arranged for **Sunday Jan 26 09.30 to 12.30** where hedge laying will be taking place. Please bring own secateurs and gloves.

Bird and Bat Boxes

Fred and Ann surveyed the existing boxes and many had evidence of use. He has documented this on a plan to be given later. Unfortunately, many had suffered damage and were not suitable for further use. Denis who is a member of Downend in Bloom that make items to sell will talk to his team and it is hoped they will make us some new ones. Funds for this are available in our account. At least 5 are needed.

Wildlife News

The Egret has been seen in the valley on occasion. A Buzzard is a regular visitor and his arrival can be pinpointed by the crows making an unusual call as they fly up to head him off. Grey Wagtail pair seen around the stream and indeed in some resident's garden. A council employee was looking for a reported dead fox but this was not found. There are many squirrels who use the gardens as larders to stock up.

Ownership of the woodland area at Badminton Road end

This investigation is ongoing. It is believed it is Downend Estates who own this but has yet to be proven.

Methodist Church Land

Julia Lettey who came to the meeting as a representative of the above church that abuts the valley came to ask advice on the management of their land. As we are unable to work on their land due to our insurance remit, we were happy to help with suggestions on how to proceed. A Fraser Budd will be contacting Pete or Mike to get their advice.

South Glos Volunteers Thank you event

Four members attended the 'Thank you to Volunteers' event put on at the Science Park. It was an excellent venue and gave the possibility to network with other groups and council teams. Being able to talk to John Morris about the gate needed in the Orchard provided an excellent timely result. Sally Patterson and John Morris on hearing how concerned we were about the wetland having been scalped this year by the contractor, assured us it would recover and arranged for us to have a bag of wetland wild flower seeds for scattering when the intense weather and flooding has abated. A wonderful buffet was provided and relevant talks on differing subjects given. An excellent evening.

South Glos Green Spaces Forum Meeting

Pete went to represent the group at the South Glos Green Spaces Forum on 9/1/2020. Around 20 attended along with two South Glos Officers. It was stated the Green Spaces Strategy would be completed by the end to the year but a draft would be available possibly by May. Byron Campbell from the Woodland Trust gave an excellent talk. There was information about group insurance and training required for the removal of invasive species. We have to clarify where our Floating Pennywort comes in this remit. The Councils Green Spaces Strategy in which they are aiming at zero percent carbon by the year 2030 saw the first tree planting week which had been a great success with school groups being involved with this. This will be an annual event.

Forest Schools and Local Schools

Children from Lyde Green Primary School come regularly into the valley as do those from Forest School Groups and those from Bromley Heath Nursery. It's a delight to see them here knowing they too are gaining knowledge and love of nature from our beautiful open space. We want to be able to involve schools more and are thinking of ways to develop this. Bug boxes are hopefully going to be constructed to give further interest for them.

Website

This is updated regularly by the secretary. It still has many hits and remains a means of valuable communication to the wider public. The notice boards are kept updated with current interest topics.

AOB

Ian Knight is working on a Tree Survey and asked for our help in identifying trees in the valley. He is constructing a GIS Database Website and hopefully using GPS tracking we can help him with this. Pete lent him the 1986/92 Survey of the valley that our chair had safely kept and he was thrilled to see this. It was suggested we go out with him on a Sunday in May to help with this and **May 24th** has been proposed. More information nearer the time.

Date of next meeting

This will be held at Angie's 35 Aintree Drive on Sept 7th 2020 at 19.30.