

# Minutes from the Friends of Leap Valley Meeting - Wed May 18<sup>th</sup> 2022

## Held at Mary's 22 Beverley Avenue

Present: Mary (Chair), Andrew (Treasurer), Angie (Secretary), Pete, Mike, Denis and Julie.  
Apologies from Sarah, Leonie, Fred, Ann, Ian and Isabella.

1. Attendees were welcomed and apologies read.
2. Work done: Pete gave an update on the work carried out by the Monday morning team from 28/2/22 – 16/5/22. Since the last meeting of May 2021 387 hours work have been given.

Trees around the pond have been coppiced to let in more light.

Broken timber used on the boundary fence with the Church was removed.

Crowns on the Oaks in the Orchard were raised.

Young trees were planted in the nursery.

Blockages in the stream were cleared around a fallen tree by the Wooden Bridge and at the Baugh Farm end.

Baffles in the stream have been maintained.

Fallen timber was removed to the dumping area to create habitat.

Both Bramble and Laurel were removed.

Some trees needed re labelling.

Snowdrops were lifted divided and replanted.

Holes were drilled into dead trees for habitat.

Nursery areas were weeded and donated daffodils and horse chestnuts planted out.

Paths have been kept clear as vegetation increases.

There was a Wetland review and site visit by a SGC officer.

3. a) SGC Open Spaces Volunteer Group Support Officer, Kirsty Newberry, will be visiting the valley this Friday May 20<sup>th</sup>. Information has been sent for her and a suggestion she looks at the website pre visit to get up to speed on what is needing to be discussed. UPDATE. A very useful meeting was had by Mary and Pete with Kirsty. She was shown around the Valley. She will take away several issues to follow up for us including the wetland work, mowing times, hedge cutting -see below.

b) Dawn Morgan, Flood and Water Management team at SGC came to discuss the Wetland on April 13<sup>th</sup>. We have been concerned that water was not staying in the wetland as it used to. It would appear the site over the years has become a sediment trap. The bund that was installed 30 years ago has been breached although it does still hold some water and silt back. New fibre rolls or similar may help to retain some more water but the level of the silt means that there is only ever water entering the wetland from the stream at flood times. At other times it flows along the stream.

The maintenance document that we have, was created in 1989 and things have changed so much since that time. A further plan in 2006 did not really address the drying out but was more concerned with ensuring biodiversity. The cutting of the vegetation, a third of the wetland per year, has been done regularly but it states that channels should also have been dug out annually and this has not been done other than the one near the stone bridge.

We were also concerned that the cutting of the vegetation which is now done with a brush cutter is far too low and is scalping the area and we have noticed a change in the plants that now grow there. Water Dropwort is now the predominant plant there and the Marsh Marigolds are very sparse. Rosebay willowherb does not now exist in the wetland at all. There is a need for a revised management plan to take in the change and to allow plans for the bund maintenance and channel cutting to be implemented. ACTION: To contact John Morris and Sally Pattison to ensure that channel cutting as recommended by Dawn takes place this year alongside vegetation cutting.

- c) The mowing of the valley and especially the wild flower area below the Orchard was done far too early last year and it shows in the lack of wild flowers present this year. Whilst we are glad to have it done, unless the seeds have been allowed to drop, we will continue to lose species.

ACTION: To ensure that mowing takes place in late summer and to monitor what species flower during this summer.

The hedge along the back of the houses was cut with the machine in the winter but areas unable to be reached were not. This has led to a lot of dissatisfaction with residents to the point they are cutting and leaving the branches along the valley slope. The Friends Monday work party have then used their valuable time clearing all this into the dump area. ACTION: To ask SGC that after the side arm cutter has been in that there is some manual cutting of the lengths of the hedge that the machine can't reach.

- 4. Future Monday workday jobs include: - Purchasing more bulbs and planting. Suggested sites for autumn planting are: on the wooded side of the path from Beverley Avenue into the valley, by the wooden bridge and at the Baugh Farm end of the valley where the ash tree was felled. Some of our snowdrops can be transplanted there. Continuing to clear paths especially of nettles and trees seeded in inappropriate places. Acquire and plant more trees. Look into Weevils being used as biological control of invasive Pennywort that we have in the pond.

We need to price up attachments for our brush cutter which would help with cutting back brambles etc and if appropriate look into funding for this. ACTION: Costing for these items with a view to applying for a grant from the Parish Council in the future.

5. Trees and Ash Dieback, there are, according to a plan from SGC, 156 tree to be felled in the Downend and Bromley Heath area. Several more diseased ash will need to be removed from Leap Valley. The council are going to replace 2 for 1 tree but not necessarily in the same area. There are dead trees to be taken out in the wood at the Badminton Road end of the valley. ACTION: Kirsty to report these dead trees as a safety issue next to the footpath.

Surveying trees in Leap Valley.

Ian has done such a wonderful job of with the help of our team. He has created a map of the survey and is hoping to make it into an interactive website in the future.

ACTION: To put the map he has done on our website and to continue to look at how the interactive version might be set up and linked to our website as our present website will not support an interactive.

6. The bird box survey has been added to the website. It was a very successful year with 9 of the 12 boxes used. We have never seen any activity in the bat boxes and sightings of bats in the valley have declined. Our insect houses are going to be looked at and if there is no activity they may be re sited.
7. Wildlife news. The Sparrow hawk has been seen in the valley and in gardens. There are rats in many of the gardens surrounding the valley. There is evidence of Badger activity although the set has moved. The Green Woodpecker and the Great Spotted Woodpecker have been seen and heard. The Egret and sometimes two have been regular visitors to the valley over the winter months. More Starlings are being seen around the area now.
8. The Volunteer agreement has been updated. It has been noted that those over the age of 80 are not insured by the council policy to work in the valley.
9. Finance. Our treasurer has given us an update of our bank balance of £106. Grants received from Parish Council were May 2019 £200 and February 2021 £100. We are very grateful to Andrew for funding our website but will investigate ways this may be achieved in other ways in future.
10. The Green Spaces Forum meeting was held at Page Park recently. Members of the committee were standing down and Steph Purser from the Friends of Page Park has taken on the position of chair. Steph is welcoming our 'wishes' for our open spaces that she may be in a position to help to liaise with SGC if we are unable to move forward with them. She would like further meetings to include presentations from group members of their particular areas to enable other groups to understand the diversity of problems there are in the different areas including open spaces, parks, historical sites and graveyards.
11. Orchids. Members were reminded to visit the verges of Cuckoo Lane corner on the Badminton Rd to look at the beautiful Orchids that present at this time of year. Both Lizard and Winged can be found whilst Pyramid Orchids are on the east side of the verge of the main road.

- 12.** First Aid Courses. We were reminded to keep in touch with SGC about further First Aid Courses. Both Denis and Angie would be interested in updating their certification.
- 13.** The date of the next Friends meeting has provisionally been made for Wed Sept 14th