



Meeting held at Angie's 9th January 2025

Those present were Mary, Angie, Pete, Denis, Andrew, Liz, Kirsty and Ian.
Apologies sent were from Leonie, Owen, Michael, Mike, Chris, Sarah and Gaynor

AGM

Election of Committee: All members of the committee were re-elected.

Finance report from the treasurer: Andrew gave us a printed summary of accounts for the years 2022 to the present.

Future funding sources: A discussion was held of the possible funding bodies that we will need to engage with for further purchases for the group.

Review of Constitution, Volunteer Agreements and Risk

Assessments: With the help of Kirsty Newberry who is the South Glos Volunteer Groups Support Officer, the constitution was found to be up to date. She provided us with this year's Volunteer Agreement which was signed. Risk assessment documentation is up to date as are course requirements.

Other Business

There was an update by Pete of Work carried out since September.

There were seven workdays held between October and December.

Activities were as follows: Leaves swept from paths. Entrances to the site were kept clear. Brush cutter and hedge trimmer activity. Bramble and Blackthorn control. Bird Box Survey. Coppicing. Weeding around trees. Pruning and hedge maintenance. Fallen tree removal. Stream litter removal. Meeting held re future work and planned workdays. Wetland Management Course. Meeting with BART. Removal of dumped green waste.

Future change in Workday Pattern

For many reasons, one being our ageing work force, it has been decided to try a new regime of one workday per month rather than weekly and that to be set at the second Monday. If we find there is a larger task than we have volunteers for, we

may have a workday over a weekend. We will then publicise this and hope for extra troops. We already have contact with persons who would only be able to help at a weekend. Mary and Angie who live close to the site have agreed to be the 'eyes and ears' with regular walks through the site and to report to Pete if something needs attention before the next planned workday. We will hold a meeting after a workday in June to review the new regime.

Recruitment of New Volunteers

Recognising that we must be proactive in engaging with some new 'Friends,' articles were published in the Downend Voice, on our website, on Heathboard and on Facebook. This generated positive interest by five persons who would like to be involved. Two could only be available at the odd weekend but three others are available on a Monday, one of whom is now an active and valued member of the team. The other two hopefully will join us shortly.

Tools

We reviewed the tools we have, their condition and where they are kept and whether any were needing to be replaced. Those we have held for many years but are not used were given to Kirsty who has put them in the council store for other groups to use. Our First Aid Box has been updated and emergency contact numbers laminated and put inside the lid.

Training Courses

One, possibly two members of the group, will during the year, undertake the 6-hour First Aid Course to comply with the Volunteer and Risk Assessment requirement.

Wetland Project

Starting the week of the 17th of February, the Bristol Avon Rivers Trust (BARTS) will be coming onto the site to carry out work on the stream and wetland. This is part of a larger project trying to hold back the flood water we are experiencing nowadays from causing problems in the area and with the Leap joining the Frome, from flooding the city. There have over the years been several projects by the council to do this which have had some negative outcomes. Leaky dams formed with falling wood to hold back the flood water are at present in the wrong place and are causing flooding where it is not appropriate. Trenches dug across the wetland and a 'Bund' project have had little effect. BARTS are going to firstly coppice hazel in the valley. This we understand will be used for creating appropriately placed leaky dams and 'Berms' which are created to change the flow of the water in the

stream creating a 'wiggle' effect thus slowing the flow and encouraging over time natural plants to take hold which will also provide shelter for fish and other stream creatures. Whilst the 'Friends' are not actively participating in this event we are very grateful to BARTS for the work proposed and look forward to seeing the outcomes.

Mowing

Whilst the Orchard was mown early and well, it was so wet when the mower came into the valley that it was impossible to pick up the grass or mow many of the areas usually undertaken. The Wetland did have its annual third cut as per management plan and indeed a good job was done but we feel it is now being scalped to the detriment of the natural flora. The hedge abutting the houses has been cut at both ends but the middle section, which is on the slope and possibly needing a different regime remains uncut. We will contact the council and enquire why. The Cornus in the wetland has encroached halfway across the wetland and we hope to get this reduced during the year.

Pond Management

The pond has flooded several times this year. Fortunately, into the surrounding area but not towards the stream. This would be dire with the pond still having invasive Floating Pennywort in situ which we safely manage annually after our instruction from the Avon Invasive Weed Forum.

Bird Box Survey

The annual Bird Box Survey was carried out in November this year. 11 out of the 12 boxes were successful in having nests. Even our new robin box. We have a rule that if a box is unsuccessful for two years it is moved. Whilst the boxes generally, were in adequate condition we hope to purchase two more for replacements when needed.

Trees in Orchard and Valley

The trees produced an abundant crop this year. During the winter the apples and Pears will be pruned and relabelled. Mulch is badly needed and has been requested several times but not delivered. Kirsty is going to see if she can locate some for us.

Website

Ian tells us we have been getting numerous visitors to the website. In October there were 500 hits, 250 in November and already 200 this month. That is

wonderful. We discussed how we could perhaps improve the way the Nature Journal operates. Ian will look into a code to open it up in a way that the viewer can easily see what can be experienced monthly on opening the site, rather than opening the journal itself. We need to investigate how we can get ongoing funding for this excellent resource.

South Glos Friends Forum

The next meeting, which is to be held at Page Park, Staple Hill in the Bean Tree Cafe will be on the 16th of Jan. There will be a presentation/workshop on 'Promoting your group and unlocking your groups potential' Two of our members will attend.

The Parish Council Local Nature Action Plan

On Saturday Jan 18th there is an event named 'Tree Giveaway'. We understand Trees, Bushes and Wildflower Seeds will be distributed to give household gardens a larger part to play in greening our area.

Wildlife in the Valley

No unusual species were seen this autumn. The Heron was unusually seen many times on the grass around the site presumably due to the flooding. The Little Egret has been in the valley, perched in its usual tree but alone.

AOB

A shopping list of Species Daffodils, Tree Ties and Bird Boxes was discussed and will need funding. This will be investigated.

Date of the next meeting

This will be held after the work morning on June 9th to review how the new workday regime is going.