

# The Hoppit Woodland & Waterways Steering Group

## Minutes of AGM on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022

### 1. Members Present & Apologies:

#### Members Present

|                             |              |                                |
|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|
| Steve Robbins (Chair)       | (860304)     | crossgreeners@btinternet.com   |
| Kevin Voller (Treasurer)    | (861688)     | kevin.voller@btopenworld.com   |
| Howard Simpson (Secretary)  | (860138)     | howard.simpson@bakerhughes.com |
| Rhona Allen                 | (860990)     | rhona.allen@icloud.com         |
| Alan Cushion                | (860527)     | alancushions63@gmail.com       |
| Ben Dowman                  | 07831 171481 | dowmanben@gmail.com            |
| Steve Giddings              | (860721)     | sdgiddings8591@gmail.com       |
| Brian Fearnley (Vice-Chair) | (861007)     |                                |

#### Visitors

Stephen Phipps representing the Parish Council  
Richard Blackwell representing the Parish Council  
Penny Hoets  
Mike Challis  
Rupert Thompson

#### Apologies

Kellie Fisher (PC Rep)  
Caroline Giddings

#### Not Present

Peter Richardson (860996) peter.richardson@aspall.co.uk  
Gerry Baxter

### 2. Chair's Report

Steve R. delivered a report on the activities over the past year, reproduced here:

[Hoppit Chair's AGM Report – 7 September 2022.](#)

As a steering group we have now reduced the number of meetings from four to two a year (September & March). After a lack of meeting during the height of the pandemic it was agreed that two meetings would be enough to cover necessary business face to face. However, informal meet ups at working parties and email communication means we are able to keep in touch in between meetings.

Once again with the glorious dry, hot summer, the wood and lake has had many visitors. The lake level has held up well due to yet another wet autumn and winter. It was overflowing for a longer period than last year.

A special follow up session to Louise Hammond's 2020 'Plant for Hope' daffodil planting, was held last October. This time bluebells were planted, after the success of the daffodils, which flourished in Spring 2021. The bluebells weren't quite so prolific, but hopefully we'll see more appear next spring.

Some well attended working parties have meant we have managed to keep the lake area, including pathways, tidy, as well as dispose of nearly all the tree guards around the wood that had been on trees for too long. We also removed the tall tree guards which were put up around whips which were planted by the scouts a few years back. Unfortunately, none of them grew. Some left-over tree whips from a planting at DS&L were donated to us and were planted in April in gaps mostly around the western side of the wood. We held a few

watering sessions, hopefully to help them establish. However, with the relentless dry spell this began to be an onerous task and we hope when rain returns a few of them will recover and flourish.

We need to continue with regular maintenance, like the annual cutting down of undergrowth, especially brambles and the biennial hedge trimming around the wood's perimeter. Advice on tree thinning and how to go about it, is still a priority, as some trees are growing far too close to one another. The finances to support all this are still quite healthy, however with the ending of a grant this year, we need to start looking at alternative funding sources in the near future.

Fishing has once again proved very popular but this has been tarnished by reports of groups of men making occasional visits and removing fish from the lake. There is no concrete proof of this but it has been reported that there seem fewer fish in the lake, especially carp. Yet again, the carved otter was toppled and Kevin once again secured it with metal ties, along with the owl. (Debenham Shed volunteers had recently kindly installed some drainage underneath the otter to help prevent rotting). All we can do regarding these concerns is to be vigilant. An 'Environmental Agency' sign regarding not taking fish from the lake has now been put up near the lake entrance.

Despite these issues around the Hoppit, our wood and lake continues to be a jewel in the crown for our village. Finally I would like to thank all the committee and volunteers for their help and support over the last year as well as parish clerk Dina Bedwell, with her help looking after our finances.

### **3. Treasurer's Report:**

Kevin presented the Financial Report, with information received from the Parish Clerk. Balances are

- Deposit      £7,276.95
- Current      £1,950.25
- Total            £9,227.20

Woodland Payment Scheme grants have expired after 15 years of generous funding. Future fundraising will be needed, to pay for things like the biennial cutting of the hedges.

Possible funding sources were suggested: a donations box; a JustGiving page, with access via a QR code displayed at the lake; manufacture and installation of memorial benches.

### **4. Election of Officers & Committee**

The following individuals were elected to the executive: all four of the existing officers volunteered to remain in post.

Chair                Steve Robbins nominated by Howard, seconded by Rhona.

Vice Chair        Brian Fearnley nominated by Kevin, seconded by Steve Robbins.

Treasurer        Kevin nominated by Brian, seconded by Alan.

Secretary        Howard nominated by Alan, seconded by Kevin.

#### **Other Committee Members**

The following members confirmed their continued service on the committee.

Ben Dowman

Rhona Allen

Steve Giddings

Caroline Giddings (confirmed by Steve Giddings)

Alan Cushion

Other members Pete Richardson and Gerry Baxter were not present.

Action: Howard agreed to approach Pete; Alan agreed to ask Gerry.

## **5. Minutes of Previous Meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

It was noted that the title of the 9<sup>th</sup> March meeting minutes mentioned AGM. It was not, of course, the AGM but a regular meeting. Otherwise, the previous meeting minutes were approved.

Actions and matters arising from the previous AGM were reviewed:

- Webpages – Steve’s contact details to go on the web page. Action: Howard
- Can we piggy-back onto the contract for mowing the informal rides. Action: Howard
- Gary Battell - no response. We need his expertise and advice on thinning out of the trees. Try him on LinkedIn. Action: Howard
- Notice Board – could we use something similar to the allotment notice board? No action needed.
- Could the Woodland Trust help to advise about the thinning of the trees – if Gary Battell cannot help, contact Ed van Ek of the Woodland Trust. Action: Howard

## **6. Maintenance ongoing & future - hedges, rides, brambles & thinning**

Agreed the importance of ongoing maintenance. Joe Westrup has been asked to do one day’s work at the beginning of Autumn to do some cutting. This costs about £200 for 4 hours work, including all the equipment.

## **7. Fishing issues**

There have been suspicions that people have been taking fish, although it may just be an otter.

New Parish Councillor John Sweet has offered to re-stock the lake with fish, once the water level was back to normal. We might use Tom Harbinson again to supply the new fish.

It was agreed that it was impractical to try to enforce the rules covering fishing.

## **8. Litter and bins**

The main litter bin by the lake has been overflowing several times. The Parish Clerk was asked whether a second bin could be provided. The response was that a second bin would not be added to the emptying schedule due to cost constraints. It was suggested to install a ‘Please take your litter home’ notice, but it was finally agreed not to install any additional notice or to pursue adding another bin at present.

## **9. Notice Boards and Publicity**

It was decided there was no need for an additional notice board

It was suggested to display a laminated QR code to access the committee Chair's contact details, and a link to a JustGiving page. Action: Howard to contact Debbie Sage for help.

## **10. Orchard Future Plans**

In a previous meeting, Steve Palframan had been tasked with reporting on the PC's intentions on the land in question. Steven Phipps reported that the PC's position had not changed: they had a tenant who occasionally keeps a few sheep on the land, providing an income for the PC. Despite the fact that the tenant had no objection to planting a few trees concurrent with the sheep, it could not be planted as an orchard, for these reasons:

- It is classed as agricultural land – the public would not be allowed access.
- If it were an orchard, there can't be sheep
- It's a frost pocket that would not allow the trees to thrive

Brian formally proposed a motion to abandon the orchard 'project', which was passed by majority vote.

## **11. Future Working Parties and Meetings**

Alders are overgrowing the land on the eastern side of the lake. A working party is planned for Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> & Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> Sept. from 10:00am – 12:00pm to tackle this problem.

Next meeting: Weds 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023 at 7:30pm in Dove Cottage

Next AGM: September 2023, date to be decided.

## **12. A.O.B.**

Members of the public had reported that kingfishers have been seen at the lake, but that reed mace has taken over the area of the lake where the kingfisher perch was located. It was agreed to ask Joe Westrup for a quote. Action: Kevin to contact Joe.

The public had also brought it to our attention that children were seen swimming in the lake, that children had been riding bikes through the Hoppit wood and around the lake; that fires and portable barbeques had been used in the area. It was agreed that no specific action would be effective and that little could be done. These incidents seemed fairly rare anyway.

Mike Challis agreed to sit on the committee.