

# The Hoppit Woodland & Waterways Steering Group

## AGM on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023

### Dove Cottage at 7p.m.

## Minutes of Meeting

### 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
Brian Fearnley (Vice-Chair)	(861007)	
Richard Blackwell		
Mike Challis		
Alan Cushion		
Rhona Allen		

#### Visitors

Mick Evans

#### Apologies

Ben Dowman  
Katherine Barlow (PC Rep)

#### Not Present

Pete Richardson  
Gerry Baxter  
Steve Giddings  
Caroline Giddings

### 2. Chair's Report

SR gave welcoming remarks, and made introductions for the benefit of visitors. A Chairman's Report on the activities over the last year was read out, and is included verbatim here:

#### [Hoppit Chair's Report September 2023.](#)

It has been a fairly busy year with the Hoppit continuing to flourish. The trees and lake have benefited from the high rainfall in autumn and winter along with the cooler, wetter summer we've had. I can't remember the lake being so full during the summer months. The previous very dry summer did mean that only about 14 trees survived from a planting session in 2022. These were whips left over from a planting session at Debenham Sport & Leisure Centre. There was an amazing display of pyramidal orchids this year mainly near the western edge of the wood.

We continue to maintain the wood and particularly the paths around the lake. Impromptu trimming sessions have been necessary this summer as growth of everything, especially brambles and nettles, has been unrelenting. Working parties have carried out regular tasks like cutting down alders which continue to spring up around the lake. However, we have at last removed the last of the hundreds of tree guards which has been on trees for far too long. Some work was carried out with cutting the grass on paths that criss-cross the wood, but more needs to be done on this. Joe Westrop continues to be employed early autumn with tractor and flail to keep brambles at bay, especially near the lake and woodland edges.

Anti-social behaviour has been at a minimum in the past year, when it comes to littering or suspicious fishing activity. However, there has been a problem near and around the picnic table with BBQs. Disposable BBQs have been left up there and even briquettes. It was agreed that I put a polite notice stapled to the table to say no BBQs, due to threat of fire and the litter implications.

Richard Blackwell approached the steering group last March, when he was on the Parish Council, to find out our views on establishing solar panels on the fields to the north and south of the lake for the benefit of the village. We thought it would have minimal impact on the Hoppit and felt it needed further investigation. However, a public meeting to explain the scheme was not approved by the PC and with the way it was

handled, Richard resigned. We wrote a letter to the PC in support of Richard and to convey our disappointment with them not exploring this worthy green initiative further.

Ideas for raising the profile of the Hoppit, and hopefully some income, needs further consideration in the next couple of years, as grants have stopped. Mike Challis is already getting together a calendar with Hoppit photos past and present for sale this coming Christmas. Maybe some sort of regular sponsorship could also be acquired soon?

Thanks to everyone on this group for their work and support and Dina Bedwell once again for overseeing finances. Bank transfer is now a new option which makes payments easier. Finally, thanks to the people of Debenham and the vast majority who appreciate and keep the place in good order for everyone to enjoy.

Steve Robbins. September 2023

### 3. Treasurer's Report:

As a consequence of little financial activity, the Current and Deposit account balances remain about the same as reported six months ago, specifically:

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

It was noted that the committee does not receive regular bank statements from the Parish Council. **Action: HS to make a request to the Parish Clerk to provide an annual statement, in advance of each AGM.**

There was a brief discussion on future sources of funding; the possibility of applying for a Locality Grant was suggested.

### 4. Election of Officers & Committee

All four of the existing officers volunteered to remain in post, and were elected unopposed:

Chair	Steve Robbins nominated by HS, seconded by RB.
Vice Chair	Brian Fearnley nominated by RB, seconded by MC.
Treasurer	Kevin Voller nominated by RB, seconded by AC.
Secretary	Howard Simpson nominated by BF, seconded by AC.

### Other Committee Members

The following members confirmed their continued service on the committee.

Ben Dowman  
Alan Cushion  
Mike Challis  
Richard Blackwell  
Rhona Allen

Other members Pete Richardson, Gerry Baxter, Steve Giddings and Caroline Giddings were not present. In their absence, it was assumed they would continue to serve on the committee, but HC would contact each of them to confirm. **Action: HS**

### 5. Minutes of Previous Meeting (1<sup>st</sup> March 2023)

The minutes were accepted as being a true representation of the proceedings.

Outstanding action points:

- Re: the cutting of paths. During the summer, AC had tried to keep the paths open by using a normal garden mower, but it proved too difficult. The job requires heavy-duty equipment. Although the

perimeter path remains clear, some of the crossing paths have closed up. We could hire a heavy mower to get this done. Need to encourage people to not just use the perimeter path. **Action: AC to explore the cost and availability of a heavy-duty mower.**

- SR has posted a laminated sign on the bench to discourage the use of barbeques.

6. Maintenance - hedges, rides, brambles & thinning.

At the beginning of October, Joe Westrup will be contracted to flail the brambles. Noted that we also trim the perimeter hedges on a 2-year cycle. **Action: SR to contact Martin Durie and Joe Westrup to engage their services.**

7. Discussion on balancing the needs of pedestrians and dog walkers vs. protecting wildlife.

A discussion was led by MC: could we have designated areas which were demarked for ground-nesting birds? This would require impenetrable hedges or fencing to prevent ingress by dogs. Also, is the pond large enough to support a floating duck island, to encourage ducks and swans? The consensus was that, although it would be good to encourage ground-nesting birds, it would be impractical due to the limited available land area, and the small size of the ponds. However, advice could be sought from Scrub-Up Britain guy Chris. **Action: MC to contact Chris to see whether he could visit.**

Meanwhile, the Woodland Trust may offer advice following their study in the Hoggs Kiss Wood. **Action: HS to contact Woodland Trust Regional Manager, Ed van Ek, to ask about results from the Hog's Kiss woodland study areas.**

8. Notice Boards and Publicity

Separate notice board still needed, to be attached to existing sign: **Action: HS to affix board.**

Could Aspall Cyder sponsor new signage? **Action: HS to ask PR.**

Could Denbury Homes be approached about Community Infrastructure Levy: **Action: HS to contact Denbury community liaison. If not an ad-hoc donation, could they ringfence money for future projects?**

**Action: Richard to contact Claire Sheehan.**

9. 2024 Calendar (Mike Challis)

Mike Challis showed a mock-up of a calendar, with some of the photos already posted to the drop-box. It was suggested to do a limited photocopied run, with spiral binding. Committee agreed. It was suggested to include some narrative. **Action: MC to look into costs. Action: SR to ask the leisure centre about printing capability.**

10. Future funding

Not much to add since earlier in the meeting. As well as asking for legacies (as mentioned in the Parish Magazine thanks to SR), could we ask for direct debits from the residents of Debenham? To be discussed in a future meeting.

11. Future working parties – dates and activities

Next work party scheduled for Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> October at 10:00am. Brush cutters needed to tame the alders to the east of the lake. Also need a general tidy-up around the lake.

12. A.O.B.

- Poaching of fish is still occasionally taking place. It was agreed that it was difficult to police this, but one solution may be to post laminated notices on the fishing platforms to raise awareness.
- Peter Huish had sent a communication requesting permission to scatter the ashes of Helen Huish, who passed away earlier in the summer, in the woodland or around the lake. Helen had been a strong supporter of the woodland project when it was being set up. Unanimously agreed to grant permission. **Action: SR to reply to Peter on behalf of the committee.**

13. Dates for future meetings

Next meeting will be at 7pm on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> March in Dove Cottage.