

Friends of Harebreaks Wood

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 12 October 2011 at St Mark's Church Hall at 7.30 pm

Present: Richard Ahrens, Neil Bennett, Keith Cheyney, Maria Green, Stephen Johnson, Heather Law, Steve Harvey (Chair), and David Wallis.

Apologies for absence were received from Sue Ahrens and Ann Austin.

1. Review of 2010 / 2011.

The events held through the year, Dawn Chorus, Bat Search, Butterfly Count, Fungus Foray, etc. had been well supported but would have been more rewarding if there had been "experts" on hand to advise and inform. Tree planting continued and the trees put in a few years ago are now quite large. There has been no repetition of council maintenance workers inadvertently mowing up seedlings. There was less trouble with litter than had been the case in early years.

The web-site now displays a "before" and "after" illustration and continues to provide general information on the Friends' activities.

2. Officers for 2011 / 2012

Chairman: Steve Harvey re-elected

Secretary: no candidate

Treasurer: Ian Brandon was not present. He has resigned as treasurer but has not yet passed on the accounts. Keith Cheyney agreed to try again to contact him. (Note: Ian remains one of the signatories for the Friends' bank account).

3. Further dates for 2011

Saturday 15 October	Litter-pick	Meet at 1.30pm in St Mark's car park
Saturday 3 December	Tree-planting	Meet at 1.30pm in St Mark's car park

4. Programme for 2012

It was agreed to hold the following events:

Saturday 4 February Litter-pick meet at 1.30pm in St Mark's car park

Saturday 14 April Dawn Chorus, (followed by breakfast) meet at 5.30am at St Mark's
Ian Mather to be asked to contact the local RSPB group regarding a bird expert.

Saturday 28 April Bluebell Walk meet at 1.30pm in St Mark's car park
Date subject to confirmation depending on how early the bluebells come into flower

Saturday 16 June Litter-pick 1.30pm, St Mark's car park

Friday 13 July Bat Search
Provided Ian Mather available to supply detectors

Saturday 22 September Fungi Search 1.30pm St Mark's car park

Saturday October Litter-pick 1.30pm St Mark's car park

Also to be arranged: Tree planting Date dependent on national tree-planting events and availability of Ian Mather
Butterfly Search Date subject to advice and availability of suitable expert. (Butterfly World and other specialist groups to be consulted)

The Planning Meetings in St Mark's Church Hall will be held on Wednesdays 11 January, 11 April, 11 July and 10 October 2012, beginning at 7.30pm.

5. Playing Field Boundary

Steve registered an objection at the Planning Application meeting dealing with the extension of the Cherry Tree School site and its effect on access to Harebreaks Woods. He has been told that the application was subsequently withdrawn, but Steve Johnson thought this had been reversed. Steve H will try to obtain more information.

Regarding access via the playing fields, the Borough Council still claim that they have no jurisdiction over the playing fields, but seem to be reconsidering their position. Steve will ask the local County Councillor whether he can persuade the County Council to ask Everett Rovers to remove their barrier.

6. Finance

Steve said it has become clear that our events will benefit if we are able to invite experts in to guide our surveys and habitat improvement. We ought to offer at least to reimburse their expenses. It was suggested that such funding might be obtained from The Mayor's Fund or from the Community Housing Trust (Better Communities Fund), based on our aims to learn about and maintain the biodiversity of Harebreaks Wood.

The damaged bars intended to protect the bluebell area in Harebreaks Wood have still not been repaired. At last year's AGM this was blamed on lack of funding.

It was agreed to invite Paul Rabbits of Watford Borough Council to go round the site with Steve so that the amount of work needed could be agreed, costed and the appropriate funds sought.

7. Publicity

The Friends' activities are included in the Borough publication "Wild about Watford". Steve H will check with Ian Mather that this year's events will be promoted.

Mike Wright was suggested as a suitable contact at the Watford Observer. A short illustrated article had recently featured the threat regarding access to the woods posed by Cherry Tree School development.

8. Other Matters

Brambles encroaching on the footpath need cutting back - Steve to raise this with Ian Mather/Paul Rabbits. Such work might be added to the litter-pick days.

Similarly, it is a while since we did any coppicing. It was an interesting task for the Friends but again needs cooperation from the Council Officers.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm.