

BEARSTED WOODLAND TRUST: MINUTES OF AGM 29 September 2019 2:30 pm, Bearsted and Thurnham Bowls Club

The 2019 AGM was attended by 44 people, including Trustees, Management Committee Members, and Friends of BWT. Apologies were received from 24 Friends. The Attendance List and Apologies are given in appendices to the Minutes. John Wale took the Chair, explaining that he and Co-Chair Sharon Bayne would manage the meeting.

Welcome and Chairs' Remarks.

John opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and by thanking the Bowls Club for the use of their clubhouse; also Joe and Barry from the Bowls Club, who were looking after the bar.

John said the year had seen many positives:

- The trees and hedgerows were continuing to mature and were, on the whole, very healthy: the time spent in original preparation and careful maintenance was now being repaid.
- Moore Meadow planting was also maturing, while still affording distant views of Bearsted Village and the North Downs;
- The Fitness Trail had been installed and designed by a specialist company in May. Sponsorship had helped to offset some of the cost, thanks to donations from Bearsted Parish Council and 10 other local organisations; the trail was very proving popular, especially during school holidays.

In contrast, the two break-ins during June and July had resulted in damage to the barn and the loss of most of the powered tools and equipment. Police and SOC Officers had visited the site, but none of the stolen equipment had been located. BWT's Insurers had been informed. The break-ins were some of many experienced in the Bearsted and Maidstone area this summer.

John and Sharon thanked all the volunteers for their efforts during the year. Their dedication and reliability helps to keep the site as users would wish, judging by the many compliments received. We have a high quality Newsletter and Website which are well-liked by locals and by outsiders.

Reports for the Year 2018/19.

Audited Statement of Audited Accounts (copies available at meeting and on website).

In the audited accounts to June 2019 Richard Ashness, Acting Hon Treasurer, reported an in-year surplus of £11,971.18.

This was largely due to

- generous fund-raising by a family who were Tree Sponsors, together with substantial match funding by employers.
- reduced costs on tree surgery
- a grant from Bearsted PC for the Fitness Trail.

For 2019/20 the position would change significantly because of additional expenditure on Security and the Fitness trail. John Wale added that fencing erected in 2008 was in need of replacement during 2019/20, and this outlay could be in the

region of £10,000. However BWT had planned for this, and reserves should be able to cover the anticipated cost.

There were no questions.

John reminded the Meeting that BWT was still looking for a permanent Hon Treasurer!

Trees and Benches: David Ward reported that two trees lost in Moore Meadow and one in Old Avenue were being replaced; the pause in sponsorship remained.

There were now 64 benches around the site; those deteriorating would be replaced, but no new benches would be sponsored for the time being.

The design and provision of plaques had changed; replacement plaques would be at a cost of £10.

On a sad note, the sudden passing of Steve Andrews in April had come as a great shock to everyone. Steve had skilfully created the owls, animals Green Man and horse sculptures in Moore Meadow, and his legacy to BWT stands as artwork we, and others, will enjoy for many years. A plaque in Steve's memory has been provided in Riders' Wood.

Membership, Chris Street reported that up to June 2019 BWT had 1186 family memberships, of which 46 were new. After a short general discussion, the consensus was that with such healthy reserves we should keep Annual Membership unchanged at a minimum of £5. Chris thanked all the volunteers who deliver Newsletters.

It was suggested BWT could explore ways of attracting additional Friends by increasing BWT's profile and penetration within the local community, especially within younger people and families. It was suggested BWT could erect signs such as *"do you enjoy the site? - if so, are you a Friend of BWT?"*

Green Flag: Following a "Mystery Shopper" inspection during the summer, BWT had again received the highest band score in the Community Award category. This reflected the continuing hard work put in by all volunteers.

Fitness trail: Adrian Bouwens explained the purpose and structure of the Fitness Trail, and urged all friends and families to make good use of it! Originally planned in 2016/17, each of the six exercise stations had been professionally designed and built, and had an information board explaining how the equipment could be used safely. There would be regular condition monitoring of the fixtures on site by BWT, and an annual safety inspection. Thanks to sterling work by Chris Street, we now had 11 sponsorships totalling £3014. Adrian was thanked for his work in planning the trail and overseeing its installation.

Outreach: There had been several educational visits and walks by local schools, including Thurnham CE Infants, Roseacre Junior School, and Madginford School. The area was in regular use informally by several other organisations and Walking Groups. Talks had been given by John Wale to two charitable organisations in Kent and these had generated donations.

Questions and Discussion:

- (i) Control of Ragwort was mentioned: after another dry summer, ragwort has proliferated in verges and fields in many local areas; despite several

volunteer mornings picking ragwort roots by hand, Moore Meadow still needed close attention. The Management Committee agreed to investigate methods of control, including the possibility of root pulling sessions involving volunteer help from Friends and local organisations.

- (ii) Safety: Following a question about fuel drums near the tractor barn, Jeff Winn explained that diesel was now delivered in drums, and these were stored pending disposal.
- (iii) Vote of Thanks: John Broadhurst, Trustee, thanked all the Management Committee and Volunteers for the work they do to maintain and develop the site. Holly Parker, a Friend of BWT, endorsed this by saying how much pleasure she and her family derived from visiting the site. These views were supported by everyone present.

There being no further questions, the Meeting closed at 15.37
