

Friends of Marple Memorial Park Meeting

Monday 11th December 2006

1.0 Present: Adrian Ellis (Chair), Micaela Wood, Jay Havoleana, Robert Wilson, Peter Bardsley, Bill Ardern, Mark Whittaker.

Apologies: Dave Burrows, Chris Armitt.

2.0 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted and approved.

3.0 Matters Arising.

3.1 Presentation by Lesley Wright (PCT)

Lesley Wright of the Primary Care Trust attended the last meeting and was expected to give a presentation to the Group this month but did not turn up. No apologies were received.

3.2 Park Keepers Cottage

Mark advised that he had corresponded with the party that had previously shown an interest in the cottage and urged them to present their plans to David Brayshay. They confirmed they would do this and also said that they may attend this meeting to explain their plans to the Friends, although obviously they had not done so. Mark agreed to pursue this one more time but if there were no further developments after that the Friends would have to assume that the interest was not strong enough to be taken seriously.

Bob Wilson reported that the flat-roof section of the cottage had sustained damage during the recent storms. The problem has been reported to Property Services and temporary repairs are to be made, probably early in the New Year.

3.2 Marple Locks Flower Bed.

At the last meeting Dave Burrows advised that Parks & Maintenance had said that they couldn't make suitable steel/hardwood locks structures themselves and were seeking prices from external contractors. Mark asked Dave if they could also get a price from Wayne Chaisty of Ironwood, who had done such an excellent job on the Coronation Bench. After receipt of prices the Group will consider whether the display should be rebuilt in the park or moved to Oldknow gardens alongside lock 13. With Dave on holiday Adrian has been unable to obtain any new information on this and it was agreed to carry it over to the next meeting.

3.3 Mosquito Deterrent Device

Mark handed round copies of a specification for the Mosquito Anti-Social Behaviour Deterrent Device mentioned by PCSO McDonald at the last meeting and advised that it seemed to have good potential for use in the park, perhaps on the corner of the library to deter night time use of the Junior Play Area. The cost of the device is between £500 and £600 and the Friends do not have sufficient funds to pay for one at present. Adrian agreed to pass the information on to Dave Burrows to investigate further, including whether the devices were in use anywhere else within the Stockport Borough.

3.4 Removal of old Flagpole

At the last meeting Dave Burrows reported that he was seeking a price for disconnection of the electric cable from the flagpole and will also obtain one for removing the pole to give us a second option, if it is affordable. Adrian was unable to obtain any new information on this, so it was agreed to carry it over until the next meeting.

3.5 Task Days.

Two task days have been held since the last meeting:

Saturday 18th November – Bluebell and Daffodil bulbs were planted in the nature / woodland area by members of the group. 5 volunteers attended, aided by Adrian and Dave Forber, who also installed the new park history interpretation board at the end of the path near the War Memorial.

Thursday 7th December – 1 volunteer (Micaela) attended to assist Bob with pruning and cutting back of shrubs.

It was agreed that as weekends seemed to be more suitable for the majority, the next task days would be scheduled on Saturdays. The following dates were pencilled in with activities for the January date to be confirmed at the next meeting.

10:30am Saturday 20th January 2007
10:30am Saturday 24th February 2007

It was agreed that the Group needed to look at increasing publicity for the task days if they were to attract more volunteers.

3.6 Oldknow Memorial Plaque

At the last meeting Dave Burrows advised that he had asked the Landscape Team for suggestions and costs for a possible external housing for the Oldknow Plaque. He also suggested that housing it inside in the library was another option that could possibly be

considered. Adrian has tried to obtain an update on this without success and it was agreed to carry this item over to the next meeting when Dave would be back.

3.7 Breathing Places

There have been several separate meetings during the last month to develop plans to make a bid for a grant from the BBC Breathing Places Campaign. An application was finalised and sent off on 7th December, in good time for the 13th December deadline. Grants will be awarded to successful applicants in May 2007.

The application submitted is for a sum of just under £7,000 to create a wildlife / woodland reading and viewing space in the existing woodland area behind the library. It includes a path to a circular reading area suitable for wheelchair access surrounded by planting, a bird-feeder sculpture, an interpretation board and additional wildflowers, bulbs, bird boxes and bat boxes in the woodland area itself.

The original plans included permanent seating near the centre of the woodland but following consultation with owners of the properties adjacent to the site objections were received from Mr & Mrs Manton of Stone Edge, the property immediately opposite the rear of the library. The plans were modified to remove the permanent seating and the reading area was made smaller and moved nearer to the library to address the key concerns expressed by Mr Manton. Since the original consultation two further discussions have taken place and it is believed that Mr Manton is happy with the way that the issues have been addressed. Mr Manton has written a letter to the Group that explains his concerns and that he is much happier with the revised proposals. Mark will reply to this letter on behalf of the group to confirm the understanding that the new scheme is acceptable to Mr & Mrs Manton.

The Group have committed to contribute £485 towards the cost of the scheme and this needs to be set-aside in the Friends' account until the result of the grant application is known.

Adrian acknowledged the efforts that the people involved had made to prepare the application in such a short timescale and gave a special thanks to Jay, who took on the tasks of consulting with the neighbours and filling in the application forms.

The Friends also wished to record their thanks to Councillor Andrew Bispham, who had kindly acted as the Group's independent referee at short notice.

4 Monthly Park Report

Bob Wilson advised that an area of the wall between the park and the canal, near the old canal link, has deteriorated badly recently and a large gap developed. The problem has been reported and a temporary metal fence erected for safety pending repairs by the council's builders.

College students using the junior play equipment, as reported by Jay last month, are becoming an increasing problem and Bob has had to ask them to leave on a daily basis. He has recently visited the College Principal to explain the problems the students are causing in the park and has been promised some action. It was felt that part of the problem is that there are no facilities provided by the college to enable the students to burn off their energy and little for them to do. It was agreed that if things continue into the New Year without improvement then the Friends should write to the Principal about the matter.

Bob also advised that bulb planting has been completed for the year and the main work in the park at present was on pruning and cutting back of shrubs and weeding.

5.0 Any Other Business

5.1 Carnival Committee Donation

The Friends thanked Marple Carnival Committee for the donation of £50 from the funds raised during the 2006 carnival and confirmed that they would like to be considered for a donation next year.

5.2 Christmas Dinner

The group thanked Micaela for organising the Friends' Christmas Dinner at the Ring o' Bells on Saturday 9th December, which everyone enjoyed. It was agreed that a summer event should be considered next year too.

5.3 Additional signatories for bank account

Mark advised that he would like to have two additional signatories added to the Friends' account. At present we are reliant on Peter Clarke to provide a second signature, which is not a problem in the short term, but a more permanent arrangement needs to be put in place. Jay and Micaela agreed to be added and Mark will sort out the paperwork with the bank.

5.4 Removal of Copper Beech tree near Hollins House

Adrian advised the group that there had been some controversy over the removal of a large copper beech tree between Hollins House and the Bowling Green.

Adrian passed over a copy of an emailed report from Jim McGarrie which explained that following a request for branches to be removed to allow scaffolding to be erected around Hollins House to carry out repairs to the building, his inspection had resulted in the discovery that the tree is a potential danger to the public. The tree is reported to have a lean of 20% away from the building and an area of decay within the main fork, which is the main stress point of the branch structure, casting doubt on its structural strength. A decision had therefore been taken on safety grounds to completely remove the tree and replace it with a specimen tree, such as a Dawn Redwood.

Based on the safety issues advised to them the Friends agreed to support the council's decision to remove the tree.

(Post meeting note: It was not realised during the discussions at the meeting that the tree inspection took place in August this year yet the Friends had not been advised until after the felling had begun in December. Mark has written to Adrian and Jim McGarrie to express disappointment at this.)

5.5 Green Flag Application

Adrian advised that the 2006/07 Green Flag application was due soon, with Stage 1 (Application Form) due to be submitted at the end of December 2006 and Stage 2 (Management Plans) due at the end of January 2007.

Adrian added that the council intended to apply again for 2006/7 but were considering whether to only apply every other year in the future due to the amount of work involved and the limited time available to put recommendations into place.

5.6 Tatton Show

Micaela enquired about the possibility of the Friends becoming involved in Stockport Council's next entry to the Tatton Show, as the Locks entry this year had been such a success. Adrian agreed to make enquiries about the process for doing this but said it would be too late for the 2007 entry, as that had been selected already.

6.0 Date of next Meeting.

Monday 15th January 2007 at 6:30 in Marple Library.