

**Friends of Marple Memorial Park Meeting
Monday 9th November 2009
Marple Library**

Present: Micaela Wood, Bob Wilson, Adrian Ellis, Mark Whittaker, Sue Emery (part-time), Patrick O'Herlihy (part-time).

1.0 Apologies: Jonathan Long.

2.0 Minutes of the last meeting: Agreed.

3.0 Matters Arising.

3.1 Park Cottage

Sue Emery, representing Marple Bands, gave the group a potted history of the campaign to refurbish and extend the empty Park Keeper's cottage so that it can be used as a practice room for Hawk Green and Marple Bands. It began in February 2008 with the following milestones:

March 2008 – supportive response from Paul Hartley (Conservation)

June 2008 – positive response from Mark Jordan (Planning)

July 2008 – positive response from Marple Area Committee.

October 2008 – NPS invite expressions of interest in the cottage with a closing date of mid December 2008.

December 2008 – Bands express interest.

January 2009 – met with NPS and agreed in principle a peppercorn rent.

May 2009 – draft lease received (99yrs with responsibility for repairs).

June 2009 – comments on draft lease returned to NPS.

August 2009 – pre-planning application submitted.

The services of an architect, an acoustic engineer and a solicitor have been secured free of charge.

Sue advised that proceeding have now reached a frustrating stage with little apparent progress. A second issue of the draft lease has dragged on for no obvious reason with the latest promise from NPS this week (*but it has not arrived as these minutes are published on 15/11/09*).

Unexpected suggestions and issues are also now being raised by the council's conservation and planning representatives, who have changed personnel since initial enquiries. These are proving difficult and time consuming to deal with and as a result progress has been much slower than anticipated.

Sue advised that the Bands have been fund-raising for some years with the aim of creating a permanent Bandroom but the money they have raised to date would be needed to cover ongoing running costs. It is felt that around £100,000 worth of additional funding will be needed to undertake the project successfully.

The Bands own some land behind the Edge restaurant next to the park and they are hoping that it may be possible to obtain residential planning permission on this, allowing it to be sold to contribute towards the funding needed to refurbish and extend the cottage. However, there are a number of planning issues identified and they have decided to try and proceed without relying on this as a source of funds.

Opportunities to fund a project like this were discussed:

The Heritage Lottery Fund's "Parks for People" is one possible scheme but with a range of £250,000 to £5M it would not be suitable for the Bandroom in isolation. An application to this scheme would have to encompass improvements to the whole park. Some initial suggestions included a bandstand, disabled toilets, improved access, outdoor fitness equipment and extending of the skate park.

Due to the all-encompassing nature of a "Parks for People" grant and the extensive application criteria it was felt by the Bands and the Friends of the Park that this would have to be led by the council, as owners of the park. Both groups would be happy to support and work with the council towards this but it was noted that SMBC already have six such applications underway at present.

Another potentially suitable scheme was felt to be an Arts Council Grant. The range on these is £1,000 to £100,000. Sue advised that a pre-application was made for one of these some time ago, before the opportunity to use the cottage arose, but this would need to be looked at again taking into account the new circumstances.

Sue finished by explaining that it was intended to start seeking funds in earnest in the New Year and the Bands would welcome the support of the Friends of the Park. The group confirmed that they would be pleased to give this.

In the meantime the Friends Group will write to the council to express their disappointment at how long the park cottage has now been empty and how long it is taking to resolve the lease and planning issues.

3.2 Basketball Court

The court has been added to the list for resurfacing next year but Jonathan has advised that there are several others that he feels will be considered higher priority. He says he will continue to work on trying to find ways to fund the resurfacing of the court.

3.3 Roundabout in Infants Play Area

Jonathan has advised that an order for a replacement roundabout has not been placed yet. Due to failures on two other roundabouts in the borough that have taken higher priority it is not expected to be possible to do this now until March 2010 for work to start in April.

3.4 Wood Sculptures

The apple and pear, ground sculptures and tree sculpture were treated with preservative during the last task day on 31 October. The tree sculpture will need another coat and it is hoped to do this at the November task day if the weather is suitable.

3.5 Boules Court.

The interpretation board was successfully installed during the October task day. It was felt that the new panel design was easier to install and more robust than the Armourseal ones used before, as well as being significantly cheaper. Mark has advised Rebecca that the Shelley Signs order can be paid and asked for the group to be invoiced for the £790 due on this before the end of the year.

Marple Business Forum has kindly made a contribution of £250 towards the interpretation panel, as they had previously promised.

The wooden seats alongside the Boules Court were treated with preservative during the last task day and are now looking really good.

Following installation of the interpretation panel the Boules Court project is now complete. We hope that visitors to the park will make good use of it and it was encouraging that several people came up and spoke about it during the task day.

3.6 War Memorial Remembrance Service

Terry laid a wreath on behalf of the group at the Remembrance Sunday Service in the park yesterday. The service was very well attended and the crowds seem to be getting bigger every year.

Chain link fence

No further progress.

3.7 Improvements to the Park Entrance

Jonathan has advised by email that work will start soon with the removal of unsuitable plant species and will be carried out as part of Area Teams' winter works. Mark has expressed concern that this is going ahead without consultation with the group, who were expecting a design for improvements to the entrance before any work was started. The group were also expecting to involve the schools through Patrick's connections. Jonathan has responded to say that he will be happy to meet up on a Saturday morning to discuss what is proposed.

It was felt that the intent when Micaela first raised this item has become lost, as she had suggested a new feature at the entrance whereas Jonathan is proposing to modify the existing shrub beds. It was concluded that a meeting on site with Jonathan would be of benefit and give everyone the opportunity to contribute their ideas and suggestions to improve the park entrance as a whole.

There have been several complaints about the log bench near to the entrance and it was agreed that this was probably now past its best. It will be considered for removal or relocation during the discussions.

Micaela is not certain if she can make the November task day due to work commitments. When she is able to confirm Mark will ask Jonathan to attend either the November or January task day to discuss the entrance area.

Patrick will continue to try and get the school involved in this at the next Governors' Meeting in November.

3.8 Task Days

Previous Task Day – 31 October 2009

The 2,000 bluebell bulbs ordered didn't arrive in time to be planted by the Beaver Scouts due to the postal strikes. Fortunately the Beavers were able to purchase their own bluebells and snowdrops, which they planted instead. They also cleared one of the ornamental beds and added some plants to the War Memorial beds. The ordered bulbs did arrive on the Monday after the task day and have since been planted in the Breathing Places area behind the library by Bob.

The Boules Court interpretation panel was installed and the three seats plus Jim Heald's bench were treated with preservative. The tree sculpture and ground sculptures were also treated and further repairs made to the Breathing Places interpretation panel.

Next Task Day – 28 November 2009

Tasks likely to include maintenance work on shrub beds. It was also agreed to take a look at the fenced area near to Garth Road and possibly install some additional stakes. The tree sculpture will be given another coat of preservative if the weather is ok and also the wood in the stocks.

A meeting with Jonathan will be arranged if Micaela is available.

Mark will submit the parking request and send the task day email.

3.9 Bird Survey

Patrick advised that a new survey had been received from Ian Hilton and was waiting to be typed up by his secretary. It was agreed that Mark will write to Ian on behalf of the group to thank him for conducting these surveys, which have now been running for approximately a year.

3.10 Painting of Bowling Green Huts

Jonathan has advised that before committing to supplying paint to allow the doors and woodwork of the Bowling Green huts to be painted by the group in the spring he will need to discuss this with Adrian.

3.11 Senior Citizens' Bench

Towards the end of last year Patrick established that the Senior Citizens were interested in funding a bench that could be sited in the shade from where the bowls could be watched. He has followed this up but not received a response, so will speak to them again.

3.12 Green Flag Award Ceremony

The Green Flag presentation was held at Vernon Park on 22nd October. Micaela and Bob attended on behalf of the group and reported that it went well.

There is a Greenspace Forum on 17 November at the Town Hall but nobody is able to attend from the group.

3.13 Funding of Projects by the District Partnership

On hold pending recovery and return to work of Brian Nash. Patrick has sent Brian a get-well card on behalf of the group and we wish him a full and speedy recovery.

3.14 Access to Co-Op

The access ramp / steps are now illuminated and Patrick reported that he thought the condition of the ramp and steps is satisfactory.

3.15 Corner of Garth Road

Adrian advised that the fence has been repaired several times and is being inspected regularly. Patrick suggested that some additional stakes were needed to improve security further and this will be looked at during the next task day.

4.0 Fundraising Activities

4.1 Status of Funds

Current bank balance: £2,686

Committed Funds: £790 (Interpretation)

Working balance: £1,896

Income since the last meeting is £250 from Marple Business Forum donated towards the Boules Court interpretation panel.

Expenditure includes £16.50 for the poppy wreath laid during the Remembrance Service and £22 for preservative for benches and sculptures. An invoice for £790 for the Boules panel is still waited.

5.0 Monthly Park Report

Bob advised that British Waterways have now finished the work on the canal towpath and the woodwork chicane at the entrance from the canal has been reinstated.

Bob also advised that Marple Hall School were proposing to provide a working party to help in the park. Initial thoughts were that they could help with the laying of a bark-chip surface to the nature trail pathway starting near the cinema and running alongside the canal. It would need to be decided exactly how this should be done before commencing work.

The graffiti on the skate park quarter-pipe has been removed.

Any Other Business

6.1 Christmas Dinner

Micaela presented a number of options and it was agreed to choose the Hare & Hounds at Mill Brow this year. This is proposed for 1pm on Saturday 5th December and deposits and menu selections are now required as soon as possible.

6.2 Naming of entrance road

Micaela asked about any news regarding the naming of the entrance road into the park that was mentioned several months ago. As we have heard nothing about this Mark will make enquiries with Dave Burrows.

7.0 Date of next Meeting:

Monday 8th February 2010 at 6pm in Marple Library.