



Woodcote Millennium Green Trust

Charity Registered Number 1075872

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Minutes of the AGM for 2023 of the Woodcote Millennium Green Trust held on Wednesday 15 March 2023 at 8pm at Epsom Sports Club

Trustees in attendance were: Mark Swan and Jason Cowling via Zoom link; Liz Frost; Alister Harwood; Luke Jennings; Paul Masters; Allan Stamper

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chairman Mark Swan (MS) welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming. He and Jason Cowling (JC) apologised for having to attend via zoom but they both have covid!

All the above trustees were present, along with Chris Frost our Life President, seven residents and guest Stewart Cocker, Countryside Manager EEBC representing Sam Whitehead.

MS thanked Stewart for coming along to talk about the installation of a special bench. It was noted that there would be an additional item immediately after the apologies for Stewart to speak.

MS also thanks Luke Jennings (LJ) for setting up the online element of the AGM!

MS thanked Emma Swan for offering to take the minutes.

2 Apologies for absence

Debby Saxby, Brian Saxby, Derek Warrilow

3 Covid Bench

Stewart said he was standing in for Sam Whitehead as she is unwell and would read out her notes for us. Please refer to Appendix 1 for the notes.

MS noted that the bench had not in fact yet been installed and he understood that it was due to be done on Monday 20 March.

4 Minutes Of 2022 AGM

The actions agreed were reviewed – all had been done or progressed.

No other comments from the floor and the Minutes were approved.

5 Trustees Report and Annual Accounts

Trustees report

Points of note:

Andrew Broadbent has retired from the Hospital Trust and so has resigned as Trustee – the MG Trust is awaiting a replacement.

Amazon Smile has now stopped

Achievements – the Trustees are very pleased to have planted a tree under the Queen’s Green Canopy scheme

There were no questions on the report itself.

Accounts

Allan Stamper (AS) noted that it had been a simple and straightforward year – no major outgoings this year. Donations were about 13% so gift aid will be quite significant this year based on that.

Volunteers did lots of the pond work so no cost to MGT which is great

Investments – overall fund went down slightly but very much due to market conditions.

Bank interest is tiny.

There was a discussion around whether there was any large expenditure anticipated this year.

- JC noted that the ride on tractor may need a full service
- Someone asked if the paths are being repaired – JC confirmed that 2 areas need remedial work and he is awaiting a quotation
- The plaque for the new tree (Queen’s canopy) is being donated by Alister Harwood (AH)
- Currently investigating an eco-friendly replacement of the wooden edging on the sundial – awaiting costs

6 Effect of climate change on the Green

MS noted that the MG was very lucky that the pond “survived” last year’s exceptionally hot/dry summer. Originally the pond had been lined with puddle clay but this cannot be used as a liner any more. In future if the pond needs relining it would have to be done differently and perhaps it would be sensible to start looking at quotations this year as it may be very significant expenditure. Ideally any liner would need a 15 year guarantee.

It was agreed that this would be a big project to take on and the previous work in 2018 was disruptive to the environment so should not be underestimated. AS noted that the Trust does have £75,000 in investments so could spend the money even if it is fairly significant. That is what that fund is for – to secure the future of the MG.

AH suggested the Trust get some professional advice on this. Across the south east are ponds going to disappear in summer if there is an x degree increase in temperature? It would be good to understand what the latest thinking is from environmentalists. This was agreed.

Action: MS to speak to Stewart Cocker and his team as he could perhaps help advise the Trust with his experience of Epsom Common Stew ponds.

Action AH to speak to Atkins to see if they would give some advice on a pro bono basis.

It was noted that the pond was down to about 2 foot of water in the worst of the heatwave last year.

JS also mentioned that the Trust has changed the pond management strategy and is no longer using Aquajoy for weed control – trying to use more environmentally friendly products and manage the pond with twice yearly clear outs by volunteers. A supplementary question was does clearing the pond of weed reduce the effect of drought? It was thought that the lilies had helped to keep the pond where other ponds had dried out completely last summer.

MS noted that there can be a fire risk in dry conditions. Difficult to do much about that.

7 Future plans

It was noted that the building work at bottom of Pine Hill has made a mess and caused quite a bit of disturbance along the side of the MG there. Question was asked - can we ask the builders to make good on MG? **Action MS to speak to them**

Suggestion – ask for ideas in next newsletter of where our supporters would like the MG to go and what they would like done...

Comments were made to say that maybe nothing needs to change or be done specifically – we should all be trying to keep it as it is. It is meant to be a woodland area not a park.... Idea was always to make it reasonably open so that it feels safe and accessible but nothing more. Trustees should not feel that they have to have a project to do on MG – it should just be looked after.

8 Any other business

LJ wanted a note of thanks for all the volunteers who come and pick up litter and who make the MG look great; also thanks to Richard Lea for photos. Lots of people just do things in the background which is fantastic and helps the MG stay as it is.

LJ also reported on the digital stats: 6,500 visitors to website, 1,900 individual page views – older users typically. 58% UK users but loads of overseas visitors – have never had so many countries on the list!

Someone asked if there is anything else we can do from a technology perspective, eg. Twitter? LJ felt that there wasn't really – most people use FB in our demographic. It was asked how many people follow us on FB? LJ was not sure. Someone also noted that the FB page is not included on our newsletter – need to add **Action MS**

It was noted that the banner put up on the MG for maintenance session had been a good investment and has improved visibility locally.

MS reiterated his thanks to Richard Lea who had a slide show of photos to share after the formal AGM business.

MS noted that Andrew Asbury may be the new contact at Epsom & St Helier. He is looking to set up a “green team” and would like to nominate somebody he just needs to have a little more time to think about who’s best to be the MG representative. It was noted that the Trust needs to have someone in place by September.

JC had a few items:

Oak processionary moth (OPM) caterpillars will reappear shortly. Several years ago, we found these on a couple of our trees. The guidance at the time involved specialists coming on site and removing these nests. This was an attempt to contain the spread of the moth in the local area. However, this hasn’t quite worked as this pest is now quite common throughout Surrey and Greater London.

The advice now is to mark off the area and put-up signs informing people what these are and to advise to keep your distance. These caterpillars will be seen from April through June.

The Trust will actively be looking for these during this time.

Duke Of Edinburgh: For the last two years the Millennium Green Trust has been sponsoring local young people as part of the Duke of Edinburgh awards scheme.

Bronze requires an hour per week for 3 months and Silver requires an hour per week for 6 months, so a huge commitment from anyone that signs up. Since the last AGM we have had 4 young people volunteer as part of this scheme.

Activities include keeping the Green generally tidy and clean, being part of any ad-hoc maintenance sessions, delivering of the bi-annual newsletters and you may even have seen and read, writing a small piece to be included in the newsletter itself (which is additionally good publicity!).

JC wanted to thank and congratulate these young volunteers:

Laura Rodriguez, Eva D’Souza, Roisin Harkin and wish them luck completing the remaining elements of their Bronze award; Harry Castledine (who originally volunteered in 2021 for his Bronze award) who has since returned and in 2022 completed his Silver as well.

Another person is about to start their DofE and there have now been 8 or 9 people supported to do their volunteering with the MGT.

MS mentioned that the Trust had received an email from resident Rachel Hill who has seen Firecrest birds on the MG and also is excited by the fungus on the log piles and other signs of flourishing nature. JC is going to meet her.

With no further questions or comments, the meeting officially closed at 8.55pm.

Everyone was invited to stay for a glass of wine!

Appendix 1: Stewart Cocker - report to WMG

There's no question that the coronavirus pandemic has changed all our lives and has affected us all in so many ways.

Everyone here this evening will have a Covid tale to tell, from mild inconveniences to major life changing events. Collectively the world has grieved for so many lives lost, and celebrated lives saved by the tireless work and dedication of hospital staff and carers and the roll-out of the vaccination programme which allowed the world to slowly open and resume a degree of normality.

In November 2021, Councillor Hannah Dalton put forward a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Bid to secure funding for ten metal and four rustic Covid Memorial benches, to be placed in each ward of the Borough. The ethos of the bid was to provide a place of reflection to remember those who died and all who worked so hard for their community as well as a lasting reminder for future generations.

Members of CIL Panel voted unanimously in support of this application and funding was granted for the project to go ahead. During 2022, after a few covid related delays, the metal benches were manufactured by a specialist commemorative bench maker, Roll and Scroll, and were installed in each ward of the Borough.

Metal Benches

1. Mount Hills Garden (Town)
2. Dorking Road (Stamford)
3. Shadbolt Park (Cuddington)
4. Ewell Court House (Ewell Court)
5. The Grove (Ewell Village)
6. Auriol Park (Auriol)
7. Alexandra Recreations Ground (College)
8. Nonsuch Park (Nonsuch)
9. Longrove Park (Court)
10. Stoneleigh Broadway (Stoneleigh)

Wooden Benches

- Epsom Common (Stamford)
- Epsom Downs (Woodcote)
- Horton Country Park (Ruxley)
- Hogsmill (West Ewell)

After the first round of benches were installed, Councillor Liz Frost and Councillor Steven McCormick, contacted the Streetcare Manager to ask if a bench had been considered for Millennium Green. As Millennium Green is not Council owned land, it had been bypassed in early conversations about proposed bench locations. However, on reflection it was felt that it was ideal, both in proximity to Epsom Hospital and for its peaceful, natural surroundings, which perfectly summed up the reflective nature of the project.

After a productive meeting with members of the Millennium Green Committee, the Streetcare Manager, secured funds from the Council's bench replacement programme and the final metal bench was ordered and installed today on Millennium Green, just in time for the National Day of Reflection on 23 March 2023, where the nation will come together to remember our loved ones who've died, support people who are grieving, and connect with each other.

The National Day of Reflection is marked with a minute's silence at noon, a nationwide network of Walls of Reflection, and a series of grief-themed online programmes hosted by the Marie Curie charity, who provide care and support through terminal illness.

We hope that the benches around the borough will be cherished and a statement of a community coming together and supporting each other through an unprecedented period of our lives.