

Minutes of the Footpath and Amenities Group of ARPC held on 23/10/2017.

Present: Peter Hetherington in the chair, Di Eaton, Mike Eaton, Lynn French, Graham French Peter Gibbons, Jan Gooders, Tony Hughes, Steven Sowerby and Tracy Lambourne, parish clerk.

Apologies: Julian Knight.

Minutes of the last meeting held on 03/04/2017: Agreed and signed.

Matters Arising:

1. Planting of Field Maples along the Stert Road needs to happen soon or will need to be deferred to next year. They would cost £2 each and need to be planted by November to establish over the winter, with watering-in critical. Permission needed from landowners & clarification of positioning so as not to block vision for farmers coming off the fields.
2. No update from Aston Rowant School re: nature walks, despite several approaches.
3. The willows at Fiveways need pollarding – Mike to do shortly.

Official Opening of the Moors Footpath: Friday November 3rd at 2pm by the cricket field, arranged to give publicity to the charities and donors towards the cost. Photos to go in Parish Notes, Chinnor Pump, Thame Gazette and hopefully the Oxford Mail. Children from Aston Rowant school to be present at the request of T.O.E and arrangements to be made for a ribbon to cut – Peter Gibbons to arrange. Tea & biscuits for after the opening in Aston Rowant church as a school assembly prevents doing so there.

Fiveways report and further work: Mike acknowledged that the whole area needs a bit of attention. The dam is silting up due to a particularly dry year and the recently planted wildflowers have established particularly, well to the point of getting out of hand. The “walk-through” also needs to be cut back and cleared of weeds and brambles which are making many walkers & ramblers walk round it instead. Footfall is down due to work being carried out at the Blue Cross in Lewknor and it was felt that the path needed widening. Several branches came down in Church Lane after recent high winds and local farmers have been asked to help clear these. It was agreed to reduce expenditure on planting to allow funds for George Stevens to strim and clear the area.

Mike reported that 200 English Bluebells have been planted to replace the Spanish variety, plus Wood Anemones and Star of Bethlehem, but no more daffodils. Both the holly and the gorse are doing well, as are the trout in the stream.

Signage was discussed further – probably to be a map of the area with essential features highlighted, together with various historical features. Vandalism has occurred to a sign for the Aston Rowant Discovery Trail in AR Nature Reserve Car Park. Black enamel paint has been sprayed on it which will be difficult to remove so the sign will probably have to be removed.

Various options discussed as to how to avoid this on any new sign at Fiveways but not considered a major issue due to the location. Mike and Tony to arrange mock-ups of the proposed layout/graphics.

Snowdrop Sunday & Duck Race: Arranged for 11th February, which is a week later than this year to ensure the snowdrops are fully flowering. More bodies needed on the day to ensure two shifts to cover the day - 2 people at the top, 2 in the river and 2 runners – at least 12 people, plus help with car parking. Adverts to go on KBAR seeking volunteers to help on the day and to ensure people “save the date”.

Historical & Nature Outings for Aston Rowant School: Nothing has been arranged this year (see matters arising above) or currently planned. Efforts to continue to arrange this soon. Meanwhile, an historical walk through the villages has been planned for the local U3A on Wednesday 9th May 2018, starting at 2pm from Kingston Blount Village Hall with tea & cake to follow, again at Aston Rowant church.

Improving Paths in the Parish Bridleway & Footpath Surfaces: More planings have been ordered to replenish stocks after the Moors Path renovation and it is proposed to use 25% to improve the lanes that cross the centre of Kingston Blount, particularly those used by school children gaining access to the bus. The remaining 75% to be used in Church Lane Aston Rowant to fill pot holes and generally improve the surface.

Peter Hetherington will meet with the Chiltern Society to discuss replacing stiles with gates on footpaths within the parish. They will secure grants for the materials and provide the labour themselves.

The next Parish walk is on Sunday 11th January at 10.00 AM - 5½ miles, starting from the National Trust car park at the top of Watlington Hill and held jointly with Thame and Wheatley Ramblers. Details to go on the Parish web-site/KBAR. An observation was made that there appear to be less people coming to these from our parish and more from Chinnor, Thame or Wheatley. Two other walks have been held since the last meeting, one in May starting at The Lambert Hotel and another from The Leathern Bottel in August.

Village Flower Tubs: Continued thanks go to Simon Coulon. It should be noted that he has replaced, free of charge, the tub which was damaged at the chicane by Icknield Close, and he will be undertaking further planting for Winter in the next few weeks.

Litter Picking Update: nothing to report.

New Projects: It was felt that the current projects are enough to be going on with, but that priority should be given to clearing out the stream in Church Lane prior to the Duck Races in February, along with investigating who is responsible for controlling the sluice gates from Aston Park Lake into the stream to ensure a decent flow of water in the stream for the event.

Next meeting: will be at 8:00pm on Monday 16th April 2018, at Di & Mike Eaton’s house.