

ELSWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Fardell's Lane Reserve Committee meeting held on-site and at Elsworth Pavilion at 11:00 on 19th February 2006

Present

Berry Kenny (Chairman), Alan Farrow, Ian Hardy, Ian Maddison, Ruth Moulder, Gordon Thwaites & Paul Harding (Minutes).

Apologies

Robin Grange, Tony Martin, Ian Penfold & James Witheroe.

1. Site visit

• Gate at Fardell's Lane entrance

The gate has been hung and is padlocked. It was agreed that consideration should be given to erecting a low picket fencing on either side of the gate and planting hawthorn behind the fence and in the remaining gap. PH commented that he had some 2 year hawthorns in pots that could be used. (See Item 6).

• Surgery on ash trees on Fardell's Lane boundary

Some members commented that the tree surgery had been more drastic than they had expected. The closed canopy "tunnel" effect on this part of the lane has been lost. BK & PH commented that the extent of the surgery was only that considered to be necessary to: a) protect the public from obvious danger from dead, decaying and unbalanced branches; b) ensure as far as possible the long-term survival of these trees. It was noted that one tree had been felled completely because it unsafe to a very low level.

• Paths

New wood chippings and coarse sawdust, provided by Adrian Parfitt, have been spread along the path through the blackthorn spinney.

• Stacks of dead wood

It was noted that the small stacks of dead wood, particularly in the blackthorn spinney, are a potential fire risk. They are in an area where fire could be a particular hazard for nearby properties with thatched roofs, or with elderly residents, not to mention the integrity of the site itself. PH commented that there are no particular benefits for wildlife from stacking small dead wood in this way. Dead wood should be allowed to lie where it falls.

• Felling of dead elms

This was completed successfully. It was agreed that the two accumulations of lop-and-top should be left to decay where they were and would soon be overgrown by brambles.

- **Recent plantings**

Most of these have been a notable failure due to damage by rabbits, deer and probably humans. One surviving oak sapling had been burnt to the ground recently when somebody set fire to a stack of small dead wood that had been placed around the sapling.

- **Log seats in the meadow**

These seem to be being used, but unfortunately litter and broken bottles accumulate around them.

- **Ash tree beside the pond**

A long low branch extending towards the meadow will be reduced because it is unstable and also casts a lot of shade on the pond when in full leaf. BK & PH agreed that it should be reduced to about 2 metres from the main trunk, leaving two young, vigorous upright growths.

- **Ancient pear tree**

There was considerable debate about the need to remove some of the dead wood from the main (old) tree. Several members were opposed to any work on the tree, despite having received advice from SCDC Trees Officer that some work was necessary. Again, two factors have to be taken into consideration: public safety and the long-term survival of the tree. BK said that some overhanging dead wood would be removed. PH commented that the ancient tree had three younger suckers on the northern and western sides, which would eventually replace the ancient tree.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 9th October 2005

These were approved without correction and signed by the Chairman.

3. Matters arising not dealt with elsewhere

- **Open meeting**

Carry forward to next meeting.

Action: Next

Agenda

- **Transfer of ownership and SCDC visit**

IM reported that there had been no further developments – Carry forward to next meeting.

Action: Next

Agenda

- **Tree labels**

PH said that he was not inclined to progress this until feedback from the school had been received, but AF commented that labels on a few trees would be useful to other visitors. PH agreed to liaise with Tony Martin over the preparation of a few example labels, which could be put up to assess their readability and vulnerability to vandalism.

Action: PH & TM

4. Recent activities

- The tree surgery, felling of dead elms, planting of sapling oaks and field maples and construction of log seats had all been carried out since the last meeting (see Item 1 above).
- BK tabled copies of the costed work plan and a Summary of Costs, for information.
- Commenting on the Summary of costs BK noted that the costs of tree surgery of the ash trees on Fardell's Lane had been significantly higher than originally expected. BK had written to John Hellingsworth, but JH thought that there would be little prospect of additional funding from SCDC as they had been capped. IM suggested that the Committee should continue to follow this up with SCDC. **Action: BK**
- PH commented that purchasing chipped bark for paths from Madingley Mulch was an unnecessary expense because chippings from tree surgeons were available for little more than the cost of transport. Although these chippings might not be suitable for ornamental purposes in gardens, they were adequate for laying on paths. He suggested contacting Tim Hewitt at Eastern Landscape Services to obtain a supply. BK said he would try to obtain some chippings before spring. **Action: BK**

5. Tree planting

- Following a wide-ranging discussion it was agreed to plant a few saplings of native forest trees in inaccessible natural clearings in the blackthorn spinney, where the risk of vandalism might be minimized. IH and PH stressed the need to protect any planted trees against barking by deer and rabbits, and to ensure they were watered in at least the first 2 years after planting.
 - BK agreed to obtain 3 Oak (*Quercus rober*) and 3 Field Maple (*Acer campestre*) from Simpsons of Fordham, together with 1.5 to 2m high weldmesh tree guards, with posts, hare guards and ties.
- Action: BK**
- RM agreed to invite Rosemary Parfitt to look after these trees and she would also take the opportunity to talk to Rosemary about the potential fire hazard being created through stacking small dead wood.

Action: RM

6. Other future actions

• Paths

More chippings will be obtained to extend the "approved" network of paths (see Item 5).

• Gate and proposed fence on Fardell's Lane

BK agreed to obtain quotations for simple picket fencing, using tanalized timber to match the gate, to run from the gate to RM's boundary and

part-way on the other side of the gate, leaving a 1 m gap to the right of the gate when viewed from the Lane.

Action: BK

7. Involvement of Youth Club and School

- It was noted that the Youth Club no longer existed and this topic should be removed from future agendas.
- AF undertook to follow-up IP's letter to the Head Teacher following our last Committee meeting. AF suggested that guidance notes for teachers on what might be seen in the reserve in spring should be offered to the school, to encourage them to use the reserve. PH responded that this was exactly what he had provided to the Head Teacher in May 2005.

Action: AF

8. Any other business

None. There being no further other business, the meeting closed at 12:25pm.

9. Date, time and place of next meeting

To be arranged.

Signed

Committee Chairman

Date