

Minutes of a meeting of the Monks Wall Nature Reserve Management Committee, 17th January 2018, in the Council Chamber, Guildhall, Sandwich at 6:00pm

Present: The Mayor, Cllr Paul Graeme (in the Chair)
 Cllr Mrs Liote
 Cllr JE Franklin
 Cllr R Daw
 Mr A Henderson
 Mr M Chandler
 Mr K Chapman
 Mrs S Hunter

Cllr D Friend also attended

Officer: Amandajayne Hollobon-Baxter

10.01.18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted from Mr Andrew Lipczynski and it was noted that Dr M Walkey is no longer part of this Committee.

11.01.18 DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER SIGNIFICANT INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

12.01.18 MINUTES

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of 11th October 2017

RESOLUTION: These minutes were approved, agreed and signed.

13.01.18 REPORT: FINNS

To receive a verbal report from Mark Chandler (Finn's) regarding management of the Reserve, including:

(i) Mark Chandler advised that following a letter received last week from the Environment Agency (EA), who have failed to grasp the understanding of our claim. The EA have made a counter offer of £31,000 from MWNR's initial claim of £120,000 and a meeting is to be arranged asap between Julian Sampson and Jonathan Tenant from The EA.

The claim for the pen stock and sluice has been provisionally agreed by Jonathan Tenant of The Environment Agency. To be implemented asap.

RESOLUTION: It was agreed that Finns meet with The Environment Agency asap regarding MWNR claim and that the pen stock and sluice be installed as soon as possible pending the complete outcome of this claim.

(ii) UK Power Networks have been chased again by Mark Chandler who is currently awaiting payment of £4719.00. These monies have been outstanding for over a year now and are backed dated to 6 years ago. Mark Chandler suggested that MWNR Committee could threaten to terminate existing agreement in the hope of speed up a resolution from UK Power Networks.

RESOLUTION: Committee agreed to terminate agreement. Mark Chandler to facilitate.

(iii) The flailing, rushes and track being opened up were dealt with by Rhino Plant Hire last October (2017) and has been a great success. The Warden has even noticed a resident flock of 20 odd Curlew. However, the flailing must be done annually to ensure maintenance. Mark Chandler suggested that flailing is repeated with a chemical treatment late September/Autumn 2018.

RESOLUTION: Agreed unanimously to flail and chemical treat end of September 2018.

(iv) The draft management plan had been circulated and comments had been invited. The Warden, Ken Chapman, was very happy with this document having worked closely with Mark Chandler. The Warden felt it was focused, succinct and adoptable. Committee agreed to the adoption of the Management Plan. Mark Chandler to finalise and Acting Town Clerk to circulate.

RESOLUTION: Adopt, finalise and circulate the Management Plan.

14.01.18

WARDEN'S REPORT

To receive verbal and written update from the Reserve Warden, Mr Ken Chapman covering September to December 2017.

1. Visits were made on about 15 occasions during the period, averaging 1.5 hours per visit.
2. At this time of the year, most of the work consists of general inspection and regular counting of wintering bird life – some resident wildfowl such as Mallard and Teal, a flock of about 20 Curlew, a few Common Snipe, resident Kestrel and Buzzard etc.
3. Since the cutting of the rushes in the Autumn, more birds have been seen in the open meadow areas and no foxes have been seen since the rush clearance. This has improved the area as a safer haven for other wildlife but rush-cutting or spraying will need to become a regular management activity until it is permanently reduced in area.
4. Water levels stayed fairly low throughout the Autumn and, because of the suspension of all water abstraction licences in the Stour Valley by the Environment Agency in July 2017, it was not possible for me to open the river sluice to top up the ditches. However, more recent winter rain has raised the levels to the tops of the ditches anyway and there is currently (January 2018) standing water in some places in the fields.
It may be that the clay which underlies most of the fields is returning to a permanently damper state after several years of drying out.
5. Fences and gates were checked regularly to make sure that they were sound.
6. Some scrub clearance was done in the north-west section of the Reserve, to assess the possibility of opening up a footpath there.
7. I had occasional liaison with Roger Dunn, the grazier, for example regarding fallen stock. Cattle were taken off the main reserve fields in October for the winter months. About 50 cull ewes were grazed on the drier northern section of the Reserve for several months in the Autumn.
8. There was a need for clearance of small amounts of litter from the Reserve entrance gates, deposited by motorists pulling in there.

9. No members of the public were seen on any of the visits that I made, apart from regular visits made by the previous Reserve warden.

The control of foxes, magpies etc. will perhaps need considering in future.

The Mayor asked when MWNR may open? The Warden responded that there are accessibility issues which need addressing before opening can occur. Mark Chandler is looking into how to ensure the public do not interact with cattle. Access may be gained from A256 Monks Way for circulate route to view over wet areas. MWNR will be dog free because of livestock and birds and signage and arrows this way are required. DEEP WATER signage will also be required and all the life buoys are out of order. Sheila Coop, EKHR may assist with signage. A pedestrian kissing gate would also be required. Cllr Daw suggested that The Footpath Society be contacted for the kissing gates.

RESOLUTIONS: The Warden to list what exactly needs doing together with quotations and make enquiries regarding signage for the next meeting.

The Warden to supply Acting Town Clerk with a copy of Sheila Coop, EKHR's, document.

Mark Chandler to obtain quotations for hedge cutting on the embankment of A256.

Cllr Daw to locate contact for the Footpath Society for The Warden to contact and discuss.

All information required for the next meeting.

15.01.18

FINANCE

(i) To receive a statement of the Monks Wall Nature Reserve draft balance as at 30.11.2017. £27,685.95 available for improvements but EA claim and stewardship Tier (£3360.84) are still awaited.

RESOLUTION: Mark Chandler to chase. Balances noted by Committee.

(ii) To receive and consider invoice from M Chandler/Finns for annual management of Monks Wall Nature Reserve for 2018. Finns invoice for £1680.00 was presented to Committee for consideration of payment.

RESOLUTION: Committee agreed to pay.

(iii) To consider any forthcoming expenditure/income relevant to the Monks Wall Nature Reserve. Covered above in time 5 with list and quotations being sought for the next Committee meeting.

16.01.18

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 11th April 2018, at 6pm, in the Council Chamber.