

**Minutes of a meeting of the Monks Wall Nature Reserve Management Committee, 11<sup>th</sup> July 2018, in the Council Chamber, Guildhall, Sandwich at 6:00pm**

**Present:** The Mayor, Cllr Veronica Liote (in the Chair)  
 Cllr RA Daw  
 Cllr JE Franklin  
 Cllr JJ Watts  
 Mrs S Hunter  
 Mr M Chandler, Finns  
 Mr K Chapman

**Cllr D Friend also attended**

**Officer:** Amandajayne Hollobon-Baxter

**07.07.18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Cllrs Gisbey and Graeme and Mr A Henderson gave their apologies.

**08.07.18 DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER SIGNIFICANT INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

**09.07.18 MINUTES**

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018  
 Mrs S Hunter advised that her apologies had been given and the minutes would be amended accordingly.

**RESOLUTION: Proposed acceptance by Cllr Franklin, seconded by Cllr Watts. These minutes were therefore approved, agreed and signed.**

**10.07.18 FINNS**

(i) To receive and consider a written management report from Mark Chandler.

Inspected recently, very dry. EA still waiting for decision regarding compensation. Compliance in relation to the management plan is not great at the moment due to lack of water on site.

(ii) To consider best approach to public access as per Mark Chandler's report.

EA have placed signage in relation to flood warnings. Gazing signs to be requested now cattle are present. Public access signs still required.

**RESOLUTION: M Chandler to arrange for grazing signs. K Chapman to liaise with Mark Ansell re other signage.**

(iii) To consider maintenance schedule and suggestions contained within Mark Chandler's report.

A track is required through to A256 before public access can be offered. Ditch and second bird hide clearance is required but need to wait for the right time of year. M Chandler has not yet received a response from EA re water suspension and will chase. Animals and birds are not surviving so culling of

foxes was discussed. Cllr Watts proposed that culling is investigated. Seconded by Cllr Daw. M Chandler to discretely speak to local Natural England advisor and report back. Cllr Franklin proposed that the extra works be carried out by MRF Contracting. Seconded by Cllr Watts. Agreed.

**RESOLUTION: M Chandler to chase EA in the Autumn re water licence and suspension. M Chandler to also speak with Natural England re culling. M Chandler to arrange for MRF Contracting to all carry out all quoted works.**

(iv) To receive and consider letter received from Julian Sampson dated 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2018.

Very detailed summary report with compensation being offered to MWNR of either £47,601 or £60,966. After lengthy discussions it was proposed by Cllr Daw that Finns allow EA another two months to respond and if nothing is heard then Finns on behalf of MWNR make a counter offer to EA of £55,000. Seconded by Cllr Watts and agreed.

**RESOLUTION: Allow two more months for EA to reconsider their offer and if nothings is heard Finns are to make a counter of £55,000.**

(v) To receive and consider quotations from Finns on behalf of Robert Montgomery LLP, MRF Contracting and J Thompson to clear the island in front of Bird Hide 2.

Quotations discussed.

**RESOLUTION: Proposed by Cllr Daw and seconded by Cllr Watts that J Thompson to receive deposit payment and complete fencing. M R F Contracting to carry out all works subject to clarification that stumps can be pulled out rather than cut down. M Chandler to confirm.**

## 11.07.18

### WARDEN'S REPORT

To receive and consider Warden's Report from the Reserve Warden, Mr Ken Chapman covering April to June 2018.

MANAGEMENT ISSUES: Water Management:

Water levels remained at a high level across the main part of the Reserve throughout April and May, as a result of last winter's rainfall inputs. During June levels have fallen steadily due to the absence of any rain and evaporation due to high temperatures. No extra 'topping-up' from the Stour has been conducted as the restriction on water abstraction issued by the Environment Agency in July 2017 still apparently stands. (Please see below for impact on wildlife). Internal control of the water levels by the installation of proper sluices forms a key component of the Management Plan for the Reserve which was approved by the Management Committee in January 2018.

Management for rare plants: I have continued to do some minor scrub clearance work at one or two small sites on the Reserve and the adjacent road embankment, in order to increase suitable conditions for wild orchids.

Environment Agency: The Agency have erected permanent hinged signs at entrances to the Reserve which are designed to be 'opened up' by them in times of imminent flood to warn any members of the public who might be thinking of going onto the land. We have also arranged to share padlocks on all the main entrances, to ease access.

The Agency did a cut of the grass on a section of the river bank near their main sluice and as far as the first bird hide, but appear, at the time of writing, to have left all other embanked areas uncut. (Please see below for impact on wildlife.)

#### WILDLIFE NOTES, APRIL-JUNE 2018 Birds

With high water levels at the beginning of the Spring period, a number of pairs of Mallard and a pair of Mute Swans were breeding and several broods of ducklings and two cygnets were produced. Moorhen and Coot also bred, but no wading birds such as Lapwing. By early June, it was clear that almost all of the young birds had vanished and it is assumed that this is due to predation from the resident Foxes, Crows and Magpies which are such a negative feature of the reserve at all times of the year. The higher water levels at the beginning of the Spring did give the water-birds some chance, but as the water level fell, this presumably allowed the Foxes to get at the young birds. The only prospect of building up the sort of numbers of waterfowl that this site could realistically support would seem to be the excavation of permanent lake areas with secure nesting islands and also the control of the above-mentioned predators.

Insects. A survey of the butterflies and Odonata (Dragonflies and Damselflies) has been conducted by Ian Hodgson, Warden at Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory. This will give a very useful up-date on the current status of these two important groups. The restricted cutting of the grass on the embanked areas this year has been of benefit to butterflies, with Marbled White especially abundant.

Flora: Musk Mallow has been making a fine show along the Monks Wall itself, along with many other wild plants. The nationally-rare Lizard Orchid has been in good numbers but what were identified last year as a colony of Southern Marsh Orchids within the Reserve are, in fact, Common Spotted Orchids. A Potentilla was found growing by the roadside verge near the A256 roundabout and identified as Sulphur Cinquefoil (*P. recta*), a rare plant in Kent known from only about five other locations. Shortly after identification the whole verge was mown flat by the Highways people.

The Mayor thanked Mr Chapman for all his efforts.

#### 12.07.18 FINANCE

(i) To receive a statement of the Monks Wall Nature Reserve draft balance as at 31<sup>st</sup> May 2018.

**RESOLUTION: Noted and agreed**

(ii) To consider any forthcoming expenditure/income relevant to the Monks Wall Nature Reserve.

Higher tier scheme balance payment for 2017/18 is due together with basic payment scheme was due in December.

**RESOLUTION: This had taken place during the meeting item by item.**

#### 13.07.18 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2018, at 6pm, in the Council Chamber.