



Friends of Uddens & Cannon Hill Woodlands

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the FRIENDS OF UDDENS AND CANNON HILL

Wednesday 2 April 2014

7.30 pm

COLEHILL MEMORIAL HALL

MINUTES

1. Janet Healy introduced herself as the Acting Chair of the Group following the retirement of Michael Gorse and thanked everyone for attending. She also pointed out the appropriate fire exits and cloakroom facilities within the hall.
2. **Apologies** – none
3. **Minutes of AGM 18 March 2013**
Janet outlined the Minutes and explained that we have diversified from representing solely the Traveller Group campaign as the area is now being recognised for its value to the local community as a whole for its recreational, leisure and educational purposes.
4. **Matters Arising** – none raised
5. **Chairman's Report**
Special thanks were officially made to Michael Gorse for his sterling work over the past two years in conjunction with Andy Hartstone, to enable the Group to move forward and diversify into its present form.

Janet explained that the Charity we are today is seen as a Community project and an important open air facility encompassing Uddens and Cannon Hill woodlands along with Colehill, Stapehill and Ferndown thus uniting all residents in the area, to its benefit.

The Dorset Wide Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Show people Site Allocations Development Plan Document consultation on site options took place in November 2011. There were so many objections raised, not least our 6000+ signature petition, that an Alternative Site Options Consultation was formed following a Needs Assessment. This was published in December 2013 and concluded that existing and future needs for transit sites for the South East Dorset conurbation was 25 to satisfy requirements up to 2028. This is the same number put forward in the main consultation in November 2011.

Poole had put in a planning application for 12 transit pitches at Marshes End and six sites at Broadstone but both sites were turned down by the Gypsy Council. This may have put more pressure on East Dorset District to come up with the 25 transit pitches.

Bournemouth still insists it will provide no temporary pitches despite knowing that this will prevent them from using the full power of the Law in moving on illegal camps.

The Alternative Sites Consultation on the new sites only will take place later this summer. Janet urged everyone to be aware that it is only on NEW sites and will not include those already put forward in the 2011 consultation.

She urged that everyone realise this does not mean our woodlands are safe as the original Cannon Hill south site is still on the books.

Janet confirmed that at the appropriate time we will put the details on our website to enable

the viewing of the document online. Copies should also be available at libraries and at Furzehill. She warned there may be equally contentious new sites coming forwards that may require further objections from the public.

The Pre Submission Public Consultation will amalgamate all sites going forward. This is likely to be later in 2015. If our woodlands are still included as a site we will send out a draft letter of objections to all our members. Each member needs to send in a written objection using the points we will give you, along with any new ones you can personally think of.

This is most important. As many people as possible must object as it will be getting more and more difficult to overturn decisions as the consultation progresses.

Janet promised that again, all details will be on our website. The Stour and Avon magazine also always give good notice of forthcoming consultations.

Unless the dates are then put back again, there will be a Public Examination in 2016 and at some point in 2016/17 the document will be approved. We of course will appear at the Public Examination to put our case.

We understand that the Dorset County Council will then put forward a Planning Application and East Dorset District Council will determine the application.

We should be able to send in written objection to the EDDC but once again everyone must write ie. yourselves, friends, family and neighbours, both at this stage and the pre submission stage.

Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Mineral Site Plan Consultation 2013-14

Janet confirmed that the AS02 Cannon Hill, AS17 Uddens Plantation and AS18 Wimborne site proposals have been withdrawn by the promoter and are not *currently* being considered but of course we will continue to monitor planning applications on the DCC website and will read any future consultations on minerals and update members if necessary.

Possible Household Recycling Centre on Uddens Trading Estate. Brook Road is too small and has no room to expand so DCC are looking to Ferndown/Uddens for a new site. Blunts Farm is under consideration.

Although we fought off an MBT/RDF (incinerator) plant once, Janet warned we will not find our objections easily accepted. The only plausible objections would be on the grounds of access and Janet confirmed she does still have the inspector's report so there may be some points arising from that which can be resurrected. Of course the type of pollution there may have been with the other plants will not apply to this site.

Membership

For those wanting to be on our emailing list or to become a Member, Chris was manning the table. A small donation was appreciated if enrolling a family. For anyone not having email facility we will endeavour to deliver important information by hand.

6. Treasurer's Report – Jeff Maple

Jeff introduced himself to the assembly and highlighted the need to provide funds for supplying equipment to enable the continued safety and assistance to those attending the various Work Parties along with some supplementary printing/office expenses. He confirmed that the biggest expense to the group had been the supplying of wood for the formation of a series of picnic bench/tables being sited within the area and was delighted with the assistance of a Grant which has funded this project.

7. **Work Parties – Andy Hartstone**

Andy introduced himself and outlined his background as a Volunteer Countryside Ranger performed alongside his full time occupation locally. He confirmed that there were six work parties held in 2013 and that attendance had far exceeded expectation. Although numbers lessened slightly after the initial outset, we still averaged 30-40 volunteers per session which is above many community ventures.

In conjunction with the Forestry commission who own the area, 4-5 work parties have been held to clear the invasive rhododendron which are expanding from the original beech and ornamental driveway to Uddens House and require management to prevent overpowering of other forestry species and wildlife. He pointed out that although very attractive when flowering, they do not provide food for any woodland animal/insect species and will spread by seed dispersal and root runs. Once cut down and sprayed the inevitable regrowth will be much easier to contain.

Wet and muddy pathways have improved access with the installation of drainage and gravel.

Andy pointed out the social side of attending work parties which attracted families who were able to enjoy the arrival of the frying pan with a 5ft handle and the sausage and bacon cooked within the embers of the bonfire at the end of each session! Children had assisted with the installation and personal naming of several bird boxes within the clearings and there are plans to erect two more picnic table/benches within the newly formed Glade area. Rustic pathways have been formed to guide people.

A further work party will be held on 13 April to continue improvements of the Glade area and also to begin opening up a pathway adjacent to Uddens Drive to follow on from the beech tree walk which will connect to the pathways at the top end of the area. There will be no bonfires now until the autumn to avoid fire risk. Birds do not nest within rhododendron and so no risk to them will be caused.

We are awaiting the approval of the FC before the installation of three picnic tables in the northern side of Cannon Hill.

Although the group have lots of ideas to enhance the area, in conjunction with the Forestry Commission, we are always pleased consider suggestions from the general community. The group are currently looking at the possible formation of a large wildlife pond.

8. **Election of Trustees**

Janet outlined the requirements of the group as a registered Charity and the need to place Trustees forward for possible re-election in rotation every three years. In accordance with protocol the positions had been advertised to all members prior to the meeting but had not received any new nominations. Therefore the existing three members of Chris Gibb, Andy Hartstone and Scott Whibley were standing for re-election and their brief manifestos had been published online and were available for consultation at the meeting. All three had been proposed and seconded within the Group and the public vote secured their further three year terms, unanimously.

Next year the positions will be advertised again should any other members wish to stand for election.

9. **Andrew Norris – Forestry Commission**

Andrew introduced himself to the Group and made a symbolic presentation of a pair of loppers to Andy as a token of the esteem the FC hold of the work parties and their input.

He outlined the history of the FC since 1919 post war when timber was in short supply and imports had ceased. By 1939 the woodlands were a more depleted resource. Labour to maintain the woodland was very much more intensive compared to modern techniques and his visual presentation clearly demonstrated the change from teams of manual workers to the one man, one fully equipped machine techniques of today.

The Sunseeker car rally had changed their dates which had altered the FC working schedule to accommodate but there will be removal much more timber over the next few years. Although this will initially change the face of the woodland it will be replanted. The rally has recently been taken over by Rally Dorset who may decide not to do the large amount of preparation and repairs required to utilise the woodland. The lack of ability to control parking and access to the woodland also creates loss of revenue and would be another consideration to their ceasing its use.

Andrew explained the mix of trees within the woodland and demonstrated with photographs the diverse birds it attracted. He was especially pleased to see crossbills flourishing.

There are concerns regarding the arrival of a fungal disease which is creating a red blight to the needles of some conifers. It is currently felt that Scots pine are less vulnerable to this and replanting may include bigger areas of it.

He confirmed Andy's earlier comments regarding the rhododendron which had been introduced in the late 18th century from Spain/Portugal. He also highlighted a condition known as 'honey madness' when bees feed from its flowers. It would appear to contaminate both bees and their honey. Beat Foresters will map Cannon Hill South and as previously said by Andy, this will slow down regrowth.

Work Parties pulling the Himalayan Balsam were 'eaten alive' due to the close proximity of the waterways bogged down with the plants and thus enabling the insurgence of pests. The plant originated in India/Pakistan and is now a major headache which is estimated to be needing in the region of £300m to eradicate/control. Bees love it as it provides lots of nectar but unfortunately they choose this to the exclusion of other plants in the vicinity and do not pollinate those. The plant dies off naturally in winter and having overwhelmed all other vegetation within its growth areas, leaves no covering on banks throughout the winter. Janet pointed out that it is already re-emerging this Spring to which Andrew suggested anyone out walking in the area could pull some up at any time and not have to wait for an official Work Party.

Andrew explained plans being discussed to perhaps hold a night walk in the future which would hopefully have sightings of the elusive to see, but distinctly heard, Night Jar and others.

Photos of various reptiles within the woodland habitat were displayed. Their lifestyles and the clear differences between slow worms, adders, grass and smooth snakes explained.

It was reported that Colin Elford, Wildlife Ranger had found bigger dormice living in pine as well as hazel plantations.

Andrew thanked the work parties for their input but felt that 'strictly speaking we all own the woods and the Forestry Commission manage it'.

He agreed with Andy's earlier comments that all suggestions to improve the area would be gratefully considered.

Janet thanked Andrew for his most interesting and informative talk and presented him with a bottle of Laphroaig whiskey.

Conclusion

Janet concluded the meeting by thanking all those who had attended and all those whose input in various categories had helped to make the Group what it is today. She urged everyone to continue to stick together and to help to make the Community Project a success for all to enjoy the woodlands.