

Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall meeting, Wednesday, 21 October 2009

MINUTES

Approximately 30 people were in attendance at The Preparatory School, Cherry Hinton Hall. Apologies were received from Mr Hill.

1. Welcome / introduction

Group Chair Bob Daines welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Dr Sturdy for providing the venue for the meeting.

2. Minutes and matters arising from 9 September meeting

Copies of minutes from the previous meeting were available. The minutes were agreed. Matters arising:

- David Brooks, Treasurer, announced that the bank account had been established
- Bob Daines mentioned that although a letter requesting that resurfacing and repair work to the surface immediately in front of the duck pond had not been sent; one would be in the next few days. A copy of the letter, plus any reply from the City Council, would be posted on the Website

3. Agreement on Group constitution

Michelle Bullivant introduced an emended version of the constitution, indicating the changes to the earlier draft – modifications included a more detailed ‘Aims and Principles’ and an Equal Opportunities statement.

Mr Holmes queried the need to have Officers named on the constitution - pointing out that this will no doubt mean the production of a new constitution document with new signatures following the election of Officers each year. Michelle Bullivant accepted that this was the case, but suggested we keep to this format, as some funding organisations require this arrangement as a condition of granting funds.

Members agreed to adopt the constitution as presented on a show of hands.

4. Maintenance and development priorities

Bob Hall introduced the item of identifying general priority themes, and suggested as a matter of course that Group members should use the general Friends email - chhfriends@gmail.com to raise issues, or alternatively call Stuart Newbold on 457225. As all committee members receive copies of emails, whoever picks up on an issue first would take responsibility for following it up.

Members were then invited to vote on the following general items in order to prioritise their importance:

Item	Votes received
Wildlife	17

Buildings and security	3
Heritage	3
Maintenance	16
Play areas	2
Propagation centre development	17
Trees	18

Other maintenance issues:

Locking of main gates

Harriett Sturdy, school Principal, mentioned that the school had offered to lock the main gate each term-time evening at 5.00 pm, but that the City Council had not got back to her regarding this offer. Judy Webb mentioned that at City Council employee cleaned and locked the toilets each evening at 7.00 pm, and that it would seem to make perfect sense if the same person also was responsible for locking a number of the gates to the Hall grounds.

Other items of particular note:

Bob Daines mentioned he would be seeking assurances from Debbie Kaye regarding a full and open consultation on the future of the propagation centre site and that FCCH would be involved in the consultation and proposals work-up going forward. Again, copies of correspondence would be posted on the Friends Website.

Harriett Sturdy mentioned that she was meeting with Dave Prinsep, Cambridge City Council head of Property, on Friday 26 October, to discuss options for the school such as use of part as a Victorian Garden for the children. Harriett mentioned she would be able to give feedback on discussions to the Group.

5. Guy Belcher, Cambridge City Council Nature Conservation Projects Officer

Stuart Newbold introduced Guy Belcher. Guy is part of the City Council's Environment and Planning Policy & Projects team, and has been in post for approximately 12 months.

Groups such as FCHH are extremely valuable. The government's 2006 National Environment and Rural Communities Act require local authorities to promote and sustain biodiversity in their areas. To achieve this, sites such as Cherry Hinton Hall is key, and I know the site very well. The bird sanctuary is designated as a wildlife site, and the stream running all the way down Daws Lane and Snakey Path is very important for wildlife, forming a key corridor all the way from East Pit off Lime Kiln Hill and down to East Barnwell Local Nature Reserve (LNR). I am already working with the Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook and am looking forward now to doing work with FCHH. The Act requires us to produce Management Plans for each wildlife site, something being worked on for Cherry Hinton Hall right now with a draft due to be ready for consultation early in 2010. All Cherry Hinton Hall could be designated as a LNR if it was desired.

Bob Daines: Were you consulted on the Natural Play area?

Guy: Yes, because the project involved the felling of some trees.

Bob Daines: The bird sanctuary; do we know what's in there?

Guy: We need better records here. There was a survey undertaken in 2005 but it's patchy – good information on flora, not so good on birds and mammals. In particular, the information on insect life is poor, although we know there are very valuable species there such as the hornet clearing moth.

Bob Daines: And what are your views on the 'Nature Play Trail' in there? There are to be signs, a path, etc. Some of us are worried; are you?

Guy: It's something that needs to be done carefully. What we do have is the Management Plan currently under construction. We will make sure that FCHH are directly approached for input into this document.

David Brookes: There's a small area by the stream towards the Sidney Farm end of Daws Lane which has been completely devastated.

Guy: This seems to have been work by the City Council's drainage team. I agree it has been badly damaged. Indeed, it will be difficult to get it back to good habitat.

Barbara Gordon: I questioned why all this was necessary and the reply I received was "we are using up money".

Barbara Oxley: We used to have many varieties of duck. And do you not think that signs saying not to feed the ducks and also to keep dogs on leads by the wildlife area would be useful?

Bob Hall: In the meantime what can we do to help?

Guy: It would help if you could record and cite species for us. I will also get FCHH on The Wildlife Trust rota for volunteers to do litter-picks etc by contacting Ian Webb.

Conclusions:

Species audit: It was thought best to leave this until the spring. However, please continue to record wildlife.

The draft Wildlife Management Plan for Cherry Hinton Hall will be made available late January / early February 2010 for FCHH members to have as much input as possible.

6. Sources of External funding and Grants

Michelle Bullivant mentioned that there were a number of external sources that had been identified for funding and that the committee will look further, especially with an eye to matching funds and criteria to FCHH priorities.

Stuart Newbold mentioned that, notwithstanding other sources of funding, he was in the process of making an application to the Cambridge Community Foundation (CCF) for a few hundred pounds to cover the cost of producing a new leaflet for shops etc, stationary and room hire, and other promotion. This would be considered by CCF and then by City Council Area Committee in the next few weeks.

Bob Daines asked members to let us know the sorts of items that they would like to see us get involved with and then we would do our best to secure some money.

7. Promotion

In addition to hopefully securing funding for a promotional leaflet, Robert Dryden agreed to do some radio and newspaper work, including on efforts to get repairs to the surface near the duck pond.

8. Open Forum / any other business

There was some discussion on the use of Cherry Hinton Hall for the Cambridge Folk Festival. Michelle Bullivant queried whether the site could sustain the Folk Festival over the long term. Many were supportive of its use as the venue; in particular it was agreed that some of the surpluses each year should be allocated to improvements to compensate users and also repairs to areas damaged during the Festival itself.

Harriett Sturdy suggested we ask Folk Festival organiser, Eddie Barcan, to one of our future meetings.

Sean Lang suggested that the Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall should take a small stall at the Folk Festival as a way of promoting the group and increasing membership, gathering feedback, and raising revenue.

Bob Hall mentioned that the Website is already getting hits from as far afield as Japan, Canada, Australia and the US.

Questions were raised as to why the site was unavailable for public use for a whole week prior to the Folk Festival. It was also noted that during this week the public were being deterred from trying to gain entry by security guards, including use of Alsatian dogs.

It was also questioned why access to the children's play area could not be retained whilst marking out the Folk Festival boundary? The Festival coincides with the first week of the school summer holidays so the timing was particularly hard on local parents.

Michelle confirmed that we would include an item on the Folk Festival on a future meeting agenda.

It was suggested that FCHH should engage with local secondary schools. Pupils could be encouraged to cherish Cherry Hinton Hall grounds. Some may even like to get involved e.g. with litter-picks. We should also ask if something about the Hall grounds and this group could be put in school newsletters to parents.

9. Date and venue of next meeting

*7.30 PM, WEDNESDAY, 20 JANUARY 2010, AT CHERRY HINTON BAPTIST
CHURCH ROOMS, FISHER'S LANE, CHERRY HINTON
(Corner of the High Street and Fisher's Lane, opposite the Baptist Church)*