

Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall meeting, 7.30 pm, Wednesday, 16 November 2011
The Baptist Church Centre, Fisher's Lane, Cherry Hinton

Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall is a group that is concerned about the usage, environment, welfare and future of the Cherry Hinton Hall grounds for the benefit of those who use it

28 people were in attendance at the Baptist Church Centre, Cherry Hinton. There were no apologies.

Bob Daines introduced Anthony French, Open Space Officer, Horticulture (new title), who had agreed to provide a report on where the City Council are in delivering the master plan plus other items of interest.

Anthony French firstly apologised for not providing a formal response to the Committee's letter to him and Eddie Barcan on 13 August 2011 – it would be preferable if members of the Committee could meet with Council Officers to go through these items – *Anthony French will try and organise a suitable date with Bob and others in order to progress this.*

Master Plan Delivery: Anthony French

It may look as though not much is happening, but behind the scenes quite a lot has been going on. A funding question had needed to be addressed in terms of the definition of what constitutes our "open space" under section 106 planning regulations (these S106 monies are provided by local developers as part of the planning application process).

Funding:

As of 15th November, £75,000 has been secured for landscaping including around the old propagation centre area. The City Council then has a further £350,000 set aside for master plan delivery. However, the City Council will also seek matching funds in the form of a Heritage Lottery Fund grant application. It had been the Council's intention to apply for this early this year. However, the City Council are also pursuing a Lottery bid for Jesus Green and advice from the Lottery administrators was to wait until this was concluded before submitting the bid for Cherry Hinton Hall.

Anthony said he will provide a Committee report for the January 2012 Community Services Scrutiny Committee which will formally sign-off on the £75K being used to create open space from the former propagation centre site so this will be available for public use by the summer. The works intended are to –

- Remove the privet hedge – we would like to replant the hedge this coming winter
- Remove the green fence
- Take out the shrubbery around the bottom part of the brook, also trying to stop debris from falling into the brook and providing more light and biodiversity

- NB1 the service yard area will be retained for City Council use
- NB2 the hard surface in the old propagation centre will have to stay in place just for now

This should all provide a very large area of open space with good views to the lake and across the whole site. The idea is that this provides a 'blank canvass' to assist in making the application for the additional £350K.

This winter, Kenny McGregor will also start planting new trees inside the fence along the Daws Lane boundary. This is being funded by a £50,000 sum allocated to planting trees in parks and open spaces. The plan is also to 'underplant' in here so as to provide a nice informal line. Anthony French agreed to consult the Friends on species types prior to purchase and planting.

Questions and Feedback:

- There was some disquiet regarding removal of the privet hedge which many people thought was an attractive feature of the area.
- Gill Palmer asked whether the Council will clean out the backwater?
- Bob Daines asked where the £630,000 of funding earlier reported had disappeared to. Anthony French replied that there had been an exercise redefining S106 monies across the city and the result is that we now have £350K instead (plus the £75K and hopefully another £350K in matched funding).
- Paul Holmes asked whether the Folk Festival organisers may object to opening up the site as they use this area each year. Anthony French replied that he will be meeting with organisers on 17th November to discuss the issue. He added that he couldn't foresee any problems as the likely solution is to erect wire mesh fencing lined with white sheeting in order to protect the Folk Festival compound.

Anthony French was keen to emphasise that as the master plan is 'Committee approved', we now have an obligation to deliver it – and the Folk Festival people need to start to make compromises in order to accommodate us.

- Bob Daines mentioned the siting of the water pipe which is located to the edge of the propagation centre and which requires moving. Anthony French said he would bring this to the attention of Eddie Barcan.
- Stuart Newbold asked about maintenance of the wildflower area – this has now become overgrown with thistles which will increasingly take over. Could the Friends get involved with maintenance? Anthony French said that this area also needed a management plan.
- Bob Daines thought this a good illustration – we have ongoing issues which we are aware of that need attention and which we try and flag to the Council but little gets done. What we need is a monthly meeting to raise new items and review / sign off on those flagged earlier. Anthony French said he was receptive to this idea and a monthly or two-monthly meeting would be a good idea. However, he thinks it would be best to have a pre-meet walk around.

Bob Daines suggested members let the Committee know of issues going forward and the Committee will add these to an ongoing list.

Sandra Day asked whether Anthony will still produce a *Bulletin*. Anthony replied that yes, in fact there is one due for November.

Bob Daines asked about the issues with two memorial benches.

Anthony French replied that he had met with Amelia Poon and agreed the position - the bench is ordered and will be placed near the lake. Regarding the memorial bench for Ken Wollard, Anthony French met Joan along with her friend Lorna Sergeant, and had a long discussion. The Council is unable to put the bench immediately under the tree not only to prevent damage to the roots but also to minimise risk, as the tree does have a split further up. The proposal is to put the bench to the edge of the tree canopy, facing the tree and the brook.

Sandra Day said she will contact Lorna and Joan to ensure they understand the reasoning behind the decision not to locate the bench immediately under the tree.

Stuart Newbold asked about removal of the laylandii tress, which will not be consistent with the master plan's theme of returning the park to its Victorian look and feel.

Anthony French said that the school had at one time requested that it be kept for security reasons, but he'd heard nothing for a while. *Anthony said he feels that the laylandii really ought to go and that he had already got some quotations for the cost of felling.*

Sandra Day asked about the disabled toilet in the Hall, which is signposted, but which after investigation is being used as a store cupboard, and is kept locked.

Anthony French said he would look at the lease to see what it says.

Catherine Mills asked about the Parterre garden.

Anthony French said it too would be removed, along with some of the tress, creating a 'fantastic view'.

Bob Daines stressed that the Friends would have a say in all the decisions going forward.

Pond layout and Works Options

Anthony had brought along a number of design templates from Watercourse Manager Simon Bunn. These showed the current pond layout plus alternatives for increasing the water flow and dredging. The current suggestion for dredging is to put the spoil on the island, and prevent any collapse by use of coir coil matting, whilst increasing the size of the island.

However, Anthony had also discussed with Simon the possibility of creating more of a chalk stream to keep the water flow running smoothly. Depending on the design,

this would mean there would be flowing water on either the near or far bank. There is also quite a bit of hazel on the island which needs coppicing back.

Ian Simmons suggested a key consideration should be to what extent any works enhanced the wildlife.

Jim Davison said we must ensure that any works do not allow young people to get access to the island as this would be detrimental to the wildlife.

Ian Simmons mentioned that he had attended a recent *Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook* meeting when Simon Bunn was present and *Simon had suggested putting in a channel to sweeten the water not currently part of the flow*, but that it would be tricky to make sure the flow was correct.

Sandra Day suggested the best solution would indeed to be ensure that all the water was able to circulate; an idea which was generally supported.

David Brooks suggested that restoring proper water flow should be a top priority in use of funds secured from S106 and the Lottery bid. Again, this was met with agreement.

Bob Daines asked if we could have a close-boarded fence so people are not able to see the swan's nests. There have been instances of young people throwing items at the swans and this may help.

Anthony French said we could look into this when we there is the walk around.

Finally, Jim Davison asked if we could have some more geese. Gill Palmer mentioned that there must be 70 or so geese at Newnham – could we have some?

Use of Hall Grounds by ParkFit / Other Third Party Use

Anthony French said he had taken a look at the *Keep Fit Boot Camp* using the grounds this evening and they were conducting themselves well. They have also been very good when he has spoken on the telephone. There hasn't been much contact with *ParkFit*. One good aspect is that the revenue from the two groups had paid for the new gates.

Bob Daines said that as long as groups weren't causing any damage or altering the park e.g. by making use of children's play equipment or painting marks on trees, then they should be allowed to continue.

Anthony was thanked for coming and providing excellent feedback.

Giant's Grave

The question has arisen as to who should look after this – *Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall*, or *Friends or Cherry Hinton Brook*?

David Brooks, chair of the *Friends or Cherry Hinton Brook*, said that the question had been raised at the last meeting and that it was agreed that Giant's Grave should be included in their remit – at least in principle.

Cllr Robert Dryden mentioned that the City Council still looked after Giant's Grave, For instance, each year before the Cherry Hinton Festival duck race, Robert asks for Giant's Grave to be cleaned, which gets done.

Cllr Mark Ashton said perhaps the best thing would be to ensure Giant's Grave was on one of the City Council's maintenance plans. *Mark would try and confirm this.*

Membership Update

Sandra Day said new cards have been produced, with reference to Cartridge World blacked out. Sandra has inherited the membership database and is in the process of updating it.

- At the end of the 2010/11 year we had 177 members
- So far only 69 have renewed their membership (which includes 32 for 5 years; 12 for life)

Sandra will contact the others by email and post in order to get as many renewals as possible.

Community Groups Fair

The photograph competition was a great success, with 50 entries, many from children. Some of the photos were really excellent. Unfortunately, we have been unable to contact two of the prize-winners, as their entry details only gave *Flickr* aliases. The cost of organising the Fair was £139.48, but we took proceeds of £170, so there was a small surplus.

A special thanks to Judy Webb, and also the Wicked Cake Company.

AOB

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, 18 January, when we will have a guest speaker from the RSPB.