

Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall Minutes, 7.30 pm, Wednesday, 21 November 2012
Cherry Hinton Village Church Centre, Colville Road, 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

22 people were in attendance at the Village Centre, Cherry Hinton. During the evening we were joined by Cherry Hinton PCSO Marie Bailey. There were apologies from Mark Ashton and Robert Dryden.

1. Welcome

David Taylor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. The Minutes of the 19 September were agreed.

Matters arising:

Stuart Newbold mentioned he had not so far worked on a City Council 'Safer City' grant application for to cover automatic closure of the main and/or driveway gates to prevent ASB problems in the car park and the danger of drivers accessing the Hall grounds by car. The 'Safer City' application timetable runs annually until June when bids are considered and awards are made at Area Committees from the £50,000 annual budget. Stuart will ensure we have a bid in time for the relevant South Area Committee meeting.

The minutes of the 18 July AGM were accepted as accurate. It was decided that formal minutes retained and also posted on the Website would in future be signed as being accurate.

3. Guest Speaker: Anthony French, Open Space Officer - Horticulture, Cambridge City Council

Anthony started with a recap on where the City Council is with various works in line with delivery of the master plan for Cherry Hinton Hall. So far the City Council has awarded £75,000 for various works. The main theme so far has been to focus on the former propagation centre and returning this area to usable open space.

- The leylandii hedge has been removed and replaced with a new beech hedge. The feedback from the school has been positive, including that security should be better now what is going on around the Hall is more visible.
- Guy Belcher has been overseeing the renovation of the original chalk stream including removal of old vegetation, dredging and addition of gravel to improve the water flow. While the trees and shrubs along the stream are valuable for wildlife, the plants and animals need light and so there does need to be some cutting back, at least periodically. It has also

been agreed to remove the grille in front of the Daws Lane bridge to stop debris accumulating at this point.

- Tree planting has gone ahead both inside the main grounds and alongside the Daws Lane boundary. We have also put in two beech trees at the front of the Hall grounds near the crossing on Cherry Hinton Road after an earlier replacement died.
- Ivy removal from the Hall has opened up the building to being viewed from all sides. This will provide ongoing benefit to the school and the City Council.
- There have also been some smaller things undertaken including signage regarding dogs near the lake, and the rocks used provide a nice feature in themselves.

There was a suggestion from the audience that a small picket fence could be erected to keep the dogs and the bird fowl away from each other. Apparently one used to be there, just in front of the water's edge. Perhaps this could be reinstated when the resurfacing work has been undertaken?

Anthony concluded the overview by stating that after the above works, £20,000 of the £75,000 remained to be spent. It needs to be 'landscaping' in nature, but what would the Friends prefer it was spent on?

Bob Daines suggested that path repairs would be appropriate, and that creating a path from the Daws Lane gate where the lane turns a corner to the corner approaching the brook and the wildlife area would be helpful. *The proposal to use the £20,000 for path improvements was agreed.*

Sandra Day mentioned that there were still problems with the new gates at the car park entrance being left open, especially by City Council employees. There have also been problems with multiple cars being parked in the grounds at weekends. Bob Daines mentioned that vehicles sometimes used the driveway as though it was a road, travelling at 20 or 30 mph. Could 5 mph speed limit signs be considered?

Anthony mentioned that there is now an electric gate installed on Midsummer Common and if the Friends submitted a 'Safer City' grant application, this might form part of a solution. We could also consider painting 5 mph speed limit notices on the driveway.

Regarding cars, unfortunately, the issues with either speeding vehicles or members of the public accessing the grounds with their vehicles is getting someone down in time to stop them. All the City Council can try and do is to educate transgressors of the potential hazards and ask that they do not access parks in vehicles again.

Anthony mentioned that in other areas such as Lammas Land and Jesus Green, there were designated parking areas made available to try and prevent damage to the more sensitive parts of the open spaces. *For Cherry Hinton Hall Anthony*

agreed to consult the City Council's Environmental Health team to see what recommendations they have to ensure the grounds remain as safe as possible for pets and pedestrians.

Sequoia Trees:

Anthony was asked about possible removal of these two trees in front of the Hall. We need to be mindful that the trees could double in size yet and pose problems with their roots etc. At present the plans for the master plan, although indicative, indicate the giant redwoods will be removed. However, to achieve this, there would have to be a thorough consultation process, including use of the City Council's 'Tree Protocol'. To put in the turning circle as in the plan, one – possibly both – of the sequoias would need to be removed. But the protocols and consultations would be exhaustive including consulting councillors, stakeholders and members of the public before a decision is made. This work could only be undertaken when more funding has been secured to enable delivery of the major parts of the master plan. And don't forget, these are not native trees; they could die earlier than their natural lifespan would indicate.

Master Plan Funding:

Anthony mentioned that the City Council had on three occasions been refused Heritage Lottery bids in respect to improvements to Jesus Green. The reasons given by the Lottery Fund were that they were concentrating their awards on what they deemed were 'bad/disadvantaged parks' and that Jesus Green was not considered poor and therefore not a deserving-enough case. After discussions with the NHL (Sarah Tovell visited the Department) the City Council feel that any bid for National Heritage Lottery funding for Cherry Hinton Hall may also fail as this will be considered a 'good park' too.

It is now felt that the NHL is not going to be the best vehicle to acquire funding for the master plan. However, Stuart recently got in touch to mention that in his work with Cherry Hinton Residents Association – he and colleagues had been invited to a planning workshop to submit bids for so-called "section 106" funding for amongst other things parks and open spaces. The S106 monies are 'developer contributions' to the likes of roads, schools, community buildings, open spaces, etc. to ensure the areas around where new housing takes place are adequately served by amenities. As there are quite large developments going on in the Southern Fringe plus many smaller developments too, there may be funds to tap in to for the Cherry Hinton Hall plans.

Stuart and colleagues included a Cherry Hinton Hall master plan request at the workshop, specifically requesting from the plans funding for:

- A concessionary outlet / café
- The creation of Music and Arts Performance Area
- Lake dredging and re-establishment of waterflow to rear pond
- New surfaces in front of the Duck Pond
- Original species replanting for the orchard
- A realigned / new path network

- Refurbishment of the Play Area
- Reinstatement of the turning circle and parterre garden
- Safety measures for the Car Park and Driveway Gates
- A replacement toilet block

Decisions as to which schemes get funded will be made in the coming months, but we are hopeful Cherry Hinton Hall will be progressed.

Ash Dieback and Wildlife Area Habitat Maintenance:

David Taylor asked what the situation was in the Hall grounds. Anthony said that the Tree Officer recommendation is that no trees will be felled unless they are in serious decay / dying from the disease. Most ash will be in the wildlife area. Perversely, this may help the area by providing some much-needed thinning-out.

Barbara Gordon asked about the ash trees which line the back of Malvern Road. Are these inside or outside the wildlife area? Anthony mentioned that as the Folk Festival takes place in the Hall grounds the City Council would be especially keen to ensure risks from ash etc. are at a minimum, regardless of tree location.

Mr & Mrs Pettit in particular objected strongly to the idea of removing any ash trees from the wildlife area, however bad they might be, as in their view any 'management' of the wildlife area is not appropriate and the wildlife area should be left to develop and evolve as 'naturally as possible'. Opening up the area will destroy much of the wildlife and should be resisted. This applies for attempts by the Friends and Guy Belcher to undertake clearance both inside the wildlife area and along the brook, which should be left alone.

Sandra Day in particular tried to calmly reply to Mr & Mrs Pettit and outline that what was planned was not intended in any way to be detrimental to the wildlife or natural habitat, but was constantly interrupted. David Taylor said that he understood from Guy and from Drainage Engineer Simon Bunn that the works to improve light and water flow were desirable and that the area really does need to be managed, for example e.g. some trees growing near or on the stream have to be checked because of their close proximity to residential homes. Works such as removal of rotten or dangerous branches which can be then used to make additional habitats for wildlife with the onset of winter were positive for the wildlife.

However, these reassurances failed to placate Mr & Mrs Pettit who continued to argue quite vociferously that what was proposed was detrimental to wildlife and the area should be left as it is. The Chair David Taylor said he would seek reassurance from Guy Belcher and Simon Bunn that any works would be done only for positive reasons for the wildlife, and would report back, which would include to Mr & Mrs Pettit if they attended a meeting again.

Concrete Block, Folk Festival:

Anthony was asked about the block of concrete near the former propagation centre area and duck pond. Anthony replied that it has been left as a service area for a

new concessionary outlet / café, as one is envisaged in the master plan. It is also helping prevent damage during the Folk Festival.

Bob Daines was sceptical about the Folk Festival organisers to genuinely consult and to change plans if there were real objections to anything planned e.g. in 2013, or whether new consultation was really just ‘communication’. David Taylor said he had received assurances that the consolation from now on would be entirely genuine and meaningful. The worst thing perhaps would be to ignore any approaches or do nothing. Anthony mentioned that it is expected that if changes to the Folk Festival layout are required by adoption of the master plan then these will have to be accommodated by the Folk Festival organisers.

Anthony was thanked for his presentation and the question and answer sessions.

4. PCSO Marie Bailey

Marie had made enquiries regarding suspected dog snatchers. She has been told that one lady walking her dog was approached by a hooded man who had managed to pull the lead out of her hand. However, by using her whistle, she had managed to get the dog back. There have been sightings of two people – a young man and a young woman, but not always together. More concerning has been one report of poisoned sausages being dropped – a lady in the audience confirmed that her dog had eaten what were probably poisoned sausages and the dog had been ill. There have been reports of other people’s dogs becoming sick, and one of a dog dying. Marie agreed to monitor the situation, including with patrols as a matter of urgency.

5. Media Communications

- Media Remit

It was agreed at the last meeting that a member of the Committee should take responsibility for liaising with the media, and some ground rules established as far as what any individual should say to the press, etc., before consulting with the rest of the Committee. Some guidelines have been circulated to the Committee and these will now be circulated to the wider membership for comment. Stuart was content to take on the press liaison role with the new guidelines once they had been formally agreed.

- Regular ‘Committee Updates’

Stuart had produced a recent news bulletin to all members. It is intended that the Committee produce one of these every month or two months from now on in order to improve communication with all FCHH members.

6. Car Park Survey

Preliminary work has been undertaken on a car park survey to assess who is using the Cherry Hinton Hall car park, and for what purposes. Anthony has seen a copy of the draft and if the City Council is in agreement volunteers will undertake some survey work in the New Year.

7. FCHH Volunteer Work

The following has been agreed / undertaken:

- Bird Sanctuary: Sunday, 9th December, from 10.00 a.m. (removal of self-set saplings in bird sanctuary plus guided tour)
- Winter bulb planting – Anthony mentioned that he has been able to purchase bulbs very reasonably (approximately ½ price) and that he had been offered use of a mechanical bulb planter. So a degree of bulb planting has already taken place including by the birch trees between the lake and the Hall. The bulbs are mainly ‘naturalising daffodils’ in pastel shades. When the bulbs come up we will be able to review the areas and perhaps the Friends can get involved next winter in adding some more bulbs e.g. to soften the edges.

8. Next Meeting

The next meeting is will take place at 7.30 p.m., on Wednesday 16 January, at Cherry Hinton Village Centre. *The guest speaker will be Peter Jackson from Scotsdales Nursery.*