

**Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall Meeting, Wednesday 15 September 2010**  
The Baptist Church Centre, Fisher's Lane, Cherry Hinton

**MINUTES**

31 people were in attendance at the Baptist Church Centre, Cherry Hinton.

Formal apologies were received from Robert Dryden and Ian Simmons.

**1. Welcome / introduction**

Bob Daines welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**2. Minutes and matters arising from 24 July AGM**

The minutes were agreed. There were no matters arising.

**3. Feedback on Consultation results on the Master Plan for development of former propagation centre area / beyond**

- Overview of consultation responses, Anthony French, Cambridge City Council

Phil Back, the consultation who organised the survey, is currently writing a full report which will go to Community Services Scrutiny Committee on 14 October. However, Phil has been able to provide the following information:

288 filled-in questionnaires

247 from individuals

30 claimed to represent different interest groups

288 should be considered as a pretty good response rate, especially as with only 1 week to go we had only 120 returns!

½ of respondents use the Hall grounds at least one a week

70% of respondents use the Hall grounds at least one a month

City Council proposals/objectives	Total fully or partly agreeing with proposals
Pond	98%
Services / café	96%
Wildlife	98%
Hall	85%
Propagation centre	87%
Overall what do you think of plan?	96%

Just over 50% agreed that the master plan met all of the objectives

Question 13 centred on “other uses” and there was strong support for a City Farm, both from individuals and from interest groups. There were also many comments on how such a farm could be set-up and managed on a day-to-day basis. Attention was also drawn to the practical issues e.g. compatibility with wildlife, smells, conflict with

the Folk Festival, the amounts of visitors – especially driving to the site – and so forth which would have to be overcome in order to make such a proposal work. It should be noted that there were also quite a number of responses strongly against the City Farm concept.

Sandra Day: Have the City Farm advocates still not provided any details, such as a site plan, of where it would go / what it would look like / how it might function? It would have been helpful if they could have worked up their proposals.

Anthony: For the City Farm, the next step is to look carefully at the proposal via a feasibility study.

- Next steps in process including 14 October Community Services Scrutiny Committee

Anthony: Phil Back will submit a full report in the next few days, including comments from responses. As soon as we have this, Streets and Open Spaces will prepare a Committee Report. This will be available to the public – in particular I would alert you to taking a look at the recommendations – on 4 October.

Discussion –

Bob Daines: Why, given 95% say they are happy with the master plan proposals, are we even considering a City Farm?

Anthony: History / timing really – we started with the master plan then the City Farm idea came along. The City Farm people attended a South Area Committee early this year and requested that the idea be incorporated in the consultation document – a proposal agreed by members of South Area Committee. Now we have to review things to see if it is possible to incorporate, possibly at a later date.

Bob Daines: But the major deficiency is that all our details (i.e. the plans worked up by Robert Myers Associates) were seen by respondents, but there were no details of the City Farm.

Anthony: The feasibility study will now have to determine if Cherry Hinton Hall grounds is the right site, whether it can fit in.

Anthony: Phil will also take a look at the computer domains used by online respondents to see if some were multiple responses from the same person / group. This might have a bearing.

Member: Surely we should be considering brownfield sites as alternatives for a City Farm?

Anthony: Many responses also mentioned that there would be better locations and were not wholly against the concept.

Paul Holmes: As we have made clear many times, from what we have in front of us it is a clear choice – we go with the master plan or we go with a City Farm, one or the other, but both won't work.

Stuart: Andrew Varley from the City Farm project is intending to speak at the 14 October Community Services Scrutiny Committee in the hope of persuading Committee members to go along with his ideas. Perhaps the Friends should have a speaker at Committee too?

Anthony: Please get hold of the Committee report as soon as it is published, highlight any issues of concern and of course you can attend.

Bob Daines: Please can members let me know if they would like to go along and speak on 14 October.

Michelle Bullivant: I am worried that the Friends will be seen as trying to block it / fight it. We must try and strike a balance – I am in favour of the concept, it's just that I've never seen any drawings.

Bob Daines: I will attend the 14 October meeting as an individual – perhaps someone else can attend on behalf of the Friends and present a more nuanced position?

Member: We should focus on the master plan proposals on 14 October as too much attempt to integrate the City Farm will delay the project and may put it at risk.

Bob Daines: Anthony – what do other stakeholders feel about the City Farm e.g. the International School, the Folk Festival, Cambridge Regional College, etc?

Anthony: In general the Folk Festival sees it as a contentious issue. It will have implications. I am unable to comment of the views of specific Council Officers. I'm unaware of other views such as from the school.

Stuart: The Friends, if we make representations on 14 October, must do so with care. We have many different views across the membership and we have a responsibility to our members. We can indicate majority views in certain ways but must leave more strident opposition to individuals.

#### 4. Update on Maintenance issues

Anthony French, Cambridge City Council was present to provide feedback and update members on various maintenance and amenity issues.

- Duck pond, including signage, winter bird-feeding proposals

Anthony: Regarding feeding, the City Council did provide bird feed many, many years ago. However this was one of a number of discretionary spending items that, over the years, the City Council decided not to continue with (other examples include locking/unlocking Cherry Hinton Hall gates). Back in the 80's the City Council did have someone who put feed down, including to birds kept in coops in the wildlife area.

Stuart read out an email from Guy Belcher, Cambridge City Council Conservation Officer, who had advised that

*“Ecologically speaking the feeding of semi-domesticated waterfowl at the Hall is detrimental to the biodiversity value of the pond, as they over graze aquatic vegetation and associated invertebrates, stir up the sediments and their guano increases nutrients levels. That said, I appreciate that the feeding of the ducks is a popular family pass time and an opportunity for children to get close to 'wildlife'.*

*“With the possible exception of the few remaining geese, the mallards and mute swans present are able to move to new feeding grounds if food is short during cold spells. “The geese can graze grass throughout the year; perhaps some could be exposed for them in prolonged periods of snow. Any mortality of weak individuals should be seen as a natural occurrence and good control of the artificially high population. The wild Moorhens will find food or move to richer feeding grounds.*

*For this reason I would not advocate supplementary feeding, other than that provided by the site users. As you say, bird food is expensive and time consuming to dispense.*

*“The biggest issue is probably being the need to clean dispensers regularly to avoid contamination and disease and the certain increase in rats using the feeding stations. Should feeding occur, I would advocate the daily hand spreading of limited corn or similar cereal and possibly a few potatoes. This should be put in the water or on the ice in the open to discourage rats.”*

A general discussion continued as to the merits or otherwise of feeding.

Bob Daines asked members if they would be agreeable, during very harsh winters (such as 2009/10) that the Friends could purchase duck feed (feed for scattering on the surface of the water, not feed to sprinkle on the ground which may cause a rat problem) – this was agreed by members. NB Judy Webb mentioned that the cost is £50 for a 10kg bag, with the feed packaged in smaller bags within the 10kg container.

- Fallen trees / other debris in brook

Anthony: Firstly please can I apologise for the delay. A site meeting has been held with Sandra Day and Judy Webb to assess what should be done. The City Council has now received a quotation from the contractor (£2,000) and the work will be undertaken along with other CHYPPS works. Some people may have noticed that the trees have already been marked up with red splodges.

Bob Daines thanked Anthony but pointed out that just clearing the brook once would not be sufficient – it will certainly re-block and need attention from time to time.

- Litter and dog bins including emptying

Anthony: The City Council acknowledges that more bin provision is required especially nearer the centre of the Hall grounds. Much of this will be addressed if/when the master plan proposals are accepted and put in place.

Bob Daines: What is required is not just additional capacity but a different litter bin design that is fox-proof. The foxes take out all the bags from every bin every morning! We then have to tidy up every morning! The right bin design will include a lid to stop the fox problem. Bins need to have a larger capacity too.

Anthony: The ones you see at this time are standard bins we have across the city. Our new Head of Service is looking into this issue. However, the Cherry Hinton Hall master plan really does give us a good opportunity to look again at what bins we have here – and in this case provide something much more functional.

- Holes in wooded area

These have been attended to.

- General clear up after events e.g. Pink Festival

Bob Daines: The clear up following the Pink Festival wasn't sufficient. I put a large mirror into the propagation centre to stop it being smashed. On four occasions Friends have found areas of broken glass which they have cleared up.

Anthony agreed to pass this information back to Streetscene.

- Other

Anthony: If you look you will see that our external contractor has done some vertidraining (grass aeration) to help the areas where there were a lot of traffic/vehicle movements during the Folk Festival. The notice board is now in place (the Friends has the key so please see Sandra / send an email if anyone wants to display something – indeed the Friends has some material from Guy Belcher ‘what wildlife to look out for’ which will be on display).

Sandra Day: Can we get an update on what's happening with the new / replacement play equipment? There was some exercise equipment to go in by the tennis court as soon as the Folk Festival was over – where is it? Ian Ross from the City Council showed us a picture of some equipment with a bigger footprint which was ‘due to go in at the end of the summer holidays’ – where’s this? Additionally there is a new double-slide to be put in by the raised bank...

Anthony: I will get an update from Ian and report back. There's nothing controversial with all this; it's outside of the master plan remit, so we should do it.

There were a number of concerns about the level of vandalism recently, including to the Hall itself. Stuart mentioned that the Police were advising the International School about increased security including CCTV.

Sandra: Could we re-site the propagation centre CCTV unit, even if it has been disconnected to the control room – it might act as a deterrent.

Anthony: The master plan also includes the removal of the dense vegetation in front of the Hall – this is providing shelter for the vandals.

Stuart: The Friends are keen to see (and contribute financially to) the memorial bench to Ken Woolard, founder of the Folk Festival, which was expected to be sited under the tree planted in his memory to the left of the bridge over the stream. Can we ensure this happens – Joan, Ken's widow, will happily pay for a lovely wrought iron bench, but it would be appropriate if the City Council / others also made a contribution.

Anthony: Yes, the proposal is that between the Friends, Joan, Arts and Recreation (Eddie Barcan) and Streets and Open Spaces, we will fund the bench. It is due to go in under the purple beech mentioned.

## 5. Review of Folk Festival Stall / Other marketing ideas and events

Folk Festival –

Sandra Day reported back. We have 77 new members from the Folk Festival weekend, some from far-afield including Ullapool, Preston, Cornwall and the Netherlands. We distributed a lot of leaflets, and also a lot of stickers.

Bob Daines: It was valuable having the stall and we are very grateful to the City Council. Manning the stall was left to too few people and arrangements were too add-hoc. Next year we will need to be better organised with more volunteers.

Other Events –

Sandra: It'd be nice to do more history tours.

Michelle: I would be happy to do a series of history talks at Friends meetings. We could also make it more of a social evening with a glass of wine etc. *The meeting agreed this format should be considered for some future meetings.*

Bob Daines: I would like to see more events from us in the Hall too.

Judy Webb: What about organizing a dog display team?

Sandra: We could do things like this but I will need to look into public liability insurance first.

Sheila Manton: We did a flyer before we met first time in the Red Lion. So many people came along – could we consider another, especially if it was going to be a social evening? *It was agreed that we would try and put together another flyer.*

Michelle Bullivant: We should also use the Parish Magazine, newspapers, radio etc. Please let us have your ideas for promotion.

## 6. Update on Membership and Finances

Sandra Day: We have a further 25 new members following delivery of our 3-fold leaflet during the consultation period. 123 members are paid-up, the majority we still need to chase for the £2.00!

We have transferred our account to the Cambridge Building Society, who offer Direct Debit facilities – this is how we'll look to ensure subscription renewals are handled going forward.

#### 7. Ivy clearance / group activities

Bob Hall: We will try and do a Sunday morning again. It's not a scorched-earth method – we try and leave a balance for insects and wildlife. We'll agree on a date and send this out via email as well as putting something on the notice board and on the Website. *We will also inform / involve Guy Belcher (Conservation Officer) and Kenny McGregor (Arboricultural Officer).*

#### 8. Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, 17 November, at 7.30 pm, at the Baptist Church Centre, Fisher's Lane, Cherry Hinton. Please bring along a raffle prize!

#### 9. AOB

Coton has lovely banks of daffodils which remain pristine because much of the planting is done by the school children. Could we get local schools involved in bulb-planting, whether daffodils or e.g. bluebells along the Walpole Road edge? *Stuart agreed to get in touch with Guy Belcher and ask what would be the most appropriate things to plant to ensure that they could cope with lots of people walking on them e.g. at the Folk Festival.*