



FRIENDS OF THE MEADOWS

Minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting

Held on Thursday 18th November 2021 at 7.00pm

In St. Mary's Handbridge Centre,
St. Mary's Without-the-Walls,
Handbridge, CH4 7HL

27 Members were present.

1. Apologies

Stephanie Hefferan (Greenspace Officer)

2. Minutes of the AGM meeting for 2020

No meeting held, because of Lockdown

3. Chair's Report

Julie Savory, Chair, presented the following report.

I am very pleased to **welcome** you all to this year's AGM. After the difficult period of the Covid 19 pandemic which meant that we were unable to hold an AGM meeting in 2020, it is a real pleasure to be able to meet once again at the Handbridge Community Centre at St Mary's without the Walls.

Despite the pandemic meaning that volunteer working parties were unable to meet to carry out maintenance tasks on the Meadows, as a committee we have been able to progress a number of other projects.

Interpretation Boards

In the summer of 2020 we made a successful bid to the Postcode Lottery Fund for £2k to provide two interpretation boards. We have also recently been successful in being awarded £300.00 from Razia Daniel's Councillors Community Budget to cover the cost of installation. The Boards have now been designed and are currently being made by Shelleys Signs in Shropshire. We hope that they will be installed within the next few months. The aim of the Boards is to generate more appreciation of the history of The Meadows, their role in flood prevention and the biodiversity they provide so close to the city centre. They will also include mention of two women who are important in the history of the Meadows. Phyllis Brown, who along with her husband, purchased the Meadows 92 years ago and covenanted them 'in perpetuity' to the people of Chester for their recreation. Adele Edwards, who in 1990, concerned that the Meadows had become neglected, established Friends of the Meadows. Sadly Adele passed away in 2020.

Thanks are due to Rachel Cross, James Holroyd and Stephen Savory for all their input into getting planning permission, and refining the design and text.

Management of The Meadows.

We continue to **work closely with Stephanie Hefferan**, the Council's Greenspace officer to preserve and maintain the Meadows for both human recreation and as an area of unspoilt grassland important in terms of the biodiversity it provides so close to the city centre.

- **Paths.** In January 2020 we met with Stephanie on The Meadows to look at the paths which in some places were getting very worn. I am very pleased to let you know that Stephanie, has just confirmed that her grant application to the capital funding budget has been approved and repair to the path surfaces will be starting soon (the first area to be repaired will be the central path and the riverside path to the entrance).
- **Waterworks repairs.** Thanks to committee member ,Andy, a problem with leakage from sewage pipes was speedily identified back in November 2020 and Stephanie quickly organised for the water authority (Welsh Water) to carry out repairs. This work went on for some weeks , as those of you who walk on the Meadows, will have observed. Despite the disruption, a benefit was that a large section of the path near the ferry crossing, was repaired.
- **Grazing** For the time being, a decision regarding reintroducing grazing by cattle, has been postponed indefinitely.
- As a committee we were disappointed as conservational cattle grazing would have had the benefit of enhancing the biodiversity of the Meadows in a way that mechanical mowing cannot.
- However, we do appreciate that it is necessary to balance the need to preserve and promote biodiversity with the role of the Meadows as a recreational space for people.
- **General maintenance** .Now that Covid restrictions are eased, working parties are allowed once more and Stephanie has organised volunteers to coppice the willows opposite Dee Banks.
- Andy and myself have also carried out some trimming of branches that were overgrowing onto paths.

Future projects.

- **Black Poplars Information Board** We are hoping to be able to provide an information board about the Black Poplars which were planted in 2018. Planning permission has been applied for, the Board content has been designed and we are seeking funding from the Councillors Budget to help with the cost of provision. The Black Poplars were provided by Chester Zoo as part of their project to restore and conserve threatened species.
- Other suggestions for expenditure include owl boxes, a wildflower strip and possibly new saplings for the empty tree guards.
- We would also welcome suggestions from members for next year's expenditure. Please mention any suggestions to members of the committee tonight or email or message us through the FoM website.

Newsletter

Our thanks go to Rachel Cross for producing four excellent newsletters a year, one for each season.

Thanks also to Ruth Davidson and our team of volunteers for delivering the newsletters.

Website and Facebook We are grateful to Rachel for maintaining the website and Andy Ingham for managing the Facebook page.

Meadows Log

Andy continues to monitor the comings and goings of the wildlife, especially the birds, that spend time of the Meadows.

Membership

We currently have a membership of approximately 150. Membership costs £5.00 per household and we are very grateful for the additional donations totalling £879.00 made by Friends which contributes significantly to supporting the various projects and tasks we undertake to look after The Meadows.

Thanks go to Richard for his work as membership secretary, to James Holroyd for his patience and sterling work as secretary and to Keith Dixon for his work as Treasurer. I would also like to record our thanks to Bill Richardson who stood down this year after many years service as our treasurer.

If any members are interested in becoming more actively involved, either as a committee member or by helping out with Meadows maintenance working groups, please get in touch.

4. Treasurer's Report

Keith Dixon presented the accounts, which were unanimously approved – see details below.

5. Election of Officers

The following officers were elected unanimously:

Chair	Julie Savory
Secretary	James Holroyd
Treasurer	Keith Dixon
Membership Secretary	Richard Cain
Meadows Log	Andy Ingham
Newsletter Editor	Rachel Cross
Newsletter Dist. Co-ord'r	Ruth Davidson
Committee	Julie Rose

6. Any Other Business

None

Following the AGM, there was a talk presented by Mike Shaw on sundials.

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED SEPTEMBER 30th 2021

	2019/20 £	2020/21 £
Receipts		
Subscriptions/Donations	1,115.00	1,639.00
Grants	-	2,300.00
Total Receipts	1,115.00	3,939.00
Payments		
Printing Newsletters	272.67	442.12
Post and Packaging	60.84	125.06
Website	-	78.00
Planning Approval for Notice Boards	270.50	284.80
Meeting Expenses	50.00	-
Room Hire	27.00	-
Insurance	76.16	90.72
Total Payments	757.17	1,020.70
Surplus of Receipts over Payments	357.83	2,918.30
Balance Brought Forward	3,776.89	4,134.72
Add Surplus for the Year	357.83	2,918.30
Balance Carried Forward	4,134.72	7,053.02

Notes

1. The Receipts and Payments Account for the year 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2021, (2020/21) shows that our Bank Balance at Barclays has increased by £2,918.30 to £7,053.02.
2. Comparisons with the previous year, (2019/20) are affected by COVID which severely curtailed our activity that year, as can be seen from the Accounts.
3. Subscriptions and Donations have returned to a full year level. Based on a current membership of some 152 households with a subscription of £5 each, Subscriptions totalled £760. The balance of £879 represents Donations made by Friends in excess of £5, for which we are very grateful.
4. Grants have been received from the Postcode Lottery Trust of £2,000 and from the Council's Local Budget Area Scheme of £300. These are to meet the cost of installing the Meadows Information Boards during 2021/22. This will then reduce our Bank Balance to a more normal level.
5. A full programme of 4 newsletters was produced in 2020/21, compared with 2 the previous year.
6. Planning approval was sought in 2020/21 for an information board for the black poplars we planted in February 2018. The previous year's successful application was for the Meadows Information Boards.
7. Looking forward, the estimated total cost of installing the Information Boards is about £2,750, and installing the Black Poplar Board about £1,300. Should the total be met then our balance would reduce by a little over £4,000 by next September. However we are working closely with our local Councillors and County Officers to minimise the net cost to the Friends, thereby maintaining the bank balance at a prudent and sensible level to meet our future plans.

Keith Dixon (Treasurer)