



SLIPPER MILL POND PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION CIO
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Friday 29th October 2021

The meeting was held in the Mountford Room at the Emsworth Community Centre. 27 Members and all 5 current Trustees were present (Jo Greenfield, Sharon Corbett, Simon Dwyer, Simon Eveleigh, Bill Keeble). Apologies were received from 25 members. Wine and nibbles were served afterwards.

1. Minutes of the previous AGM held on 30 October 2020

These were approved unanimously.

2. Annual Report of the Chairman & Trustees for the year ending 30 September 2021

This was approved unanimously. It will now be posted on the Charities Commission website as a publicly available document.

3. Inspected Annual Statement of Accounts for the year ending 30 September 2021

This was approved unanimously and will be uploaded to the Charities Commission website.

4. Election of an Honorary Inspector of the Accounts (Colin Montague)

This was approved unanimously.

5. Election of Trustees of the CIO

The following motions were approved unanimously:

- The following Trustees retired in accordance with the Constitution, and were re-elected: Jo Greenfield, Sharon Corbett, Simon Dwyer, Simon Eveleigh (Bill Keeble & Gary Lamb retired).
- Maire Park was elected as Social Secretary.
- Jim Hailstone was approved for election once the Pond ownership transfer has been completed.

6. Membership Levy

The motion to maintain the membership subscription at £15 per annum for full members, and £8 per annum for Associate Members/ Friends of the CIO was approved unanimously. These rates have been in place for many years now.

7. Chairman's Update

Below is a transcript of the presentation made by the Chairman Jo Greenfield at the meeting.

Total membership is now 148, of which 93 are full (voting) members. 2020-21 was Jo Greenfield's first year as Chairman. It was also the first year operating fully as a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation). The old SMPPA charity (277744) and bank account have now been closed and there is a new online bank account for the CIO.

a) Financial Report

The income for the financial year to 30th September 2021 was £5,948.93 against an expenditure of £10,561.46. Without the £8,383.72 expenditure on the sluice gate, the CIO would have reported a reasonable net income. The bank balance at the end of the year was £12,755.19.

Subscriptions were up nearly 50% as a result of the membership drive in the spring. However, donations were down significantly as 2 large donations were made in 2020. 2021 included the first full year of income from Dolphin Quay Boat yard (£2,000). There was no income from social events, although many Members made donations in lieu of the Annual Dinner.

The majority of expenditure was on maintenance and planting. Other than the sluice gate, there was no other “extraordinary” expenditure. Legal fees of around £1,500 are still anticipated for the Pond Ownership transfer.

b) COVID-19 Impact

There were more walkers, more litter, more dog waste, and on the whole people became more aware of their local environment. The one-way signs erected were mostly appreciated and respected and Committee Members were busy as they had time available to work on maintenance, planting, bird rafts and Pond signage. A membership drive to 400 households in the local area resulted in around 50 new members.

c) Social Events

There was no Annual Dinner, no Broomfield Schools Photographic Competition, no Talks or Work Parties (first work party was 9th October 2021). Many members made donations in lieu of the Annual Dinner, resulting in a similar net “profit” of around £600. The Summer Garden Party took place in August 2021 and was hosted for the first time at Slipper House by Claire & Simon Dwyer, with around 50 people attending in spite of the windy and cool weather. A presentation was made at this event to Nick Madina for his long and dedicated service.

d) New Sluice Gate

This was fitted in November/December 2020 by Nick Gates & Co (wooden boat builders from Emsworth Yacht Harbour); the previous one was around 80 years old and it is hoped that this one will last even longer. The total cost was £8,384 incl VAT (less £90 income from timber sale) – more than the initial estimate, but in line with other quotes. It was partly funded by 2 large donations made in 2020, along with SMPPA Reserves.

e) Other Infrastructure Maintenance

The capping has been removed from the wooden beam above the tidal gates as it was collecting water and causing rot. This will prolong its life considerably. The footbridge woodwork has been treated and we are looking to fit straps to strengthen the upright posts. We are investigating the most appropriate solution for pointing the brickwork to the south of the tidal gates. We continue to monitor the large crack on the east facing wall; there has been no change. A new gate is to be fitted in the south-east corner as the old one is rotten, and the field drain in the south east corner will be repaired over the winter.

f) Bird Rafts and the Great Black-Backed Gulls

At the 2020 AGM it was voted by 25 to 15 to attempt to deter the GBBGs (same vote occurred in 2013). Although not a unanimous vote, it was a significant majority. We consulted with the Hampshire Ornithological Society who are sympathetic – for example GBBGs have decimated the Avocet population in Needs Ore (Beaulieu River). All 3 rafts now have wire frames welded together and covered by netting – smaller birds can easily access (and have successfully nested). The GBBGs managed to nest on the middle raft and produce 3 chicks but these sadly fell off and perished. There is a general observation that many more young birds have matured this year. Further work on the middle raft will be carried out this winter.

g) Wildlife

The Pond is included in the Hermitage to Westbourne Strategic Wildlife Corridor – we have met with Sarah Hughes (Community Wildlife Officer, Chichester District Council) who is very involved with Brook Meadow. We have also met with the Sussex Wildlife Trust who are planning to include us on their map of important wildlife areas. Local ecologist Katy Goddard has carried out bat monitoring and is also investigating if we have voles (we know that there are plenty of rats). There have been no wildlife studies for many years and we would like to encourage people to be more involved in wildlife monitoring, and maximise advice from external organisations as to how to encourage wildlife.

h) Planting

Our objectives are:

- to encourage a wildlife habitat which will both suit existing species and encourage suitable newcomers;
- to provide an environment that will encourage the growth of native plants and wild flowers;
- use of indigenous, salt resistant trees, shrubs, wild flowers and underplanting;
- use of species with upright, open habit which will provide perching spots, nesting sites and feeding opportunities for wildlife;
- to enhance the natural beauty and views of the pond, to include the removal of tired and overgrown planting where appropriate;
- to support the CDC Wildlife Corridors Initiative;
- to establish a cohesive planting scheme and establish a maintenance plan to support the above

There has been much research on planting this year – an updated list of plants is now on our website. Native plants we have planted include: Dog rose (Rosa Canina), Sea Buckthorn, Sea Aster, Flag Iris and Marsh Marigold, Coastal Seed Mix, Teasel, Rowan Tree (Mountain Ash), Yellow Rattle seeds (to keep back grasses). Not all plants have survived/thrived as it has not been easy to get good specimens. Many Corn Marigold have appeared but were not supposed to be included in the seed mix. We say thank you to Sharon Corbett for planting and pruning, and to adjacent householders for watering.

i) Vegetation Maintenance

A revised maintenance plan was developed in 2020-21 for strimming and reeds; this plan is constantly under review. It includes the removal of “garden type” plants and shrubs, mainly in the north-east corner, following consultation with adjacent householders. We have cleared the brambles in the south-east corner, including the removal of buried netting and a large asbestos tank – wildflower seeds were sown instead. There are many different view points on maintenance and it is difficult to keep everyone happy whilst maximising house owner views of the Pond and prioritising wildlife and planting. Householders are asked NOT to strim the bank or cut back plants without consulting with a Committee Member first. We give thanks to Jim Hailstone, Rob Turner, Sharon Corbett and Simon Eveleigh in particular.

j) Dolphin Quay

The land surrounding the footpath was gifted by the Wardle family to the SMPPA in 2020 (costing the SMPPA around £4,000 in legal fees). 2021 was the first full year of income from the boat yard who “lease” access to the moorings for £2,000 pa. We are leaving the area wild and overgrown if possible, in line with the Wardles’ request. The boat yard owners strim the banks to the east of the footpath to enable access to boats while Chichester Harbour Conservancy maintain footpath(s) – Keith Rathbone is Head Ranger.

k) Signage

Both information boards were refreshed/reprinted and the old warning signs in the Pond were replaced by perching poles for the birds. “No access to Emsworth Yacht Harbour” signs were placed at the entrance to Slipper Road to discourage cars from trying to take this route – the marina contributed £100 towards the cost. Total expenditure on signage was only £169.

l) Fishing

Cast Net Fishing – this has been happening this year in the Pond and also in the water south of the tidal gates – probably fishing for bait to sell. The Rural Crime Squad and EA want to eradicate this type of fishing and have asked us to report it by calling 999 quoting crime number 935 and the date, stating that the call is for the Rural Crime Squad. If you feel able and safe to do so, they have asked us to video the perpetrators while using the cast net. Since the police have been involved, this fishing seems to have ceased.

Line Fishing: As the Pond is a saline lagoon, fishing rules fall between fresh water and sea water. It is difficult to enforce “no fishing” and line fishing is therefore “tolerated”. Fishing line is often retrieved from the Pond; on Peter Pond, a Coot has been killed by fishing line, and a fishing hook caught on Cygnet. It is a health and safety issue fishing from the narrow pavement on the A259 so is to be discouraged; signage is being considered.

m) Water Quality

Southern Water have placed signs round the Pond. If you email them they will send Cappagh out to test the water quality. The test is for ammonia which will indicate if there is sewage or fertilisers. Brown or white foam on the Pond surface has been reported but Cappagh have not identified ammonia at all – it is probably spume, a natural phenomenon, particularly when it’s windy. However, if you think you see pollution, please do report/email pollution@southernwater.co.uk.

Gilbert Park mentioned that there was a pollution episode in the Creek a few months ago involving a diesel spillage from a boat on the pontoon at the top of the creek. The coastguard was informed as they are contactable 24/7 and they dealt with the spillage. He queried if waste from the boats in the boatyard was discharged into the creek. A toilet is available for those on the boats, some of which are live-aboards. Jo Greenfield will follow up to query this.

n) Sluice Apron / Outfall (updated after clarification from Nick Madina)

The concrete apron to the south of the sluice gate is in a very poor state. Although it was starting to break up beforehand, a significant amount of additional damage was done in December 2012, at a time of heavy rains and flooding upstream. The Environment Agency insisted on us opening the sluice gate at the time as the tidal gates would not open due to the force of water coming down the rivers. The force of water hitting the apron exacerbated the break up and further undermined the concrete (similar to the damaged dam in Whaley Bridge).

The EA now agree that the Pond water level does not affect upstream levels. EA personnel who were involved in 2012 have changed since then and current personnel deny all knowledge so it is difficult to know whether it is worth pursuing them. We are hoping to build up a Contingency Fund as the cost could be many tens of thousands of pounds. It is difficult to find professional advice “for free” so we are looking for a “champion” of this project to go through records etc and propose alternatives.

o) Ownership Transfer Update – Jim Hailstone

Firstly we thank Jim Hailstone for his perseverance on this issue, as others have tried unsuccessfully to move this forward in the past. The SMPPA has so far spent £1,230 on associated legal fees, with a further £1,500 to come.

Brief history:

In 1980 the Pond was sold to 33 people who bought 10,000 shares, maximum 500, minimum 20 shares. There is now only one original owner, David Urry. The Assignment process in the 1980 Conveyance for transfer of shares was not always followed; some were quite clear but many were not. In many cases, the estate of the original owners were not even aware that the shares existed. Four original trustees were appointed and there have been seven changes since 1980 (current trustees are David Urry & Jim Hailstone). Trustees have very limited powers – they record share owner changes, sell or dispose with majority agreement by shareholding. They have no fund raising powers and lease the Pond to the SMPPA for all maintenance activity (for which the SMPPA pays £5 per annum).

Progress with proposal to transfer title to SMPPA

In April 2019 Jim Hailstone produced a business case paper setting out all of the reasons why a title transfer to the SMPPA at nil cost would be in the best interests of the Owners, and guarantee the future of the pond as a wildlife reserve for the quiet enjoyment of the public. This paper was discussed at meetings with the Owner Trustees on 2nd July and 15th October 2019 and accepted by them for progression with the Owners. The SMPPA also indicated their support for taking ownership, and confirmed that they would meet the legal costs involved. It took a long time to contact Owners and verify their claim to ownership of the shares when in many cases the assignment process had not been completed satisfactorily. By April 2021, contact had been made with Owners of 8,560 shares, with 1,440 deemed to be lost without trace. Of those contacted, 67% returned a signed proforma attached to the business case confirming their support for the proposal to transfer title to the SMPPA.

An erroneous covenant on one property, theoretically preventing disposal of 500 shares, has delayed progress. A solution was found, although Land Registry confirmation is currently still awaited. Title Transfer and Contract documents have now been signed by the current Trustees. Due to ongoing delays with the Land Registry, no indication can be provided as to when the title transfer process will finally be concluded.

p) How Members can help – we are looking for:

- Additional Trustees, ideally from Slipper Road south / Roundhouse Meadow
- A “champion” to pursue the EA and options for Sluice Apron / Outfall replacement – to include the likelihood of applying for grant applications
- Wildlife monitoring / Studies. We are a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) and part of the CDC Strategic Wildlife Corridor.
- Ideas for Fund Raising / Social Events – hopefully the Annual Dinner can return in 2022.
- Spread the word! New Members are very welcome.

8. Any other business

No other business was raised – member contributions to the meeting are included in points above.