

FRIENDS *of* LONG LANE PASTURE

NEWSLETTER

No.3 November 2005

The Pasture Plan

Our future vision for Long Lane Pasture is based on three key principles: the Pasture will be open to the public; we will encourage all sectors of the local community to visit and enjoy it; and we will protect and enhance the land for wildlife. We were fortunate to have the support of Julie Toll, a landscape designer with an international reputation and a personal commitment to `designing for wildlife`, who met your Action Group committee, saw the potential of the site when she visited it, and drew up a draft Plan. This was presented to supporters at an open meeting in April. It has been circulated to all Friends and was on display at the open day in September. We have been greatly encouraged by the positive response to the ideas put forward. What follows is a summary of the consultation.

Wildlife work will focus on restoration of the ancient meadowland. This will not be uniform: some grass will be cut once a year, for example, while other areas will be mown regularly. As you will know, brambles have invaded the site. Because they provide an important, and well-established, habitat – particularly for nesting birds – we have identified areas where they will be retained. Clearance from other places will take place only in the autumn/winter months.

The question of managing the land with grazing animals (horses had been on the land for many years) was raised. Although this is recognized as a sympathetic, and possibly ideal, method of maintaining the grassland it does present difficulties in terms of water supply, secure boundaries, and husbandry. And it is important to keep a feel of wilderness.

A pond will be dug out in the lowest part of the Pasture. We hope to provide other wildlife features – a bird feeding station, slow worm habitats, a butterfly border and a bird hide. A beehive has been suggested, but we may not be able to keep it secure, and we would need a beekeeper! We have been reminded that the interests of nocturnal animals (foxes, owls, bats, moths – all of which are present) should not be forgotten bearing in mind the special interest and affection some people have for them.

All trees on the site will be retained and some new planting is proposed, though the overall emphasis will be on restoring the open meadowland not creating a wood or a patchwork of habitats/parkland. New planting will be of native species only (e.g., willow, birch, oak, and various shrubs) and mainly close to the boundaries. We were reminded that ash is an invasive species that is best avoided.

We intend to plant an oak tree in memory of Octavia Hill, a founder of the National Trust, who lived nearby.

Due to concerns about vandalism and the risk this may pose to the adjoining allotments, the site will be open only when a voluntary `warden` can be present. Initially this may be only at weekends, but we hope that with increasing voluntary support opening times can be extended, particularly during summer months. (The Group already has public liability insurance cover.)

Because the protection of wildlife is the key issue, dog owners will be asked to keep their pets on a lead at all times and no ball games will be allowed. There should be no picnic tables though a number of benches, in a design sympathetic to the surroundings, will be placed round the Pasture. We plan to incorporate a stretch of hard path suitable for pushchair/wheelchair access but identify the rest of the path network by closely mown grass. Although educational visits will be encouraged lack of facilities will limit such use.

Fencing along the NCR footpath outside the site is a security risk and urgently needs replacing, but it will be expensive to do this. Currently it is the Council`s responsibility and it is not yet known whether the Action Group will become responsible for improving it, though we fear this could happen. Along the railway line boundary brambles will be *encouraged* to flourish in order to deter intruders. However, the boundary itself, and all other boundaries apart from that by the footpath, are the responsibility of our neighbours.

There will be no car parking on the site. Visitors coming by car will have to park in Long Lane.

Vandalism concerns us. There has been a spate of break-ins and thefts on the allotments, access having been gained from the Pasture. Neighbouring

property and the NCR bridge are regularly graffitied and vandalised. We hope that greater use of Long Lane Pasture and the help of the local community will help to reduce the problem.

We are pleased with the interest shown and grateful to everyone who contributed to the consultation and for all the suggestions put forward.

New Moth Records

A moth trap over the night of 10th June recorded the following larger moth species: Rustic, Common Quaker, Muslin Moth, Lime Hawk Moth, Hart and Dart, Setaceous Hebrew Character, Common Wainscot, Bright-line Brown Eye, Buff Ermine, Flame Shoulder, Common Rustic, and Large Yellow Under-wing. This brings the total of larger moths for the Pasture to 79.

Negotiations for the Lease

We are *still* in discussions with the Council about obtaining a lease for the site, but progress, though slow, has been made on the terms. A proposal to pave the way for a formal lease offer is expected to go before the Council's Resources Committee early in January. We hope that the lease itself will follow promptly and smoothly from this.

News

- We are grateful to Avenue House Estate for the donation of a secondhand bench.
- Fairviews have now sold the garage site to Turnhold, a small development company. There is an outline planning permission for a small flat development.
- The end poplar in the line of splendid large trees along NCR footpath has fallen. It was completely rotten.
- The water leak at the top of the footpath has returned. Three Valleys Water is on the case (again), meanwhile the Pasture is now very wet at the bottom of the embankment.
- A *very big* `thank you` to all who have given us donations over the past few months. You have enabled us to continue our insurance premiums and purchase much needed work gloves. We have also benefited from a grant of tools from the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers.

Work in Progress and Future Work Days

Restoration work continues with a huge challenge facing us over the winter months. There is a large amount of bramble still to be cut back, rubbish to be removed, a small pond to be created, and trees/shrubs to be planted.

We hold work days every other Saturday (10.00 a.m. to 12 noon). The next two work days are:

12th November, which falls in national tree planting week and when we will be doing some planting of our own.

10th December

You will be very welcome on either – or both – of these days.

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