Friends of Crofton and Sparrow Woods (F0C&SW)

Minutes of Zoom Committee meeting at 6:30pm on 7 December 2021

**Present**

Jane Andrews

Claire Osborn

Karen King

John Bray

1. **Introductions and welcome**

*I*dverde were not represented at the meeting as Ian Wright had a domestic commitment, and Angela Wood had COVID-19. Kirsty Blackman was pausing her attendance at Committee meetings due to recent bereavements and the need to address personal issues. The Committee looked forward to her return as her contribution and local knowledge was be missed.

1. **Minutes from last meeting**

The previous minutes were agreed.

**2. Update on developments**

2.1 Footpath adoption

Karen King shared the excellent news that after three years of work, the Council at Committee had formally agreed to adopt two footpaths across the privately owned land behind the horse’s field, and were planning to instal notices to say that the paths had been adopted. She had attended a presentation with local Councillors and Mel Wright from PWDRA, and Mel had covered her success in the December edition of the PWDRA Gazette. Karen’s application had been noted as one of the best applications seen. Photographs had been taken. It was agreed to cover the success in the December FoC&SW newsletter. Karen had received ‘Go Fun Me’ support, but due to the time that had elapsed she could not identify donors to repay the surplus. She would contact those people that she did know had donated, and would donate any remaining balance to FoC&SW, which was welcomed. The Committee commended Karen for her hard work and success in achieving adoption which would at least protect the public rights of way.

**Action point 1:** Karen to obtain a copy of the photograph and share with Jane for the December newsletter.

**Action point 2:** Jane to cover the success in the December newsletter.

**Action point 3:** Karen to establish the views of known donors, and transfer any remaining balance to the F0C&SW account.

2.2 Gumping Common Footbridge replacement

Jane Andrews was pleased to report some small progress. Ian Wright had been supplied with such information as the Group held on the cost of bridge replacement. He had drawn the issue to the attention of Amy Rogers (idverde funding rep), which suggested that he was not opposed to replacement. Jane had achieved written clarity on the vies of Natural England. Ian had emailed to say: ‘As I understand it Ella from Natural England was concerned about the creation of any new paths. She wouldn’t really say either way as we would need to apply formally before they would say yes or no. I think it is safe to say they would have no objection to a bridge but as I say a new path might be an issue, unless it can be demonstrated that any new section of path would be very short and would link to an existing path.’. On the process, Ian had explained ‘With regard to the bridge, you need to put this as a proposal to our funding team as everything like this has to be fully documented with the client (LBB). I have copied them into this reply to get the ball rolling. ….. Once that has happened we can put the proposal to Natural England. I must warn you (as I am sure I have done in the past) that Natural England have the final say as the proposal affects the SSSI and there is no guarantee that they will permit it to go ahead.’

The Committee discussed and agreed that we should work with Amy on any further paperwork requirements, and commence considering consultation and fund raising. Mel from PWDRA might well be willing to support the campaign.

**Action point 4:** Jane to follow up with Amy and cover in the December newsletter.

2.3 Adult fitness equipment

Jane had had a useful meeting with Angela Wood (Caroll Long’s successor) during her first week of appointment, and had indicated the site proposed. Angela had no objection in principle. She had recently updated the Committee that she was planning to meet Amy from the funding team to discuss the way forward in the next week or so.

* 1. Circular path on recreation ground

Jane had also shown Angela where the proposed link path was proposed between the football pitches and the long grass and woodland. Ian confirmed to Angela that it could not follow the line of the existing path through the woods as that was within the area of the Site of Special Scientific Interest. Angela thought that there might be benefits of running the path between the pitches and the long grass area as that would help the contractor know where needed to be mown. In her update ahead of the Committee meeting she had explained that this project was also on her list for discussion with the funding team.

* 1. Noticeboards

Jane explained that with *i*dverde’s agreement she had taken over a noticeboard frame near the Ormonde Avenue entrance and had bought marine ply to create a sign. This had been vandalised once, but seemed to be effective. Ian Wright has delivered a noticeboard frame to Jane last week, and Jane hoped to restore it (weather permitted) in time for it to be installed next week after the Work Group. Jane proposed that FoC&SW should buy a new notice board for the recreation ground – Ian had still not been able to confirm whether *i*dverde could supply the quality timber for us to build our own. Jane would seek quotes, and a donation from the Bromley Friends Forum towards the cost. John raised the need for a policy on what can be placed on our noticeboards, and there was discussion of the principles that should be applied.

**Action point 5:** Jane to seek quotes, and once one was agreed, a contribution from the Bromley Friends Forum.

**Action point 6:** Jane to draft a proposed poster policy for consideration by the Committee.

* 1. Geocaching circuit launch

Group member Trevor Harvey had done a wonderful job establishing a geocaching circuit on behalf of the Group. It had been agreed with Ian Wright on behalf of the landowner, and he had obtained Nature England support, It had been used by a number of geocachers, who were providing positive feedback. The Committee were very grateful to Trevor for his continuing contribution.

* 1. Dog bag dispensers

Jane was keeping the recreation ground dog waste bag dispenser topped up with bags. Demand seemed to be increasing. At Ian Wright’s suggestion she had waited until winter in case the stolen dispenser near the Ormonde Avenue entrance turned up. It had not, so she had requested a new one. John said that the Darrick Wood dispensers were now showing adverts, so that might encourage the company to replace ours.

* 1. Badger sett reporting

Four FoC&SW members had attended a West Kent Badger Group training session at Darrick Wood in celebration of National Badger Day. Jane had since completed the forms to report the sett near the Ormonde Avenue entrance. The Committee agreed to Jane’s proposal that if a further sett was identified, that too should be reported. There did not appear to be any on-going reporting sought from the Group.

* 1. Duke of Edinburgh Scheme volunteering

A second Duke of Edinburgh scheme volunteer had recently signed up to litter pick. The Committee agreed that it was a matter for the Committee to decide whether to agree to such volunteers.

* 1. Report from Bromley Friends Forum meeting

Jane at attended the recent Bromley Friends Forum meeting, and had pressed for another first aid course to be run, as no one from the Group who attended the Work Group had been able to attend on the 2021 dates. The Council had been swamped with social care and pandemic issues in recent weeks, and parks matters had distinctly taken a back seat. James Hilsden had also broken his leg which meant he had not been able to attend to all of his duties. The Forum had a Zoom licence available to Groups to use, and the Committee agreed that this would be helpful for future meetings. The Open Space Strategy started in 2019 had now been approved by the Council. Karen was thanked for making comments during the consultation process on behalf of the Group. The Committee agreed that its content was at high level and did not particularly adversely impact us. The Bromley Biodiversity Partnership had outlined its current prioritoes, including increasing long grass (despite some ratepayer opposition), and planning native trees in gardens for wildlife. The Committee discussed the street tree planting campaign, but did not consider that there was an area within our remit which required more trees.

**Action point 7:** Jane to seek use of the Bromley Friends Forum Zoom licence for the next Committee meeting.

* 1. Report of participation in Bromley’s ‘Simply Connect’ project.

Jane explained that she had seen in the Community Links Bromley newsletter a request for participants in the ‘Simply Connect’ programme, and she had put the FoC&SW Work Group forward for consideration. Simply Connect is an online directory for use by social and health professionals undertaking social prescribing. The initiative was supported by Bromley Council who wants greater service integration. Basically it is a free online voluntary sector directory. 124 organisations are involved, offering 280 activities. The Committee supported the initiative, but was concerned about duty of care. Each referral would need to be reviewed carefully on its merits.

2.12 Report on fortnightly Work Group

The Work Group had seen a drop in attendance since COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, but were a steady 8 – 14 people each fortnight. Jane sought views on additional sessions on the private land to retackle the bramble near to the Broadcroft road entrance. There was concern not to add the dates too early in the year when the weather could be challenging. Moving to weekly meetings with alternate sessions self-led once suitable first aid classes were attended, as well as the possibility of monthly weekend sessions (although one event in 2021 have been ill-attended), were also discussed. There was also interest in having the forward dates more clearly known.

**Action point 8:** Jane to arrange two additional self-led sessions in the New Year, and a weekend session.

**Action point 9:** Jane to share the forward dates in the December newsletter.

**3. Membership** – Claire

Claire Osborn noted that there had been a flurry of new membership applications following the guided walk. However while 31 people had completed the DPA compliant process, 32 had yet to do so. There was a long discussion of how best to achieve the balance between DPA compliance, and maximum reach to those interested but not engaged. It was agreed that a middle route might, rather than requiring an annual renewal and lose people, might be to annually ask people whether they would like to leave (and at the same time offer them the chance to make a donation). This might be even more effective if there were an opportunity to do so in person (see later discussions).

**4. Treasurer’s report** - Karen

Karen King explained that there was now £425 in the Group’s account. It was agreed that Jane should evidence her claims for things like the safety glasses and marine pla, and they would be settled in this financial year, probably by cheque if online transfer proved impossible. The Group’s financial year should run to 31 March. Karen was happy to prepare accounts for that date.

**Action point 10:** Jane to resend her old claim, and the fresh claims, to Karen for settlement.

**5. Future opportunities to widen awareness of FoC&SW & fundraise** – all

The constitution required an AGM within fifteen months of formation, which took us to March 2022. The Committee debated a late AGM in April with finalised accounts, or an early one in March with draft accounts, and decided on an early AGM on a weekday evening. Wednesday 23 March 2022 was proposed as being outside school holidays. Papers would need to go out 21 days in advance to members. Steven Lofting was agreed as a suitable speaker, and we could also present on our successes such as the footpath adoption and butterfly studies. The meeting should be open to all and well advertised, with a short AGM for members at the end. It was agreed that there would also be a couple of nature walks led by Jane in spring/ early summer.

**Action point 11:** John Bray to sound out Steven Lofting (Steven indicated his willingness in principle the following day)

**Action point 12:** Jane to research affordable local hall space.

**7. AOB**

* The December newsletter will be out within the next seven days
* Committee member volunteers will be sought in that newsletter

**8. Agree timing and date of next meeting**

The next meeting will be at 6.30pm on Tuesday 8 March by Zoom.

Jane Andrews

[Minutes approved at the Committee meeting on 8 March 2022]