

STOCKPORT GREENSPACE FORUM

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

24 November 2011

Present:

Committee: Sue Colman (Chair), Lynn Good (Vice-Chair), Cath Severn (Treasurer), John Yeoman, Sheila Robins, Peter Fuller, Christine Hession (Secretary), Iain Bate

Guests: Cllr John Smith, SMBC; Megan Black, Public Realm, SMBC; Barry Brockbank, SSK; Ian Walmsley, SMBC

Speaker: Steve Atkins, Greater Manchester Ecological Unit

Members: Virginia and John Bryan (East Avenue), Richard King (Torkington Park and SMAGA), Shirley Hollinshead, Alan Roach (Heaton Norris Park), Glenys Biggar, Howard Biggar, Mark Lockyear, Dave Moore (Woodlands Park), Robert Twigg, Dean Fitzpatrick (Crescent Park), Peter Jones, Gill Clarke (Torkington Park), Marilyn Cross, Ann Fuller (Woodbank Park), Jackie Collins (Brabyns Park), Paula Isherwood, John Pollard (Gatley Carrs), Mike Gorner (Mirlees Fields Friends), P Mottram (Brinnington Park), G Hutchinson (Great Moor Park), M Wilde (Manchester Road Park), Norman Jones (Hesketh Park & St Ann's Allotments), C Yeoman, Catherine Deering (Heaton Moor Park), Mark Whittaker (Marple Memorial Park), Sheila and Robert Nevitt (Reddish Vale Unity Park), Neville Toft (Craig Road Allotments), Liz Moore, Charles Hamilton (Etherow Country Park), Tony Bielderman (Stockport Federation of Anglers), Margaret Townsend, Sarah Connor-Brooks (Hatton Hilltop), Cllr Walter Brett (Reddish), Mary Baumanis, Pat Baker (Chadkirk Country Park), Kevin Moors, Alan Procter (Hawk Green), Rita Thompson (Cale Green Park), Penny and John Allwork (Hall Street Green), Dave Percy (SMAGA and Craig Road Allotments), Vincent d'Olier (Heaton Mersey Conservation Group), Paul Lavin, John Barlow (Hollywood Park), Cllr Tom Grundy (Reddish), Cllr Andy Verdeille (Reddish), Rose Walker (Cheadle Heath Pavilion)

Parks/Greenspaces represented by Committee (not already mentioned above): Brooklyn Crescent, Ladybrook Valley, Abney Hall, Friends of our Valley, Stockport Cemeteries, Cheadle Green Focus Group, Stockport Nature Network, Stockport Tree Wardens

39 parks/greenspaces represented

1 Sue Colman welcomed everybody to the 2011 Stockport Greenspace Forum AGM.

She explained that the Panel would be joining the AGM after the break as they were at another meeting and she would introduce them at that point.

Copies of the minutes for the 2010 AGM were given out at the door. She asked for someone to propose and second these minutes.

Proposed: Peter Fuller

Seconded: John Yeoman

2 CHAIR'S REPORT

This has been an interesting year. Life is not getting any easier for us or throughout the country who all need to save money. Funding for parks is not a Statutory Obligation and during the summer the Greenspace Forum mounted a campaign to make sure the Councillors realised how much it would cost to reinstate parks if the cut-backs caused deterioration. The Council responded positively to our campaign

The member groups have worked hard during the year putting on events and making funding applications.

Congratulations must go to Hall Street Green who raised £42K, Heaton Moor who were given a Green Flag, Reddish Vale who raised £7.5K and also received a substantial donation. Woodbank won £50K to restore an old nature trail and make it into a nature heritage trail. There has also been an increase in the number of volunteers. There has been a lot done this year.

For the Forum Cath Severn has applied for and won funding from the Co-op which will cover the costs of meeting next year. We have a wonderful committee of volunteers and they are all needed.

3 TREASURER'S REPORT

Very little to say. The accounts have been distributed to the meeting. No money received this year apart from a donation of £100 from Parks and Recreation to cover catering costs. The raffle held at the AGM last year raised £68.

All invoices have been paid out, mainly for the Hero Awards and to Pure Innovations for the catering.

The Forum has just received a grant from the Co-operative Society for £495 which will cover the costs of the Networking Day and the AGM for 2012.

The Forum is operated on minimal funding. All Committee members also work in their own parks and find that raising money for parks is easier than getting funding for the Forum as Funders like to see a project.

4 NOMINATIONS FOR COMMITTEE

When the Constitution was changed, officers agreed to serve for 3 years. Everybody has agreed to stay on the Committee for a further year.

We would urge groups to offer to join the Committee. We have three vacancies and we need 'new blood'.

5 PRESENTATION FROM GREATER MANCHESTER ECOLOGICAL UNIT

The Chair presented Stephen Atkins from the Greater Manchester Ecological Unit. Stephen is a Biodiversity Information Officer at the GMEU which is based in Tameside.

The GMEU works with all 10 Boroughs in Greater Manchester. They provide ecological advice on planning issues, survey and designate Sites of Special Biological Interest (SSBI), provide advice to Local Authorities on the Unitary Development Plans and at Public Enquiries.

The Local Records Centre is part of the Unit and collects, maintains, collates, manages and disseminates information on wildlife throughout the Greater Manchester area. They also provide information on wildlife to interested parties.

The LRC started in 2008 and was funded by Natural England who wanted a network spread across the country. The LRC provide the link between local recorders and the national biodiversity network. All records from across the country are kept in a central database. Access – www.nbn-org-uk

Why do we collect records? They allow Local Authorities to fulfil their Statutory Obligation to conserve biodiversity. We collect information from a wide variety of sources and the records are used for planning applications at pre-application stage. The Unit is contacted if reports are needed for planning or for major schemes which would have an environmental impact where assessment is needed.

The Unit is contacted by ecological consultants to do desktop data searches which they can then incorporate into their reports. Also need to input information into Climate Change research. Guidance comes from central government that Local Authorities need to be aware of changes to wildlife because of the Climate Change.

He showed a 2 km search centre on Offerton which showed all the sites of biological importance.

The next map showed species records. The Unit needs to build up current species distribution. Details of common species are also needed so that changes can be recorded.

Records can be used to identify species at risk. Some species are at the limit of their range already and could disappear as the climate changes. The records are also used to identify new species as they arrive.

Records on species needing protection, ie water vole.

Records of invasive species ie mink which are a danger to water voles.

He showed a map of the SSBI. There are 65 SSBI in Stockport out of 500 in Greater Manchester. The unit surveys 100 SBI every year and designate new SSBI.

Have a Biodiversity Action Plan for Species eg wall brown butterfly distribution and identify areas for key species. Stockport is important for badgers with the highest concentration in Greater Manchester. Good range of bat species but there are not many records of bat populations. Brown hare sightings are especially important. A recorder in Woodford on the old aerodrome has provided many records. Sightings of moles and weasels are particularly important.

Most records come from the voluntary sector. The recording site can be accessed on

www.gmwildlife.org.uk

Break for drinks

7 QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

The Chair introduced the Panel: Councillor John Smith who is responsible for Parks and Greenspaces; Megan Black, Head of Public Realm; Barry Brockbank from Solutions SK and Ian Walmsley from SMBC.

These questions and answers have been distributed separately as well as being incorporated into the minutes.

8 NEIGHBOURHOOD CLUSTER GROUPS

John Yeoman is Chair of Heaton Moor Park which this year received a Green Flag. He is developing the idea of parks within an area working together as 'cluster groups' as he is conscious that the Greenspace Forum members only get together twice a year at the Networking Day and the AGM.

He has started in Heaton Moor with groups local to his park. The idea is to give the parks a more coherent voice and get more input from friends groups. The group will use the existing area boundaries and the first one will include the four Heatons. Initially it will focus on greenspace issues but more non-greenspace groups will join in as the Cluster Group grows.

Major changes in the area need to be looked at carefully and the Cluster Group can work more easily with Councillors. The group will also raise the profile of the parks with the Council.

The Friends of Heaton Moor group nearly failed and only managed to continue through help from Iain Bate and his colleagues in the Parks Development Team.

Area cluster groups could deal with smaller details relating to parks, greenspace and the area generally. The groups have local knowledge. In the Heatons there are over 30 greenspaces and only 4 or 5 of these have groups. The cluster group could look after these other areas as well.

Other interested parties can be integrated into the Cluster groups, such as Traders representatives, police, representatives from SMBC and SSK, Health representatives, local politicians, etc.

If you think the idea would work in your area, find a suitable venue, contact people and get started. Start small and grow as the idea takes off.

The Cluster Groups could deal with:

- Event planning
- Publicity
- Equipment sharing
- Funding opportunities

- Monitoring of delivery of SLA
- Identify new projects for the future
- Discuss crime and disorder in the area
- Co-ordinate events

The Cluster group would feed back to the Greenspace Forum and would also encourage new Individual groups to form.

Give it a try – the Future is in your Hands.

Send any feedback on this idea to the Secretary of the Greenspace Forum, Christine Hession.

9 HERO AWARDS

Cllr John Smith presented the Hero Awards to:

- Catherine Deering – Heaton Moor Park
- Penny Allwork – Hall Street Green
- Chantelle Johnson – Tangshutt Fields

Chantelle was not present at the AGM and the Chair will arrange for the award to be delivered to her.

The citations for the Hero Awards are attached.

The Networking Day will be in May 2012 – date to be announced.

The Chair thanked everybody for attending the AGM.