

WORCESTER CANAL GROUP

Minutes 13 November 2019 at The Paul Pry

1. **Present:** Matt (chair), Jackie, Geri, George, Richard, Alison and Barry (Warndon VEG), Graham
Apologies: Joy, Helen, David, Margaret.
2. **Matters Arising** – to be dealt with in main agenda
3. **Bench** - Matt explained that he has used £552 of his County Councillor Divisional Fund to buy a bench which will be sited next to the lock at Gregory's Bank. The money is on its way, the bench has been chosen and it should be in place soon.
4. **Website** – Matt has looked into the idea we discussed at our last meeting of setting up a virtual journey along our stretch of canal. It is feasible. The most useful photos we already have are those taken by St Pauls Creative Group. The most useful guide to locations is the repairs and maintenance map drawn by Roisin at Duckworth Trust. To use these to move on.
5. **Wild Worcester**- Graham explained that a lot has happened since we last met. The last meeting of the Canal Corridor Group was attended by Mike Perry and Nick Packham from the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. They had taken the ideas discussed with Joy and Graham to their management group and the outcome is that WWT will make a long term commitment to an urban wildlife project along the canal in Worcester. It will be called Wild Worcester. Funding is being sought and there are sufficient funds in place to go ahead. A worker will be employed and the start of the project should be early next year. Essentially what WWT are planning is a community engagement project. For example there will be advice and support to make gardens and allotments more wildlife friendly. Similarly there will be help to create and maintain meadows. There will be experts brought in to help with work with specific species and in general wildlife surveys and audits. The aim to enable local people to maintain a wildlife corridor indefinitely. So, a key element will be to co-ordinate groups of volunteers.
6. **Warndon Villages Environmental Group (VEG)**- Alison and Barry said that their group is excited to hear about the development of the Wild Worcester project and keen to work together. They gave an outline of the work the group has done since it was set up. The area contains a lot of open space, specifically a lot of sizeable meadows which were going over to scrub as the city council were no longer able to manage them. Three meadows have been cleared and are now maintained through 'cut and collect' carried out by a local farmer and by the city council. The biggest of these meadows is Aconbury which is several acres. There are also orchards. Potentially these open spaces are a wildlife corridor in their own right from close to the hospital down to meet the canal around Offerton Country Park. The scope for working together is clear. The Group meets twice a week and around ten people do three hours work each session. To date then the group has done around 1000 hours of work. Unfortunately a funding bid which would have enabled wildlife surveying and education work was unsuccessful. The group makes real use of social media. Twitter account TheVEGWorcester. Graham and Geri agreed to go to the Lyppard Hub on a Thursday morning to be arranged to talk to the local community. Reaction to this new link was all positive.

7. **Creating Links Worcester** - Geri said that this is a new group but has grown out of the 14 years of work she has done at St Pauls. The work on the canal that was being done by the St Pauls Creative Group will in future be done by creating Links. It was felt that there was a need to move out into the community and this has enabled work with people who have moved on from St Pauls but could still benefit from support and interaction with others. It has also led to a growing number of referrals from Social Prescribers especially those who are in contact with the NHS but are on a long waiting list to see specialists. The project is based at the Medway Community Centre off Humber road on Ronkswood Hill. Funding is a problem, for the future Geri is intending to become a Community Interest Company.
8. **Treasurers Report** – George said that we currently have £219.03p
9. **AOB**
 - a. Helm training- in all of the above discussions it was clear that making greater use of the Wanderer would be a good idea and that the VEG group and Creative Links could perhaps provide people wanting to undertake the necessary helm training. This could be done through Worcester Marina. So, anyone interested should contact: Richard Martin, Worcester Marina Manager, 07841995090, manager@worcestermarina.com
 - b. Litter pick. The litter picks continue on the last Saturday of the month despite some awful weather. The next is 30th Nov. We returned to the idea of some kind of social event that would enable the Litter picking Group and the Canal group to meet . Agreed on: 25th January at 12 noon at the Chestnut Inn.
10. **Date of Next Meeting** Wednesday 8th January 7.15 at the Paul Pry