

WORCESTER CANAL GROUP

Minutes of meeting held on 08/07/2020 by Zoom.

Present: Joy Squires, George Squires, Alyson Morgan, Jenny Barnes, Jackie Hollis, David Ritchie, Matt Jenkins, Paul Snookes, Tim Booker, Graham Fowler. Apologies: Helen Fairest, Geri Lowman.

Matters arising: This meeting followed on from the AGM of the Group which will be recorded and posted on the website separately.

- 1) Impressions of Lockdown – There has been a very good response to this idea with lots of good photographs and pieces of writing being sent in. There is a difficulty in knowing when the project should end as no one knows when the lockdown will officially end. People are welcome to continue to send in their impressions.
- 2) Natural Networks – This organisation has been encouraged to contact us by WWT. They have funding which they put into wildlife related projects on a 45% 55% basis. We are now registered with them and Jasmine Waters is carrying out a biodiversity assessment. Other organisations, such as VEG, have found the part funding element of their requirements difficult and the need to have the cooperation of the landowners may be an obstacle. However it may be possible to work through this in the Worcester Canal Corridor Group as anything we do would have to be in partnership with others. For example with the city council using some of the trees Nick McGowan has made a bid for. The biodiversity assessment of itself is worth having. The assessment should be completed before our next meeting. Tim Booker agreed to try to hold a Canal Corridor Group meeting on Diglis Island soon with Jasmine invited to attend.
- 3) Survey of canal to Astwood cemetery. A hoped for survey of the area behind Bilford road Tip did not take place owing to thunderstorms. Instead a two part survey has been done. In the first week in July four of us took a walk from the canal at lock six along the path leading to Astwood cemetery calling in at an abandoned fruit orchard on the way. This path is tree lined all the way and at the junction with the cemetery there is a small wood. The tarmacked path leading back to the canal has a meadow on one side and trees on the other. The following week Steve Whitehouse carried out a moth survey along this same route and found over sixty species of moth including some which are recognised as rare. This cost £100 which will be paid through Matts Divisional Fund although the money will pass through the canal group account on its way to Steve. The significance of this piece of work is that it demonstrates that the wildlife corridor is not confined to the canal towpath. In fact if the area behind Bilford road tip is treated as part of the same habitat the corridor here in what is still well within the city boundary is close to a mile wide.
- 4) Treasurer – George said that the account was as outlined in the AGM. There is an impending problem with the bench discussed at our last meeting. The cost given does not include the cost of shipping. Once this is added the cost rises to £792. It may be that the VAT payable will be reduced or the City Council Community Grant may help. Matt said that he will continue to look at other options.
- 5) WBDCS- membership of this has been paid as a donation to the group from Joy but it needs to appear on the accounts. It is felt that membership is important as it provides our insurance.
- 6) CRT update- Tim said that this has been a difficult few months. Most of his team has been furloughed with just enough being kept on site to carry out essential safety work. Regionally

there has been an enormous increase in fly tipping and graffiti. The team is now starting to emerge from the lockdown to find that some of the work facing them is very difficult. For example some of the lock gates will no longer open and some locks no longer hold water. David asked about noticeboards. He feels that the noticeboard at lock 5 is useful but inaccessible. Tim to pursue. Generally the renewal and standardisation of the noticeboards is thought of as a successful project.

- 7) Bramble Wood – Graham gave a brief up date on the project. It has been a difficult time as it has been for other organisations connected with the canal group such as Creative Links and the Duckworth Trust. It has not been possible to run Forest schools which has interrupted this work just as it was becoming well established. There is hope that it can resume sometime soon. In the meantime other activity options are being looked into based on the benefits being in nature can offer to people especially now. Also there has been the chance to carry out some work in the wood and a there is now a `tree bog`.
- 8) Warndon VEG- Alison explained that the group has been renamed Worcester Environment Group - WEG - as it found that its work was taking place well beyond the boundaries of Warndon. They have been working on a community garden at Oasis school which accessible to the disabled and particularly good for wildflowers. There has been a request from Pershore for help with a meadows project there. They have registered with Conservation Volunteers. They are continuing work on wildlife corridors and are intensifying their work with members of the community who want to help wildlife by using their own gardens to create ponds or site bird boxes or plant wildlife friendly plants.
- 9) AOB
 - a. Matt has been given the keys to the workboat by Dan Daye. Agreed to leave them with the lockkeeper at Diglis Island.

Next Meeting: 7pm on 9th September, by Zoom.

Gf 15/07/20