

**Minutes of the Friends of Barnwell Country Park
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2018**

Fletton House on Wednesday 12 December 2018 at 6pm.

Members present: Mary James (Chair), Bob Ward (Treasurer), Mark Felton, Deborah Saxby, Heather Ward, Barbara Ding, Kim Grove, Helen Shaw, Nick Fletcher, Matt Harrel, Vikki Austin, Sue Oakley, Neville Oakley, Robin Veit, Peter Peel, Simon Mutsaars.

Apologies: Claire Faulkner, Angie Holmes, Edward James

Welcome:

Mary opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. She noted that this was a “deep winter” meeting that had been delayed to allow work on becoming a Charity to proceed to the point where the AGM could consider the matter. Future meetings will be earlier in the year.

Minutes of the AGM 2017 and matters arising.

Approval of the minutes was proposed by Barbara Ding, seconded by Kim Grove and accepted by the meeting.

The previous minutes were approved.

Issues raised in discussion were:

- Membership: the effect of the GDPR reduced our membership. The current number is between 70 and 100.
- Marina development: it was noted that the field between the Marina and the town was up for sale for development. The number of units in the Marina in use has increased – perhaps suggesting the development was not imminent. There was no firm news about the timeframe for the development.

Chair’s report.

Mary gave her report, signalled that 2018 had been a very successful and active year, and highlighted the following areas:

Volunteers: we really do need more volunteers. The Food Festival showed how a larger number of well identified volunteers really helped create an atmosphere where the stall holders and the public feel supported and encouraged to enjoy the Park. We need to encourage more people to contribute in a planned way to help extend this approach.

Events: we had five main events and had made surplus funds from these. She thanked Edward and Kim for the work on funding which made a huge difference.

Music in the Park: a real success, blessed with good weather again, and now part of the Oundle International Festival. Thanked Kenneth, Rowan and Camilla for their contribution to securing this integration.

Food Festival: we had c.2000 attendees and made about £1000. Use of the field for parking helped. We need to restrict on-road parking better to ensure we do not miss parking revenue in future events. We will repeat this next year, keeping it small so its character remains as a community friendly experience. Thanks to Angie for leading the process and to Claire and Edward for their efforts with Angie in securing enough stall holders to make the event a success.

Mini steam engines: we got 10, whose owners enjoyed the event and will now turn into an annual event.

Two Wild Sleep-Outs: Claire thanked for organising these successful events which end with a good breakfast and allow real engagement with nature. The Peterborough Astronomical Society came to one. This is an example of seeking out and getting particular specialist groups to use and enjoy the Park as a place that takes their interest forward.

Committee: Edward was thanked for stepping up and being Secretary and Treasurer at the same time, and Bob was welcomed as the new Treasurer helping reduce the burden on Edward. Mary thanked the Committee for their contributions throughout the year.

Web: Mary thanked Justin, our web-master. The use of Facebook and other social media seems important given the response to the Food Festival where Facebook was used.

Rangers: Mary reported that Georgie had moved to the Environment Agency and welcomed Vikki who has joined Matt at the Park.

There were some issues that had caused concern during the year:

- The toilets were not clean on some occasions
- The over-flow car parks were closed on some occasions
- Complaints about dog waste not being picked up

Mary thanked the people who had raised these issues which have been discussed with Matt and Chris Haines. Everyone recognises they are important and have an impact on the reputation of the Park and its attraction to visitors.

There is a plan to have a campaign to encourage dog owners to be responsible for their dog's waste.

The meeting agreed this should include providing free dog waste bags as part of the campaign.

The future: Mary highlighted the following areas for future development:

- Improving security by installing an appropriate security fence so the container, and any additional containers in future, are well protected so the equipment the Park needs is really safe. The proposal is with the Park, and we need more people to show their support for this. It should help funders feel their investments are safe as well.
- Permanent Performance Area: this remains a longer term ambition to provide an acoustically excellent performance area and through this secure more outdoor live performance activities in the Park, attracting new users through providing new and different attractions.
- Cider and Sausages Event: we are working on securing a good range of both to make the event interesting and attractive.

Mary summed up saying it had been a good year for the Friends and for the Park and whilst we faced challenges with the changes at NCC the Park had shown its relevance and value and had a great future. She wished us all a Happy Christmas and a good 2019 with many visits to the Park.

Treasurer's report:

Bob introduced himself and highlighted the following issues from the reports provided:

- Our financial year is August to July, and the reports covered the year to 31 July 2018
- Overall we had c.£20,000 income and c.£14,000 expenditure in that time, giving a surplus of c.£6,000
- Looking at the figures in terms of costs and income related to activities that fell in the twelve month period we had received £11,900 and spend £12,190, so a small deficit.
- Surplus income was significant from Music in the Park (£2,421) and we also made about £300 from the Sleep Out events.
- We have £18,926 retained funds.
- The Fixed Asset Schedule is in development, and reflects the equipment and investments the Friends have made and are still in use in most cases.

The Accounts were accepted by the meeting. Mary thanked Bob for his work in bringing the Accounts to the standard shown.

Application for Charitable status:

Bob outlined the paper and highlighted the following:

- There is a legal obligation to register as a Charity if your activities are charitable and your turnover is over £5k/year
- We recommend the Association Model and to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. We wish to enable Members to vote on decisions and on the appointment of Trustees. Our proposal is for voting Members to make a £10/year contribution and other Members that support our work but do not wish to become involved in voting to continue as at present without paying.
- We are following a template recommended by the Charity Commission, and will start with the existing Committee members as our first Trustees.
- The Articles will set out the maximum size of the Committee and the process for election and re-election in future. Our current proposal is that 1/3rd of the Trustees will be up for re-election each year and we may have a maximum period of service as well to ensure reasonable turn-over and opportunities for all voting Members to review the Trustees.

In discussion the following points were raised:

- Learn from existing Charities who have made this journey recently. Graham Sands is a good contact for this.
- Ensure your aims are not restrictive as you never know what the future may require
- Sue Oakley highlighted Santander's match funding programme for charitable activities
- The issue of car parking revenue was raised and what will happen once we move to new Unitary Authorities. Matt highlighted that the Parks in Northamptonshire are over 95% self-financing through car parking fees. He confirmed that enforcement would now cover Country Parks – the Meeting **welcomed** this given the importance of car parking for the future of the Park.

The meeting **agreed** to support the transition to charitable status with due diligence, in particular taking account of the issues raised in the meeting. This was proposed by Sue Oakes, seconded by Heather Ward and accepted by the meeting.

2019 Events:

Mary outlined the events for 2019:

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| - Cider and Sausages | 22 July |
| - Music in the Park | 6 July |
| - Mini Steam Engines | 13-14 July |
| - Food Festival | 15 September |
| - Sleep Outs | June and August |

Investments to move forward in 2019:

- Security Fence and additional container
- Outdoor Performance Area

AOB:

Matt thanked the Friends for their input to the Park and the events during the year.

There was a plea for more smaller events or easy to organise events such as the Peterborough Astronomy Society, Veteran Car groups making the Park a destination, as well as visit groups to hear birds, bats or identify trees.

Mary closed the meeting at 7.15pm and thanked everyone for their contributions.

Mark Felton
pp: the real Secretary