



JUNE 2010 – ISSUE 5

Dear Friends,

At last the next long awaited Newsletter!

Committee Changes

Firstly, in January, we were sorry to learn of Damian's rather sudden resignation from the Committee, after two years in the Chair. He had taken over from Peter Allen – the founder of the Friends – when Peter's health took a set back, and notable achievements under Damian's leadership were the formal establishment of the Friends and the ratification of the Management Agreement with CWAC.

The Vice-Chairman, Brian Elias, immediately stepped into the breach and momentum was preserved. In the light of experience, however, it has recently been decided that Jim Hollinshead, our professional Environmentalist who drew up the Management Plan, should take the Chair to drive the Management Plans forward from his position of expertise until the AGM, with Brian acting in close support and also driving forward the vital fund-raising initiatives. These “*musical chairs*” changes are aimed at efficiency and organisational improvements, combined with a need to make progress on a number of fronts.

Other changes including the appointment of Carol Fearnett and Pat Allen (Peter's wife) to the Committee have taken place. Peter Allen after many years of serving the Friends has decided to stand down, but will continue to be involved in an ad hoc support role. Chris Try (Secretary) and Colin Nicol (Treasurer) remain in office to make up the complete FoPF team.

Those of you who visit the ‘field’ regularly will have seen the Notice boards. These will keep you informed of any new developments as they happen. We will also be posting bulletins on future events, reports on work carried out, records of any new wildlife attracted to the field by our habitat work once this is under way. They may also have notices of Neston Town Council events in from time to time. They are not intended for commercial advertising as ‘fly posting’ has been noticed from an unauthorised source recently. Official notices will always be in the glass compartment.

Since our last edition things have moved on. We have a lot of irons in the fire and slowly but surely we are making progress. The management of this open space needs proper thought and decisions made carefully at the beginning of the management process will ensure consistent progress and development later – but mistakes at this early stage could be irredeemable. Most of the proposed work on the land has distinct “windows of opportunity” related to seasonality of various tasks. The timing of the signing of the management agreement with CWAC, and inconclusive reports on the soil structure of the field delayed the start of work beyond the first “window”. But, we are using the extra time well. We have had research on soils undertaken by students from John Moores University, and we now also have Liverpool University Students who are at present embarking on more studies. You may have seen them on your visits to the ‘Field’. The results of all these studies will give us a better idea of the way forward. More input will mean that the right decision will be arrived at in the end. It is has always been the intention that whatever is done to the fields on your behalf has to enhance the area and not just to be done for the sake of doing it.

Ultimately the aim is for a wildflower meadow where native wildflowers and grasses will reflect the kind of species rich and varied grassland which would have existed before the intensification of farming methods last century and before. This is very difficult to establish – it either takes a very long period of patient management, or the employment of advanced new techniques, which are not always suitable – hence our concern for “getting it right” at the beginning.

The Friends are, at present, making a number of funding applications; to Neston Town Council for a grant to site benches along the Wood Lane boundary, to the Community Wildlife Big Lottery Fund (which you may have seen advertised on BBC "Spring Watch") for money to fund habitat management and creation, and others sources of funding for science and education.

The benches will be sited to make the most of the glorious views and a welcome stopping place for a little rest! It is also the intention to remove the barbed wire from the fence that runs between the Cowfield and the Sports field, and replace it with a wire and post fence in preparation for planting new hedge saplings next autumn. The hedge will stop at the point where its full grown height would impinge on the views across the marsh to Wales. At around the same time, we will be restoring the hedges ("laying" and "gapping up" as it is called) that make up the other boundaries to the field.

Most dog walkers using the field are responsible and caring people who pick-up after their pets, but we have been approached by members of the public complaining about those who do not. If any of our members using the field can persuade those who do not pick up, in a friendly manner - by perhaps offering a spare pick-up bag - or by explaining that dog excrement seriously devalues the silage taken from the field, meaning that we may be charged for the annual cuts – that would be wonderful.

A number of events are planned for the summer, including a "Bat Watch" evening and other wildlife related events – watch the notice boards and web sites for details.

It is thought that some contact between the members throughout the year in a more social setting, not just at the Annual General Meeting, would be a good idea. In addition to having a planned speaker, members could chat, find out what was going on, make suggestions etc, and generally have a good evening out! Look out for the dates on the Notice boards, the next event is scheduled for 21st July and will be a speaker (Dr. Andrew Hull of Liverpool John Moores University) from Tattenhall Wildlife Group, who are several years into a similar project, on the progress they have made.

Update on the "Village Green" Voluntary Registration Campaign

As mandated and agreed by the Committee, a campaign to ask CWAC to consider the Voluntary Registration of the Sports Ground area as a "Village Green" was mounted and driven to a conclusion by John Lobley. The completed Dossier, which essentially set out the Friends' case, was presented to Councillor Richard Short and Hazel Barber by John and Brian on 29 March 2010. Earlier in March, John also addressed a full Neston Town Council meeting on the subject to correct some misconceptions which were circulating about the possible consequences of a successful Registration.

The completed Dossier, which involved many hours' work and the inputs of other people – notably Pat and Alan Clare who did all the photographic and captioning work – contained well over 500 petition signatories and the corporate support of six other Parkgate and Neston organisations. We await the outcome with all fingers crossed, but know that the process of evaluation may take many months to reach a conclusion.

Membership – we still need your help and support

By remaining a member and paying your subscription we will be able to achieve more, and if you know anyone who would like to join, please pass on to them the enclosed Membership Form.

Treasurer's update –

The notice boards have been a major investment and hopefully will allow members and users of the field to be keep informed of future developments. The cost of the boards was mainly covered by grants that we have been successful in securing.

Member's funds are still healthy, as other expenses have been kept to a minimum however, we need to continue to concentrate on building funds to help implementation the management plan. Your membership and donations continue to be very important – thank you.

Annual General Meeting

Our AGM will be held in October and we very much hope to see you all there, when we can report on progress since this Newsletter.

Contact Details

If you would like to get involved, either on the Committee or in a more practical "hands on" way please contact Chris Try (Secretary) on 336 7472 or by email to christine_try@yahoo.co.uk

[Have a Happy summer!](#)