

# FRIENDS OF CRAIGLOCKHART WOODS & NATURE TRAIL

## Annual General Meeting 15 March 2011

### 1 Apologies and Welcome

Alan Dickson, Angela Tunstall, Jamie Pearson, Graham Esplin, Pat Bertram, Jeanette Rennie, Paul Geisler, Sarah Moffat, Jane McLaren

Robin welcomed everyone to the 12<sup>th</sup> AGM. He introduced the committee members and thanked Colin Chess, as vice chair, for his support. He gave a special welcome to our local Councillors, Gordon Buchan and Jim Lowrie, and thanked them for their active interest and support.

### 2 Minutes of 2010 AGM

The minutes were accepted as accurate.

Proposed: Colin Chess

Seconded: Betty Geisler

### 3 Chairman's Report

Robin began by saying that this had been another good year in building sustainable partnerships and taking forward the more extensive remit that we now have following the merger with the Nature Trail Group.

#### *Strategic Policy*

The original remit for the group was confined to a small geographical area. This has been successfully extended now to cover the whole of the Local Nature Reserve. As a group we have been involved in the drafting of the new Management Plan for the LNR and working in partnership with the countryside ranger service and Edinburgh Napier University shall use this plan as the agenda to identify our future direction, projects and activities over the next 5 years.

#### *Projects*

All the projects proposed and agreed at last year's AGM have been either successfully completed or are underway.

A revised Nature Trail leaflet has been produced. This is available either as a hard copy or as a softcopy download from the website.

New numbered oak markers have been put in to define the trail and highlight the particular points of interest. A successful application was made to the SW Neighbourhood partnership for support funding for this project.

An application was made to WREN again to seek funding for the remaining path improvement work that was agreed last year. This was successful and the work on the path behind the sports centre leading to Glenlockhart and on the path between the gorse at the top of the hill will start early in the spring 2011.

#### *Planned Maintenance*

The group had continued to fund a private ground maintenance contract over the last 12 months since it had been successful and the improved appearance of the area was apparent.

#### *Green Flag Award*

The Easter Craiglockhart Hill Local Nature Reserve was awarded a Green Flag again this year. We have done well as we were one of only 26 winners from Scotland. The site has to be inspected and assessed each year for the annual award.

#### *Fund Raising Annual Fete*

Last year we had a very successful fete. Despite the economic downturn we raised £1399 after expenses. Robin thanked everyone for the hard work and support which led to this achievement and especially thanked Sarah Moffat who organised the event.

This year the fete will be held on **Saturday 18 June**.

#### *Edinburgh Napier University*

Robin advised the group that the Craighouse Campus was in the process of being sold – contracts should be completed by the end of March 2011. Details have yet to be disclosed. The university will remain on site until 2013 but beyond then the future is unknown. Representatives from the developer (Sundial) are due to have meetings imminently with council officials.

The importance of safeguarding the LNR was stressed. Robin suggested that options should be considered such as exploring the possibility of a establishing a community trust and community

ownership. Meantime higher designation and greater protection of the area was being pursued by the Council through the Queen Elizabeth II in Fields and Trust scheme.

#### ***What Next?***

- The group will support and take forward the LNR Management plan. Robin proposed that we should change our focus to increasingly support educational and training opportunities which would encourage more active involvement in the LNR and a better understanding and use of the area. This was accepted by the group.
- Robin also highlighted how local government is changing and is moving towards facilitating services rather than providing direct delivery. This requires self empowerment of communities and self awareness of the driving priorities of the community. He explained that trees and paths and the fete are only small aspects of the community. It will be important to engage with the wider community and establish what is important to it. It could for instance be related to heritage, history, geography, renewables or energy consumption. But it will be important to reach out to and engage with all sections of the wider community. The audience and wider membership were encouraged to contact the committee members with proposals of new initiatives that the group should pursue.

Robin concluded by stating that the group had achieved its objectives this year as follows:

- FCWNT is an integral part of the governance of the Local Nature Reserve to safeguard the area for future generations;
- Strong community partnerships have been formed with CEC and other stakeholders;
- Future projects will be aligned with LNR Management Plan;
- The capital projects which were agreed at the AGM last year have been undertaken;
- Contract in place to maintain the environment; and
- Fête and fund raising has been successful in creating community spirit and ensuring sustainability.

He finished by thanking everyone for their contribution.

#### **4 Update on LNR and Ranger Service**

Jenny Hargreaves, Manager, the Countryside Ranger Service, provided an update on the LNR and reported on the activities of the Countryside Ranger Services. She told of the extra patrolling that was required to check the safety of the site during the heavy snow. Broken branches had to be dealt with. Whin dust has been topped up on paths and Stevenson College had assisted the service with this work. BTCV had recently been on site to install the nature trail markers and had scraped paths back and cut verges and the hedge at the wickets.

In terms of wood management there had been some small scale thinning.

Jenny confirmed that the WREN application had been successful and that work was about to start on the paths.

Jenny was positive about the educational proposals and suggested that the group get involved in the Forest for Schools initiative and consider:

- Fund getting a member of the group trained as a forest school leader;
- Provide funding to train a local teacher; or
- Consider hiring a qualified leader.

Jenny concluded by saying that she hoped that Easter Craiglockhart Hill LNR would get a Green Flag again this year and stressed the importance of active community involvement to achieving success.

A few issues were raised with Jenny.

- The condition of the wall at the curling rink was raised and it was suggested it was being damaged by adjacent sycamore trees. Jenny agreed to get woodland officer to check the trees again.
- Concern about the wall along the north edge of the pond was raised and it was questioned if the Council could not provide assistance since the location made it so difficult for residents to maintain themselves. Jenny suggested that each owner should check their title deeds to establish responsibilities and that she would get the Estates Department to do likewise.
- The state of the path along the curling rink was raised. Jenny apologised for the lorry breaking some slabs but said that the Council was of a view that the slabs were not of an appropriate specification for the area and they were therefore reluctant to replace them. A more effective solution needed to be found and she would liaise with Robin Mutch of

FCWNT over the specification for replacement slabs, ensuring that the original length of path was replaced.

#### **5 Update of Website**

Bill Troup reported that the new website is now up and running and easily accessible. It has photos, information, news and links to other websites such as I-Spot. Everyone was urged to have a look and become familiar with the site. E-mails can be sent to the committee from the website so it is easy now to make any suggestions. Newsletters can be downloaded and members are also able to join through the website.

#### **6 Adoption of Annual Accounts**

Bill Troup tabled the accounts and highlighted the balance of £7,147.

The accounts were adopted.

Proposed: Margaret Hall

Seconded: Robin Mutch

#### **7 Re-Appointment of Auditor**

Robin thanked Rob Moffat for auditing and printing the accounts and proposed that he should be asked to audit the accounts again next year.

Proposed: Tim Duffy

Seconded: Sylvia Stevenson

#### **8 Election of the Committee and Office Bearers**

Robin advised the meeting that all the committee had agreed to continue, with the exception of Sarah Moffat who had resigned last summer. Robin thanked Sarah for all her work and support. There were 3 free positions and Robin said that he was pleased that John Milligan had agreed to join the committee. There are still 2 vacancies and Robin asked for any volunteers to let him know.

The committee was accepted.

Proposed: Betty Geisler

Seconded: Brian Allison

#### **9 Amendment to the Constitution**

Robin tabled an amendment to the constitution that would no longer require a payment of £5.00 to join. All that would be required would be for prospective members to provide their name, address and if possible e-mail address.

This amendment was accepted. However, it was agreed to allow 90 days rather than 28 days before a member would be removed from the list if they have not replied to a renewal confirmation request.

Proposed: Peter Bland

Seconded: Ian Bertram

#### **10 General Discussion**

The condition of the curling rink area was raised. Differing views were expressed in the discussion. The consensus at the AGM was, however, that in the meantime the status quo would be maintained for the curling rink and that an application would be made to the SWNP to enable the path along the edge of the curling rink to be up-graded.

#### **11 AOCB**

Nothing raised.

#### **12 Close of Meeting**

Robin concluded by thanking everyone for their support throughout the year and for coming along to the AGM.

The AGM was followed by a fascinating presentation by Mark Jennison and John Maslen of Realise Renewables Ltd on renewable projects they had been involved in throughout various parts of Scotland.