

FRIENDS OF CRAIGLOCKHART WOODS & NATURE TRAIL

Annual General Meeting 05 March 2013

1 Apologies and Welcome

Betty & Paul Geissler, Bill Troup, Tim Duffy, Andrew Burns, Bryce Morrison, Stewart Guild, Jeanette & David Rennie, Margaret Marr, Colin Chess, Gavin Corbett, Will Searle, Jenny Hargreaves, Susan Dickson, David Key

Robin welcomed everyone to the 14th AGM. He introduced the committee members and particularly thanked Fiona Jackson, outgoing vice chair, for her support. He thanked Margaret Hill for all the work she has done for the group from its outset, 14 years ago. Her contribution will be badly missed.

2 Minutes of 2012 AGM

The minutes were accepted as accurate.

Proposed: Lindsay Sneddon

Seconded: Fiona Jackson

3 Chairman's Report

Robin presented an overview of the past year.

Strategic Policy

The original remit for the group was confined to a small geographical area but since 2009 this has been extended to cover the whole of Easter Craiglockhart Hill Local Nature Reserve.

The Group's overarching aims are to manage and safeguard the environment and to facilitate access and to encourage people of all ages to take advantage, make use of and enjoy our Local Nature Reserve.

The LNR Management Plan sets out the development and improvement priorities for the next 5 years.

Projects

Robin reminded the meeting that 3 years ago it was decided to move the emphasis of the group away from capital works and shift to identifying and facilitating educational and recreational opportunities that encourage people to enjoy using the site. Pathwork will continue to be supported as required but will not be a major focus.

A key project this year has been producing a history panel about the area. A first draft has been produced for comment and suggestion. A successful application was made to the SW Neighbourhood partnership for support funding for this project.

Juniper bushes have been planted at the top of the hill in the gorse area.

Planned Maintenance

Over the last few years The City of Edinburgh Council has been unable to fund all the maintenance requirements of the site. To ensure that the appearance of the area is well maintained, we as a group have funded a private ground maintenance contract and paid around £800 each year for grass cutting, strimming and pruning. This will be no longer required. The City of Edinburgh Council is now able to include the ground maintenance of this area in their new citywide ground maintenance contract. Robin asked that people would let him know if they felt this work was not being well done.

We have had two successful tidy up days again this year.

Green Flag Award

The Easter Craiglockhart Hill Local Nature Reserve was awarded a Green Flag again this year for the fourth time. We have done well as we were one of only 44 winners from Scotland. The site has to be inspected and assessed each year for the annual award. Robin thanked the Natural Heritage Service whose hard work in the area ensures our success along with the interest, support and involvement of the community which is a big criterion in the assessment process.

Fund Raising Annual Fete

There were no major fund raising events this past year.

A community picnic was held in the woods at the jubilee in June. It was a cold wet day but successful and well received.

This year we are considering holding a Concert in the Woods.

Robin asked for suggestions for future events.

Educational and Recreational Developments

Robin described the work that has been done to get local schools more involved in the area on an on-going way. Craiglockhart Primary School children have been using the woods as an outdoor classroom every Wednesday throughout the year. Every child in the school will have spent 4 successive Wednesdays learning outdoors in the woods by the end of the school session.

A very successful Magical Woodland walk was held last spring. Over 400 people came along. Children from Oxgangs, Craiglockhart and Longstone primary schools were involved.

This year there will be another Magical Woodland Walk in March with children from Craiglockhart primary school participating again.

A successful guided walk on the theme of wild food and medicine was held in late autumn on a very cold day. It was fascinating and it was suggested that it could become a regular feature at different times of the year.

Robin asked for suggestions about other types of walk that could be organised.

George Watson's continues to use the area for their second year biology project surveying the site.

Educational and informative material has been included on our website. The Woodland Trust, Nature Detectives material is made available for each season of the year. A link to I-spot has also been added.

QR codes have been developed to accompany the Nature Trail.

Edinburgh Napier University Campus

Robin noted that the future of the Napier Campus continues to be an active issue in the area. He advised that a response from the Council to the planning application was expected before the end of 2013.

Robin went on to describe the proposal for community ownership of the woodland areas and potentially the entire LNR. He made clear that he is a strong advocate of community ownership.

Robin concluded his annual report by stating that the group had achieved its objectives again. This year has seen no major investment programmes but work has been undertaken to encourage more use of the area for education and recreational enjoyment.

4 Update on LNR and Ranger Service

Robin outlined the new structure of the countryside ranger service which has merged with other services in the Council to form the Natural Heritage Service.

Robin listed what has been undertaken and achieved this year as follows:

- Successful guided bat walk
- Meadow raking
- Yellow rattle planting
- 15 new bat boxes purchased with a grant from SNH
- 24 juniper bushes planted
- New maintenance protocol in place
- Hedge cutting
- Litter picking
- Wooden steps scraped
- Information boards updated
- Dangerous beech tree behind the sports centre removed
- Upgrading of drainage behind the sports centre
- Curling rink area treated with herbicide twice and scraped

- Woodchip provided for the Forest School Initiative

This year's guided walk is called Underwater Mini-Monsters and will take place on Sunday 7 April. Details are available from The Natural Heritage Service.

5 Update of Website

Robin reported that the website has been up-dated. It has photos, information, news and links have been added to other websites such as I-Spot. To support the educational and recreational use of the site a new section called Fun for Kids has been added.

Everyone was urged to have a look and become familiar with the website.

craiglockhartwoods.org

To become a member all that is now required is an e-mail address. 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

Robin tabled the accounts and highlighted the balance of £5,842.

The accounts were adopted.

Proposed: Sylvia Stevenson

Seconded: Margaret Hill

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: Sylvia Stevenson

Seconded: Ewan Davidson

8 Election of the Committee and Office Bearers

Robin advised the meeting that all the committee had agreed to continue, with the exception of Fiona Jackson, vice chair and Margaret Hill. Robin thanked them both for their support.

Robin proposed that Ewan Davidson becomes vice chair and that Will Searle joins as a member.

The committee was accepted.

Proposed: Jane McLaren

Seconded: Ian Bertram

9 General Discussion

- The question was raised about potential conflict between managing the natural heritage of the nature reserve alongside areas that some people would wish to see more landscaped and tamed. Robin explained that as a group we have always been

aware of this tension and have tried to find ways to adapt the management regime to reflect the requirements of the different locations within the site.

- The question of community ownership of the woods was raised. Robin explained that he was taking this initiative forward in his capacity as a Director of the Common Ground Association.

He explained that the Friends Group did not have a communal view. Questions were asked about the funding of the community ownership proposal, about the management structure of the community organisation and the future position and role of the existing local groups.

10 AOCB

Nothing raised.

11 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 an interesting presentation by Kendal Gater, Depute Head Teacher Craiglockhart Primary School. Kendal told us about the Forest School Initiative and about the kind of activities she has been doing with the children every Wednesday in the woods throughout the year. She gave examples of how the children have benefitted in so many different ways by this approach. Her photographs well illustrated how much they enjoyed learning outdoors in this way.

Clearly the Forest School has been enjoyed by the pupils, the teachers and the parent helpers.