

Friends of Willaston Meadow

Annual General Meeting 2020

Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, it was not possible to hold an Annual General Meeting. Instead it was decided to do this by post and all members were sent papers by post, with proposals and a voting slip. A deadline to respond was given for Thursday 1st October 2020. 41 voting slips were returned.

1. Acting Chair's Report

Sarah Shannon, Acting Chair had circulated the following report with the papers:

2019 was a sad year for the Friends as both our Chair, Hilary Morris and Treasurer, Roger James died.

Hilary had been our Chair since the inception of FOWM in 2004. Her scientific background, interest in local and natural history and strong personality made her the ideal individual for the job. In March 2020, we were joined by members of her family and friends from the village to plant an apple tree in her memory, next to the one commemorating her husband. This event was fortunately arranged just before lockdown.

Roger had been Treasurer for nine years and brought to the committee his extensive business experience and warm personality. His contributions at AGMs and committee meetings were always astute and delivered with great humour.

As a volunteer with the Group for several years, I was persuaded to take on the role of Chair and have had great support from the rest of the committee, who have far more knowledge of natural history and the Meadow than I do – but I am slowly learning.

We were pleased that Ken Watson volunteered to take on the role of Treasurer. He was thrown in at the deep end with having to sort out the end of year accounts and coped admirably.

Lockdown due to Covid 19 has shown what an asset the Meadow is for the community. It became one of the favourite haunts for people taking their daily exercise and many discovered it for the first time. We were unable to hold volunteer sessions for three months but when we started up again in June (with appropriate risk assessments and safeguards), we have been able to welcome several new volunteers. Our volunteer sessions are always fun and an opportunity to exchange opinions about how the Meadow should develop.

The Meadow has had support from the CWaC Greenspace Officer and we work together to continue to manage the Meadow. Willaston School also has an area where they hold a Forest School, which was well used until the lockdown. The wooden logs also provide opportunity for families and friends to make a base and chat or play together.

This year has seen an abundance of wildlife. The school again found a Great Crested Newt in Jackson's Pond. Our bird spotting volunteers who visit monthly noted 36 species in 2019, including swallows, fieldfares and redwings. Often we can see a buzzard soaring over the Meadow. Many wildflowers thrive in the Meadow, including common spotted orchid, fritillary, marsh marigold and wood anemone.

Because of Covid 19 and the ongoing difficulties of getting a group together, we postponed our AGM in May 2020 and have now decided that it can only be done virtually. We hope that by next May, we will once again be able to hold a group meeting.

Sadly, our Secretary, David Nind has decided to step down after 16 years in the role. He has been a great support, as well as having a lot of knowledge about the Meadow and its nature. We hope he will continue to come to volunteer days and to enjoy everything the Meadow has to offer.

The report was proposed by Sarah Shannon and seconded by Rachel Atkinson. This was accepted by all people voting.

2. Accounts for 2019-20

The accounts for 2019-20 were circulated with the papers. Ronald Anderson questioned whether they had been audited and it was confirmed by email that they had been audited by Ian Atkinson. Three members queried the accounts because they were not listed as having paid their membership. It was explained to them separately that only those paying by standing order were listed in the accounts; those paying by cheque were included under the heading 'various' as multiple cheques were paid in at one time.

The accounts were proposed by Ken Watson and seconded by Elaine Mills and accepted by all people voting.

We would like to record our thanks to Ian Atkinson for auditing the accounts.

3. Appointment of Chair

Sarah Shannon was proposed as Chair by Rachel Atkinson and seconded by Elaine Mills. This was agreed by all people voting.

4. Appointment of Treasurer

Ken Watson was proposed as Treasurer by Sarah Shannon and seconded by David Nind. This was agreed by all people voting.

5. Adoption of New Constitution

A proposed new constitution was circulated with the papers, showing amendments clearly in red. The revised constitution was proposed by Sarah Shannon and seconded by David Nind. This was agreed by 39 votes with 2 votes objecting.

Raymond Dent objected because he disagreed with the removal of the word 'woodland' from the title of the organisation. He also suggested that a map with the boundaries clearly marked should be attached to the constitution and that a management plan should be drawn up for the wooded areas.

Jane Townsend objected because she did not think that it is appropriate for a constitution to be revised constitutionally. She raised some questions/comments as follows:

- Why remove the phrase 'and its associated flora and fauna' in para 3b?
- The suggested quorum of six people for the AGM is a very small number and asked how many members are there (para 6)?
- Is a minimum of four people at voting on changes to the constitution enough (para 9)?
- Is a minimum of four people enough to dissolve the group (para 10a)?

In addition, Ronald Anderson pointed out that there are two paragraph 5s and in one case the word 'Society' had been used, when it should have been 'Group'.