

# FRIENDS OF PUTNOE WOOD and MOWSBURY HILLFORT

## Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 April 2018 at Cloverdale Retreat Café, Priory Country Park

**Members present:** Jon Bishop, Lyn Caudrey, Martin Fannon, Sue Fannon, Dave Parratt, Diana Readhead, John Wallace, Chris Wedge, Maggie West, Helen Wilkie, John Wilkie, Andy Wilkins (Chairman), Allison Wilkins

### 1 **Apologies for absence.**

Apologies were received from Robert Bright, Mick Lilliman, Marion Wallace, Jane Warner,

### 2 **Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 23 January 2018**

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

### 3 **Update from Country Park Guardians**

Jon Bishop reported.

**3.1 Reorganisation of Park & Green Space Services.** Danny has now left to take up a post with a new employer. Nicky moves to her new role as Tree Officer at the end of May.

**3.2 Training.** The Borough is keen that all brush-cutter/trimmer trained staff and volunteers attend refresher training every three years. Friends were asked to let Jon know if they are due for refreshers, and he will let them know dates. Dave and Martin expressed an interest in training to use hedge cutters.

#### **3.3 Putnoe Wood.**

- Jon is investigating possible uses for the wood arising from coppicing (eg hedge-laying); however, issues around the danger of spreading of plant diseases may prevent this.
- Putnoe Old Glade – half of this needs cutting each year to encourage early purple orchids and spotted flycatchers.
- Other future tasks: pulling balsam; cutting bramble on south side, old glade and new glade; clearing blockages in the stream.
- Putnoe Wood Management Plan. John Wallace said he would be happy to help with this.

**3.4 Educational Visits.** It was noted that in James Lynch's reply (19 March 2018) to Andy's letter concerning the impact of Borough staff redundancies on the Friends, he stated that the Borough does not currently deem these to be a priority.

### 4 **Future Tasks and Events.**

**4.1 Site Visit by Natural England to Mowsbury Hillfort on Wednesday 4 April.** A written report by Dave Parratt is appended to these minutes. Dave and John Wallace gave a verbal report to the meeting and discussions took place. Regarding Natural England's proposals to install two interpretation boards, it was noted that this was contrary to the Friends' preference for one board at the bottom of Mowsbury Meadow. However, it was further noted that ultimately all stakeholders would need to be consulted on this subject, including the Borough Council who owned the land. Members also reiterated the need to ensure that any future management plans would preserve the archaeology of the site and the natural wildness of the environment.

**4.2 Green Flag Community Award Application.** Chris reported on the assessment visit which took place on Monday 9 April. The Assessor was very complimentary, positive and encouraging. The outcome will not be known until July.

**4.3 Orchards East Volunteer Surveyor Training Day - 14 April, Mowsbury.** Jon Bishop will give a brief site introduction to the delegates attending this training.

**4.4 Hazeldene School Visit to Putnoe Wood – Monday 23 April.** John Wallace reported that Marion and Nicky will visit the school on Wednesday 18 April for an introductory session in

advance of the visit. Eight Friends have volunteered to act as wayfinders during the afternoon visit. Marion will prepare notes to assist the wayfinders.

- 4.5 Bat Walk – 8.30pm Tuesday 15 May Priory Country Park.** Danny will lead this walk. The Friends' Anniversary Dinner originally planned for the same evening will be re-scheduled.

## **5 Financial Matters**

John Wilkie presented the latest figures.

Cash in Bank	£521.45
Petty Cash	£0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£521.45</b>

Transactions since last report:

Income	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£0.00</b>

Outgoings	
Donation to MS Therapy Centre	£165.86
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£165.86</b>

## **7 Any Other Business**

- 7.1 Danny's guidance re: management of dappled shade.** John Wallace will forward this to Friends.

- 7.2 Tea.** John Wallace suggested that we should agree a rota for the provision of tea during tasks.

- 7.3 AGM.** Nominations for office holding positions are welcomed and should be sent to Helen.

## **8 Date of next meeting**

7.00pm Tuesday 12 June at Cloverdale Retreat Café, Priory Country Park. This meeting will be preceded by the Annual General Meeting.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **NOTE OF SITE VISIT BY TIMOTHY HOPWELL, NATURAL ENGLAND TO MOWSBURY HILLFORT ON WEDNESDAY 4 APRIL 2018**

**Those present:** Timothy Hopwell (NE), from the Borough – Geoff Saunders, James Lynch, Claire Pick and Jon Bishop, from the Friends – John Wallace and Dave Parratt

**Purpose of visit:** To enable Timothy Hopwell to familiarise himself with the site's characteristics, to review progress against the HLS agreement and to discuss progress on funding of archaeological and hydrological surveys, interpretation boards and management plan.

#### **Discussion points:**

1. Funding and work on the archaeological and hydrological surveys. Timothy explained that he would be putting forward a bid for the appropriate funding. The Friends requested that the leat be included in the area to be surveyed. Timothy would also be pressing Dave Kenny of Historic England for briefs, to enable the work to be put out to tender.

2. Management plan – Timothy believes that the Friends Vision, marketing strategy and work plan is sufficient for the current management of the site. This could be adapted, as appropriate, in consultation with Clare Pick to ensure consistency with other Borough Management Plans for countryside/wildlife sites. A more developed management plan might be justified following the survey work.
3. Interpretation Boards – there was a great deal of discussion over the potential number and siting of interpretation boards, including the suggestion by the Friends of one board adjacent to the entrance gate to the Meadow. Having walked the site, Timothy favoured two boards one sited near to the entrance to the Scheduled area (interpreting the site) and one either alongside the raised walkway, or on the hillside where the walkway exits the monument (to explain the location of the Hillfort within the wider landscape). This option would be pursued by NE through a tender exercise. Timothy would expect the Friends to be consulted by the contractors on board content. In addition, should the Friends wish to pursue an additional board at the main entrance from the car park, this could be taken forward in conjunction with the Borough. James indicated that funding could be allocated to this from within his budget.
4. Northern viewpoint – Timothy and Geoff considered that there would be benefit in further clearing of vegetation/scrub outside the monument area, to improve the view down across the valley. Jon Bishop agreed to confirm that the land (which lies adjacent to the golf course) was in Borough ownership.
5. Southern viewpoint – Timothy and Geoff re-affirmed a previous request to consider lowering scrub levels (at a point on the raised walkway near to the secondary entrance to the Scheduled area), looking out across the land to the South. Together with an interpretation board, this would help to explain why the Hillfort occupied this prominent location. This would necessitate only a reduction in height of scrub, **not** total removal. Jon Bishop indicated that suitable pole saws/chainsaws and Borough assistance could be made available to undertake this work.
6. Dead hedging- Timothy and Geoff indicated that they would like to see this moved from the Inner Island to the burn site. This is because it implies an interpretation that there might have been stock fencing in place in medieval times, which is not supported by the archaeology. It was accepted that this could be moved gradually to minimise any potential wildlife impact. They considered the sightline cleared by the Friends as being helpful in the meantime.