

## **Minutes of the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Anderton and Marbury.**

**Comberbach Memorial Hall. 17<sup>th</sup> May 2010**

The Chair of FoAM, Alan Redley, opened the meeting at 19:30 and welcomed some 24 attendees.

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

The Chair had received apologies for absence from Alan and Eileen Garner and Ranjit and Yvonne Singh. All 4 had given him proxy votes to vote on resolutions on their behalf. Apologies were also received from Mac Carding and Adam Evans.

### **2. Minutes of the last meeting.**

Minutes of the 10<sup>th</sup> AGM held on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2009 had been posted on the Northwich Woodlands website as previously agreed, instead of issuing paper copies to members. The Minutes had also been posted on FoAM's Mersey Forest hosted website. The Chair asked if anyone had any concerns or issues regarding last year's Minutes.

No concerns were raised and the Minutes of the 10<sup>th</sup> AGM were approved as a true statement.

### **3. Matters Arising from 2009 AGM minutes.**

No matters were arising from last year's Minutes.

### **4. Chair's Report.**

Alan reported that 2009 was FoAM's tenth anniversary year and a celebration barbecue was held on the 25<sup>th</sup> July at Marbury. This was a successful and enjoyable event, with music by the Weavils and food provided by FoAM. A similar event has been organised for the 24<sup>th</sup> July this year, with the Weavils again providing the music. However, this time food will not be provided by FoAM, so participants will be invited to bring their own food to cook on our barbecues.

In September, Paul Hill, Alan Garner and the Chair gave a presentation on the "Past, Present and Future" of FoAM, which reflected on events over the first ten years and looked forward to the future.

One highlight of the year was at the Cheshire Show in June, where the Northwich Woodlands partnership won a "Highly Commended Award" from the Cheshire Agricultural Society in recognition of a "unique example at the show of partnership working, bringing together the voluntary sector and other organisations".

In September, FoAM was nominated for the final Unilever Dragonfly Award at the Environment 09 Conference held in Liverpool, hosted by Michael Heseltine. We came close runner-up and were commended as "outstanding and inspirational volunteers".

During the year, we completed our wildflower planting project, planting 3,500 wildflower pot plants between the lime avenues and deep ploughing two other areas for sowing with wildflower seed. The deep ploughing went well, but the subsequent harrowing of the field next to the scrape proved eventful, with two tractors becoming stuck in the wet ground. The fields were eventually sown with seed and are now showing well. The project was undertaken as a result of a grant from Waste Recycling Group, administered by WREN. The grant was only been possible because of local support from Action Weaver Valley, The Mersey Forest, Brunner Mond, Anderton with Marbury Parish Council and Cheshire West and Chester Council.

The pond dipping stage at the Ice Pond was also completed and an opening ceremony was held in September. This project was rounded off by the installation of three superb benches made by volunteers from timber felled in the Woodlands.

During the year, finishing touches were also made to the Sand Martin Bank at Haydn's Pool and the interpretation panel for the project was unveiled a few weeks ago. Alan expressed his particular thanks to Vernon Lundy, Paul Hill, Chester Zoo, Brunner Mond and Ray Hartwell for their involvement in this project. He paid particular thanks to Ray, who has since retired from voluntary work, for preparing the drawings for the project and for all his other work with FoAM over the years.

In response to requests for ideas for future projects from FoAM members, some native fruit trees were purchased and planted at Anderton and Neumann's Flash. Alan reiterated the need for ideas for future projects from members.

Another successful project saw a magnificent new gateway feature installed between the car park at Anderton and the boat lift. This project involved local schoolchildren and was mainly funded by INEOS Enterprises. Alan thanked FoAM member Frances Findlay for her contribution and work on this project.

A varied programme of events was held throughout the year, including a Dawn Chorus Walk, a Bird Race, a Treasure Hunt, Wildflower Walk, Bring and Buy Plant Sale, Moth Event, Bug Hunt, Bat Talk and Fungal Foray. Most were great successes, but attendance at some has been disappointing. The Committee was sure this was partly as a result of our new Council deciding against issuing a "Countryside Events leaflet" for the year's events.

Alan mentioned the changes happening within the Ranger Service. The Rangers were taking on responsibility for a number of new areas. Some of these areas (such as Marshall's Arm and Furey Wood) have existing Friends Groups, whilst others do not. He said that FoAM would need to review the extent to which we wished to become involved with these new areas.

Alan concluded his Chair's Report by remarking on the wide range of activities and projects carried out successfully during the year. He reminded everyone that funding opportunities for new projects were becoming increasingly tight and he took the opportunity to thank all the volunteers who have turned out during the year, without whose commitment FoAM would be unable to continue.

## **5. Treasurer's Report.**

Jim Jeeves presented the Treasurer's Report and started by saying that expenditure exceeded income by £645.50 for the last 12 months. However, most of the expenditure was money which had been received as income from sponsorship for various projects and released from provision for this purpose.

Our net income for the year was £1,559.71. Subscription receipts of £1,458 were in line with last year and include 4 life memberships. He explained that provision had been put aside from Life Membership fees received to cover future costs of servicing the membership.

Income from events was substantially boosted by the income from the Bird Box event and Plant sales. Jim explained that the total funding amount was the amount available for further projects and does not include moneys already allocated for specified projects, including sponsored projects.

The money spent on the Sand Martin project was completely covered by the grant from Chester Zoo. Likewise other monies spent on sponsored projects have been covered by previous grants and 'ring fenced' provision. The fruit trees project was the result of a suggestion from a FoAM member and should improve greatly the areas where the trees have been planted. Extra trees were also planted using the funds available from the 'Tree O'clock' scheme. The cost of this was paid directly via Mersey Forrest and thus not shown on the balance sheet. Workwear was the cost of shirts for new volunteers. Part 2 of the CCI grant from the Mersey Forest had been agreed, but received too late to be included in this Report.

Publicity costs were greatly increased this year due to the production of a new FoAM Publicity Brochure at a cost of £845. Our brochure was 10 years old and starting to look out-dated, so the decision was taken to replace it. The new Brochure was urgently needed and we have a stock which should last many years.

Donations were significantly increased by those obtained from the 'auctions' of wood furniture made by the volunteers. Whilst charcoal and log donations were adversely affected by the weather, so far this year we have cleared our backlog and sold good quantities of both. Expenditure on bird seed and Barn Owl Group includes FoAM's subscription for membership of the Barn Owl Group (FoAM joined the Group in return for them supplying us with barn owl boxes). General expenditure includes the cost of equipment for wood working, e.g. a mitre saw, replacement blades and drills, and such things as paper bags for charcoal and the sandwich boards to help with publicity, together with money allocated for the 10 year celebrations. The Heritage Bank Account remains unchanged and £2 remains in the additional account.

Total Assets are slightly down from last year at £15,105.11. Against these Assets, Liabilities totalling £5,402.07 include provision for £73.60 unrepresented cheques, £1,000 from Brunner Mond ('ring fenced' for a future project) and £2,758.47 for Heritage account costs. Jim finished by reporting that Net Assets stand at £9,703.04 and said he felt that FoAM seemed well prepared to weather the future economic storm provided care is taken.

Jim said he had now served as Treasurer for three years and was standing down. He thanked Alan Garner and Alan Redley, the past and present Chairs for their help and support. He also expressed particular thanks to Steve Penwill the previous Treasurer, for providing help and expertise.

The Chair thanked Jim for the Treasurer's Report.

## **6. Report from the Membership Secretary.**

Hilary Woodhead presented the Membership Secretary's Report. She said that membership was stable with 150 – 160 members. Inevitably we have lost some people but have welcomed 19 new members during the year. The introduction of Life membership has been taken up by a few people whose continuing support of FoAM and therefore the local area is much appreciated.

Hilary confirmed that FoAM complies with the Data Protection Act and, during the past year, the membership data base has been overhauled so that it now holds no records of children. She explained that Membership Cards are issued for each adult member and some people have found their membership number has changed after renewal. This has enabled people at the same address to be given consecutive numbers, which helps make the data base easier to administer. This overhaul of the database will be complete very soon. To reduce costs, Membership Cards are now sent out with Newsletters, unless a stamped addressed envelope is provided.

Hilary said she could not have managed this task during the last 2 years without the magnificent help and support of an IT literate – her husband Noel. She said they were leaving the area and consequently she was standing down from the Committee and the role of Membership Secretary. She finished by wishing her successor(s) all the best for the future.

The Chair thanked Hilary for her Report.

## **7. Election of Officers and Committee for 2010/11**

The Chair started by noting that Jim Jeeves had come to the end of his three year term as Treasurer and he thanked Jim for carrying out the role so well.

The Chair also noted that Hilary Woodhead was leaving the area and was therefore standing down from the Committee and as Membership Secretary at this Meeting. He thanked Hilary for looking after this important task so well.

The Chair said the final change to report was that Paul Hill had informed us a year ago of his intention to stand down from the Committee, but had agreed to stay on to help with the ten year celebrations. Now these

were over, Paul was standing down. Paul was a founding member of the Group and had worked tirelessly to help the Group since then. The Chair thanked Paul for all the help he had given since the Group's formation.

As a result, the Chair proposed three resolutions:

1. The Appointment of Alan Garner as Treasurer
2. The Appointment of Jim and Mary Jeeves to the role of Membership Secretary
3. The Re-election of those Existing Officers and Additional Committee Members who are not standing down this year.

All proposals were nominated and seconded and the Resolutions were unanimously accepted.

### **8. Any Other Business.**

The Chair reported that it had been necessary to re-visit the Group's Constitution and the Committee recommended three amendments to the existing Constitution:

1. To make changes of terminology which replace Cheshire County Council with Cheshire West and Chester Council and reflect the new title of the Rangers.
2. An amendment to the text limiting the term in a role for Committee Members to no more than three consecutive years in order to clarify that this rule applies only to the three Officer roles: Chair; Treasurer and Secretary, and not to all Committee Members.
3. To amend the quorum for an AGM so it becomes one tenth of the membership rather than one eighth.

These resolutions were passed unanimously.

The Chair explained that it was sometimes necessary to keep the Constitution up to date at short notice, for example to enable it to be included when submitting grant applications. Such changes were minor in nature and reference back to an AGM or Extraordinary General Meeting to get approval for such changes was unduly restrictive.

As a result, the Chair proposed a fourth Resolution:

4. To enable minor changes to be made to the Constitution, for example updating of terminology, without prior reference to an AGM or EGM for approval. Any such changes would be agreed by the Committee and would only be implemented if they did not affect the intention of the existing Constitution.

This Fourth Resolution was passed unanimously.

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 20:10hr.

The 11<sup>th</sup> AGM was followed by a quiz and supper.