



Milford Environment Group
(Formed 1989)



(Amalgamated 2012)
Website: milfordcv.org



Wildlife Recording Group
(Formed 2001)

Tony Locke - Chairman 3 Hillside, Sharvells Road, Milford-on-Sea Hampshire S041 0WH

MCV COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Meeting held Friday **10th May** 2019 at **7.00pm** in the **Community Centre**

1. **Apologies:** Penny Ramus, Martin Gretton and Anne Jenks
2. **Minutes of the last meeting:** Held 5th April 2019: Re Item 5b ii in the Minutes. David (C) said that the budget set for the long-reach chainsaw should have read £500 not £300. The minutes were amended accordingly.
Proposed by Keith, Seconded by David (C) - Approved
3. **Outstanding Matters**
 - a) **Brown Paper Bags** – Anne asked Keith to say that she has written to Friends of the Earth and is awaiting a response.
4. **Chairman's Announcements & Reports**
 - a) **Wild Play – NFNPA event at Bird Hide:** The Chairman said that the event had been well attended and several families came into the Hide.
 - b) **Child, Young Person, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy & Code of Conduct update:** It was explained that the update was needed to be able to submit to Alison Barnes (NFNPA) in order for her to make a formal application for MCV to be nominated for a special award for 2020. Mary said that she would retype the three individual sheets and was given the okay to amend anything she thought needed to be reviewed. A further update on the **General Health & Safety Information for Task Team and Fieldworkers**. Keith agreed to update this form. Both will be circulated by Mary and Keith for consideration at the next committee meeting.
 - c) **Task Session with NFACV** – The Chairman said that the Task with NFACV had gone very well on Sunday 5th May. Work was carried out in the Community Orchard and on the western side of the Meadow. It was noted that the June 2nd task with the NFACV will take place in Old Milford Meadow.
5. **Treasurer's Report**
 - a) **Year to Date Accounts** – David (C) presented the accounts for the period up to 3 May 2019. The accounts as presented were proposed by Keith, seconded by Dave (B) and were approved.
 - b) **To consider other finance matters**
 - i) **Shorefield Holiday Park** – It was reported that Shorefield Holiday Park had given a generous grant of £1,500 to MCV for advisory and management report writing on their Ancient Woodland Walk undertaken over the past three-years by Hugh Corry and Keith Metcalf. The Chairman had written to thank the MD Simon Pollock for their generous sponsorship.
 - ii) **Long-reach Chainsaw** – Following lengthy discussion about the overspend on this item, it was agreed that in future no expenditure over and above that given in the annually approved Anticipated Income and Expenditure Budget of more than 10% per line item could be made without reference to the full committee. The long-reach chainsaw was purchased after the Treasurer and the Conservation Officer had agreed by telephone without reference to the full committee. The new item purchased was upgraded to include a brush-cutter and hedge-trimmer which could be used at several sites. Keith suggested that if required, a bid for a second battery should be considered at a future committee meeting. The retrospective expenditure for the chainsaw was proposed by Lorraine and seconded by David (C). Approved.

- iii) **Old Milford Meadow** – It was agreed that an initial sponsorship contribution from the budgeted sum of £2,500 for benches, raised wooden beds, communications board, storage box and compost bins could be made to the Parish Council of up to £1,580, which would leave a reserve for wildflower meadow plugs and other items still required.
- iv) **The Pans - Vision Link (still picture cameras)** – Keith said that he had met with Vision Link to discuss locating two webcam type cameras close to the hidden area at The Pans to help record birds using the site. He said that the data collection costs (i.e. to recover the photographs taken every 15 minutes during daylight hours) would be between £20 and £30 per month + vat. The data collected by the system would allow anyone with the appropriate Vision Link app to be able to access the information collected via a smart-phone, laptop or I-pad. The information could also be downloaded at home on any PC. Each photograph taken would be captured and users with the app would be able to check on what had used the site through the day. Subject to agreement from J & D Edgar and Simeon Morgan to set up the system, Keith asked for approval for an initial 3-month trial period, with an option to extend this by a further three-months. If after that period the committee thought the information worth continuing with, it is possible that the equipment (solar-powered system and two cameras) could be purchased for about £1,000. Proposed by Keith seconded by Tony. Approved.

6. Conservation Officer Project Reports – Including outstanding Biodiversity Action Plan Aspirations

- a) **Nature Story Project** – Keith said that if the idea was approved, the proposed project would meet BAP aspiration EA7 – To enhance conservation education. He had already held an initial talk with the Library (Jill Neal) who thought that the concept sounded ideal for youngsters and that the Library could be used for the nature storytelling sessions. Keith said that he had already recruited about 12 MCV members (and some non-MCV-members) to act as storytellers. The proposed idea is to tell stories about wildlife that the children are likely to encounter locally. The way it would work is that the children would be shown a photograph/picture of the bird or animal that would be the subject of the story. Prior to the children arriving, several pieces of the photo/picture would have been cut into pieces and hidden (not very well) around the library. Once all parts to the picture had been located by the children, the story could begin. The storyteller would sit facing the children (either sat on mats or in chairs). The children would listen to the story being told whilst watching photographs of the book being projected onto a large screen behind and to one side of the storyteller. Members thought that the project was worth pursuing.
Milford Primary School: This was not a scheduled item to be discussed. MCV have been approached by Milford Primary School about doing some work with the children in relation to something described as ‘global pledges’ that the school children had made to help our declining wildlife. This will be reported upon further at the next committee meeting.
- b) **Bird Seawatching** – BAP aspiration SM3 – Seabird Surveys – Keith said that he was hopeful of arranging a meeting with a local business to discuss an idea about sea birdwatching from a potential interesting location. As this meeting had not yet taken place, Keith asked that this idea be kept confidential for the time being.
- c) **Sharvells Copse & Pleasure Grounds** – Keith reported that he had received information from Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) via Graham Wells (Parish Clerk) relating to Sharvells Copse. He said that Sharvells Copse (East) which is the larger section would be losing its Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) status because it no longer met the Criteria for selecting SINCS. HBIC say that the area has been largely replanted with conifers and non-native species and that no ‘heathland’ interest remains, hence the proposed withdrawal of its SINC status. However, they also say that the smaller western block would be added to the Pleasure Grounds SINC as it still retains some relic heathland interest and is contiguous with the existing (Pleasure Grounds) SINC to which it would be added. To meet our own BAP action plan aspiration (H3) – i.e. to restore heathland, Keith suggested that we should try to get the Parish Council to ‘contest’ the HBIC proposal to remove the eastern block status, by asking them to review the area

under a different SINC criteria. Whilst it is appreciated that the eastern block no longer has heathland species and its SINC status should be removed under that category, the site does still have 'Social Value' which is an alternative criteria under which SINC status could possibly be retained, or if there was a particular 'Notable Species' e.g. proof of e.g. Wood Sorrel, then maybe the status could be included in that criteria. Following discussion, it was agreed that Tony and Keith should attempt to retain SINC status for this eastern block, possibly under of the alternative criteria mentioned above.

- d) **Saltgrass Marsh** – Keith said that one of the Keyhaven Forum sub-committee members (Ben Collins – also an MCV member) had produced a report on '*Over winter water table levels*' (Aug 2018 to April 2019) in which he states that; 'in terms of impact of the summer sea water wetting programme, it was apparent that there had been no big impact on the water table close to the village and that at best there had been a small increase (6cm) of water table level rise by the end of the trial period' in the marsh itself. In the report, which will be circulated for information, two photographs had been included. The first was taken shortly after the new and impervious sea wall was constructed in 1995 and the second photograph taken in the summer of 2018. The earlier photograph showed short saline tolerant species that had adapted to the salty marsh conditions in the lower area of the marsh and the absence of freshwater tolerant common reed which was confined to the higher levels of the marsh. The later photograph showed a higher, thicker density of common reed, which had clearly invaded most of the eastern end of the marsh alongside the quay since the new sea wall was constructed, thereby forcing out the unique salt tolerant vegetation, indicating a fundamental change in the soil below, most likely due to desalination and salt loss. Ben Collins water table report will be used alongside Keith's 12-month bird survey report when further discussions are arranged with the landowner (NFDC) and the Parish Council.
- e) **Observatory & The Pans** – Keith said that he, David (C) and Julie Hallows had met to discuss making some modest changes to the way the key-fob system was managed. Julie has also modified the usage report given to Keith and David (C) which can be shared with committee members if requested. The decking extension still needs to be undertaken and the autumn reed-cutting and collection will be undertaken, hopefully using the new equipment purchased. Graham Giddens ringing and survey reporting will be shared from time to time, but is proceeding to plan. Graham's full report will be produced in spring 2020. In the meantime, it was reported that we now have both Spoonbill (up to six juveniles) and 3 Avocet regularly using the wetland from late April to date. Keith reminded the committee that the three-year Licence agreement with J & D Edgar to occupy the observatory site would terminate in April 2020 and that MCV would need to request an extension to this agreement over the next few months.
- f) **Studland Common** – Keith and Tony had looked at a possible solution to stop cattle from nipping the heads off Bluebells, Primrose and other wildflowers on the Common during spring. Acknowledging that only a few regular walkers had complained, the complaints had been vociferous and considered enough by the Conservation Officer to review whether the grazing periods could be tweaked without making major changes to the existing arrangement that the Council has with the grazier and that still meets the Natural England HLS criteria and the recommendations made by the New Forest National Park Authority – Land Advice Service (LAS). Keith proposed that further advice could be sought from the LAS on the following proposal:
- February through to May – Cattle to graze for allowed period on Studland Meadow
 - September through till following January – Cattle to graze for allowed period on Studland Common
- Keith said that if this was possible, it would:
- Protect the spring flora growth on the Common
 - Protect the Burnet Rose, Dyer's Greenweed and Devil's-bit Scabious on the Common in summer
 - Allow summer growth in the Meadow in order to take a hay-cut from August onwards and

- Allow the grazier up to nine-months in which to get their agreed 17-weeks grazing

Concern was expressed about whether the cattle on the Meadow would poach the ground. Keith said that the number of cattle grazing and the length of time allowed on each compartment would ensure that there would be no poaching. Members voted in favour of the proposed change by four votes in favour, none against and one abstention. Keith will follow up with LAS and the Parish.

- g) **Sturt Pond Bird Hide, Management Agreement & Ringing** – A further meeting had been held with NFDC and the Parish Council. A second draft management plan agreement had been discussed and a few changes made. When the third draft has been received it will be circulated to all committee members for information and comment. Keith reported that he had asked NFDC to consider repositioning the existing fence-line a little further to the east of Hurst Depot to take in a little more of the saltmarsh area that is currently used by dog walkers. The initial suggestion was rebuffed by NFDC, but Keith said that this should not deter the MCV committee from considering this point and raising it again with them. If we were to secure NFDCs approval to realign the boundary fence, BAP aspiration H16 (to protect ‘saltmarsh area’ at Sturt Pond LNR) could be achieved.
- h) **Birding for Beginners Sessions** – The attendance of these sessions by families had picked up at both locations and is seen as part of our BAP education programme to encourage more youngsters to be interested in wildlife. *Observatory (1st Sats) Hide (3rd Sats) Monthly*
- i) **Old Milford Meadow** – Work is continuing and items required for the Meadow and community garden identified. From the budget set aside for this project (Total £2,500) we have indicated to the Parish Council that MCV would be prepared to make an initial sponsorship donation towards these items: 2 x benches (£400), raised wooden beds (£280), communications board (£500) a storage shed/tools store (£200) and 2 x compost boxes (up to £200). Total £1,580). Once the Parish Clerk has given us copies of the bills, we can make the initial payment, leaving reserves for wildflower meadow plugs and other items yet to be identified. Keith and Tony have prepared an overall plan of the site and a list of wildlife that has been recorded from, flying over or using the site. Both will be laminated and placed in the communications board once it has been installed. A small team will be working in the Meadow to fix the raised beds on Wednesday 15th May). Our next Sunday task session with the NFACV (June 2nd) will be held at the Meadow to prepare the garden and any other jobs still needing to be completed.
- j) **Creeks & Saltmarsh Trips** – Keith said that he was awaiting a firm date to meet Jason Crane at Hurst Castle to discuss the proposed Rainbows/Brownies/Guides Trip.
- k) **Logging - Update Report** – Lorraine gave her report on logging progress. She thanked the team and suggested that MCV should present the owners (Simon and Amy) with a thank you gift over the coming months to thank them for the wood that we have been using from the site. It was agreed unanimously that we would think of an appropriate gift. Log orders have started to come in and we now have a very good stock of wood available for cutting and splitting. Lorraine said that last year we did 22 loads and that this year we are already up to 19. Keith said that the new logging poster will be distributed to shops/notice boards and will also send a mail-shot to all members as a reminder that they can order logs from the group if they are not already doing so.
- l) **Community Orchard** – See item 4c
- m) **Moth Group** – Mary said that trapping had begun but it was still a little cold for capturing many moths. A programme is being produced and members will be advised of dates etc.

7. Publicity Officer's Report

- a) **Wildlife Matters & Village Voice** – The June/July issue has been completed and should be distributed in the next week or two. The Summer Newsletter had also been completed and will also be circulated to members in the next couple of weeks. Committee Members had been circulated with the next Newsletter in advance of publication.
- b) **Calendar of Meetings & Events 2019:** Version 3/19 has been circulated, but new updates will be included in an issue 4/19 in due course.

8. Any other business - There were none

There being no other matters, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9pm

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING = FRIDAY 12th July 2019