

'econet'

Minutes of meeting on
Thursday 12th September 2002

at

Reading Environment Centre, Prospect Park

Econet is a network meeting of volunteers who are involved in practical conservation work in the Reading area. Meetings take place quarterly and are open to all volunteers. They are an open forum for discussions on all issues.

- Present:

Tina Gower	RBC (minutes)
Ben Stanesby	RBC
Neil Le Vin	RBC
Steve Ayers	FOMapledurham Playing Fields (Chair)
Philip Allen	FOMcIlroy Park, BeC
Ron Cutting	Battle Globe
Dave Kenny	Caversham Globe, FOBalmore Walk
Jason Gaskell	BTCV
John Lerpiniere	Econet Groups
Judith Oliver	CROW, FOMPF

- / Apologies

Trish Marcouse	Reading Urban Wildlife Group
Kit Brownlee	RUWG
Derek North	FO Prospect Park
Phil Bagge	Cav Globe

- Items arising from previous meeting(s)

Not found - *TG to include copy with this set of minutes*

Felt that most of the issues related to insurance so would be covered.

- **Apple Fayre**

Too few volunteers to help organise this event for this year, so have cancelled it. *Volunteers to organise an Apple Fayre for 2003 please put yourselves forward now!*

- **Insurance for groups/ umbrella grouping**

Most groups have now taken out some insurance, many through BTCV.

Battle Globe have used 'Torrible' (0117 921 1806). Cost was £125 (including membership of Torrible - an)

Some Reading groups have applied for community grants from RBC to cover the additional costs of this year's insurance cover (and various additional project costs). *If any other group would like to apply for these grants and needs more details, please contact Tina (951 3010) or*

Danuta Derczynska (tel. 939 0370). NB. As this is a special circumstance, exceptionally, payments will be considered in retrospect for insurance costs.

While Community grants are available from RBC for one year they are not available for successive years. Following the raising of the concerns of both Globe and conservation groups by the volunteers, at Woodland and Waterways Forum, RBC members have expressed their wish to support the continuation of the work of the groups. It has been proposed that should the group's apply to RBC for an Annual grant to cover insurance costs, this would be supported by existing members. (It will of course be subject to approval by members under the usual application processes.)

Unfortunately the funds available are not large enough to fully fund the insurance of all existing groups separately. It has been suggested that instead, all groups come under an umbrella organisation which takes out good insurance cover for all its members, hence offering economies of scale but also making it possible for only one grant application to be considered. It was still stressed that RBC should continue to provide support, help and advice to anyone / group to enable the conservation activities to continue and groups to function. (If you need more help, contact Tina).

Issues that were discussed are:

- Name (Econet? Trega? Other?)
- Responsibility (to ensure that no one individual has the total responsibility for every individual members actions)
- Provision of documentation (*all copies of insurance cover, risk assessments and task reports will still need to be provided to Tina or Anna Batchelor*)
- Bank account signatories / post holders
- Constitution and what this would cover (which groups etc. Need for careful wording)
- Different ways of dividing responsibilities (post holders) especially when representing a large number of people (100 +)

There is a deadline of end of October for grant applications for RBC Annual Grants for 2003-4. Hence there is limited time to make decisions about the setting up of this umbrella group.

- 1) *John Lerpiniere has offered to draft out a constitution with Jason Gaskell's help. This will be available by the end of September and circulated to all groups.*
- 2) *Please complete and return the tear off slip ASAP, indicating whether your group will in principle wish to affiliate / support the setting up of an umbrella organisation. You are not committed to this at this point.*
- 3) *Tina will get hold of an application form for an Annual RBC grant and provide it to the meeting on 17th October (Update: this must be returned by 14th Oct! Steve/John to provisionally complete this before meeting & send constitution following week).*

Some discussion of the drawbacks some people are noting in the detail of the Zurich Municipal insurance being offered through BTCV (this includes no cover for 'guided walks' and 'construction activities'). *Tina will write to BTCV to get detailed written clarification of cover for activities that many groups might be expected to do and report back to groups as soon as this arrives.*

Environment Centre

The cycle racks are now installed and the rest of the marsh has been created and refilled. Just need a few more plants, another layer of railway sleepers and a some work on the drainpipes to and from the water butt. **MANY THANKS** to CROW for their continued hard work to complete this project (and to all the groups who have taken part).

Other ideas of what would improve the site are still welcome – *contact Tina who will be putting in a funding bid to achieve these.*

The building is now being booked up again for meetings etc. There is no obvious place for leaving a set of keys to be collected so it is likely that they will need to be collected or dropped off – *please give feedback to Tina on how this is (or isn't) working out!*

Opportunity to raise funds: RBC have not yet let a contract for the cleaning of the building. Instead of letting it to a cleaning company, it is being proposed that for a reasonable donation (£1000 pa) [to the umbrella group?], volunteers may be interested in taking on ensuring the building is kept to a reasonable standard of cleanliness for use by the many organisations that are visiting it. Areas needing regular cleaning are:

- Meeting room & store room (vacuum carpet, wipe surfaces, empty bins)
- Kitchen (sweep & mop floor, empty bins – groups using the crockery etc. should wash up afterwards)
- Toilets & store room (sweep & mop floor, empty bins, clean toilets)

All materials and equipment will be provided. Access will need to be arranged to suit use of the Centre and volunteer availability. Some discussion as to exactly how often – suggested at least once a month, probably once a fortnight to keep the building clean enough when in frequent use. Also suggested that funds be re-distributed according to which groups actually do the work (as with the xmas tree funds). *All comments/ volunteers, please contact Tina.*

- **Reading Wildlife WATCH group**

Maurice Budden is setting up a Wildlife WATCH group in 2003. This will be based at the Environment Centre and have support of BBOWT. Maurice was lucky enough to be sponsored to undertake an Earthwatch trip to the Virgin Islands to study sea turtles earlier this summer. This project is his contribution to conservation back here in the UK as required by Earthwatch. So far 5 people have offered to help as WATCH leaders but there is scope for more so if you are interested, please contact Maurice (tel. 0118 987 4034). He has arranged for a meeting of all interested leaders for **29th October 7.30 pm at the Environment Centre.**

- **Make A Difference Day (26th Oct 2002)**

Several ideas for megatasks for 60+ people were mooted:

- Lousehill Copse; clear tree trunks & branches from the main 'pond', dam up some of the streams to create marshy areas
- McIlroy park; resurface paths & steps with hardcore in place of the soft mud & woodchip
Improve the area around the entrance from Thirlmere Ave
- Clayfield Copse: lay a new length of hoggin footpath from the car park to join up with the path across the field.
- Kings meadow: prune willow, weed & woodchip

Tina will need to organise materials for 2 of these options. Some concerns about large numbers of inexperienced people around water so will leave this task for a more skilled group such as BeC. Tina to promote the events on BBC Radio Berks on 13th Sept. and to let RVA know of proposals to try and get a good turnout. Lots of leaders for the tasks are needed – this is your opportunity to practice if you want to be a 'deputy leader' for the day.

- **Training**

BTCV have organised a series of 8 training events (4 in Reading – at the Environment Centre - & 4 at Meadowcroft Community Centre, Aylesbury, but Reading vols are welcome to attend any) on the 4 most requested subjects. A leaflet promoting them is enclosed (more on request). Costs are subsidised and represent good value for money.

Further requests received for;

- how to do various **wildlife surveys**,
- & how to carry out **people surveys**.

Tina is willing to arrange a one day session on 'how to raise funds/ complete application forms for funding' - *if you are interested please let her know with further details of what the session should cover.*

If any Reading group volunteer needs help with any of these or other similar training courses, *please fill in the enclosed form / contact Tina. If you want BTCV or RBC to find or organise training on any other subject let Jason or Tina know! Tina to organise training sessions requested so far.*

- **Recycling Green Waste**

Some discussion about how much green waste many groups (and local residents!) produce (grass, branches etc.) and what could or does happen to this waste in Reading. Jason offered to provide more information on community composting schemes that BTCV are involved in elsewhere in the UK. The parks dept are very interested in this issue as so much material is generated by current management of parks.

Oliver Burt (RBC's Waste Minimisation Officer) to be invited to the next meeting of Econet.

- **Celebratory Event (now likely to be in January)**

Anna Batchelor has replaced Julie Wickham while she is on maternity leave and will be organising this event. She would like to attend a future meeting of Econet but meantime just wanted to remind *everyone to start thinking about which achievements their group would like to celebrate/ promote.*

- **Christmas Trees**

The sales dates are booked for:

Fridays 13th & 20th December
Saturdays 14th & 21st December
Sunday 15th December

All from 10 am – 4pm. To take place at Prospect Park. Other items for sale as usual. BeC will be felling trees (somewhere!) on Sundays 1st & 8th December.

BeC have requested doing the selling on the 14th. *Offers for all other dates welcome (to Tina.) Offers to make items for sale please.*

Most important: we need good supply of trees – any one with suggested sites please let BeC/ Tina/ CROW know. Jason investigating some sites.

- **FO Blundells Copse**

FOBC held a meeting recently and wound up the group – monies being passed to BTCV as in their constitution. Volunteers have achieved a great deal since the group was established in 1990 but over the last year everyone has found it more & more difficult to find the time to continue.

John Lerpiniere suggested that perhaps a 'West Reading group' could be set up: as many groups in the West of Reading are experiencing difficulty with recruitment and yet there is a wealth of interesting sites that volunteers might like to help out. Dates for tasks could be rotated between the main sites (Blundells, McIlroys, Lousehill, Propsect, Arthur Newberry, etc) and similarly task leaders could go on rotation to reduce the pressure on any one person. Phil Allen noted that FOMP will be renewing their insurance soon and could take it out to cover a new West Reading group instead. Tina gave feedback from Derek North as was unable to make the Econet meeting: he felt that FOPP would not want to join in but that any other group is welcome to carry out tasks at Propsect Park. He is planning to hold a meeting of active FOPP members next week but expects these volunteers will decide only to continue to look after the pond, do footpath work in the Rookery and attend meetings with the Parks Dept to discuss the management of the park.

If anyone is interested in discussing this West Reading group please contact John tel. 0118 942 6225, whether or not you can make a meeting.

- **RESCUE**

(Rivers & Environmental Spaces Clean Up Event) This takes place near the end of March each year and has done for 13 years now. Many groups and individuals have taken part over the years and many areas have been radically improved as a result. Anna Batchelor is collating a *survey of views on how this event could be improved and would welcome ALL feedback: please complete the enclosed feedback form & return it to her asap.*

- **Southcote Globe website**

Anne Briers is putting this website together and would like to include a short piece on each of the local Friends groups (& links to their sites if you have one).

Please can a representative contact Anne with details of your group, tel. 0118 950 5041.

- **Woodland & Waterways Forum**

At the last meeting of this Forum, the chair (Cllr Jones) suggested that a small sub group be set up, to meet more frequently than the main forum in order to consider any relevant planning applications due to be submitted to the Planning Applications Committee, in advance of the next meeting of the WWForum. At present, any comments on these applications are made solely by Cllr Jones, on the Forum's behalf. He would therefore like to make this a more representative set of comments (and possibly also act as a means of reducing the number of items presented to the main meeting of the Forum). He would therefore bring this as a formal proposal to the next meeting of the WWForum (13th November); all Econet members welcome.

In the meantime, Cllr Jones asked that all those wishing to give feedback on his suggestion should contact him direct: tel. 0118 986 4474 or via the Members' Services at the Civic Centre (reading RG1 7TD), tel. 0118 939 0125.

- **Mapping footpaths & hedges**

Tilehurst Globe are carrying out a survey of the formal and informal footpaths in their area (mapping and commenting on condition). *If any other group would like to do the same for their area, and / or include surveys of hedgerows, ponds or habitats in general, please let Tina know so she can provide maps and assistance.*

- **Date Of Next Meetings**

Volunteers to chair and minute will be needed for both!

General Econet meeting :

Tuesday 26th November 7.30 pm Environment Centre at Prospect Park

To set up Reading Wildlife WATCH group :

Tuesday 29th October 7.30 pm Environment Centre at Prospect Park

To set up new umbrella group (constitution etc.) :

Thursday 17th October 7.30 pm Environment Centre at Prospect Park

Please can a representative of each conservation group complete and return this slip to Tina at the Reading Environment Centre (Prospect Park, Liebenrood Rd, Reading RG30 2ND) asap:

✕

The group (please insert name)
would like to / would not like to (please delete) consider affiliating* to an umbrella organisation
for conservation groups in the Reading area. (*NB you are not committed to this at this stage.)

Our representative is (tel.) who will attend the
meeting on October 17th to discuss and agree the constitution for the new group.