

Friends of Rocheid Path, (FORP)

Meeting

Minutes of the meeting of The Friends of Rocheid Path, held Monday 26th March at Stockbridge Library.

Present: Pam Barnes(PB); Josie Inwood(JI); Pat Bryden(PBR); Caro Tulloch(CT); Gus Schwarz(GS); Andrew Hajducki(AH); Ian Cunningham(IC); Kath Davies(KD);Rose Pipes(RP);

1. Apologies: Anna Guest

2. Minutes of last meeting approved.

3. Matters arising

The outline plan produced after the last meeting was circulated amongst all those who have expressed an interest in the Rocheid Path. Apart from those people sitting round the table, only 4 responses were made. What can we deduce from that? That we've got it about right in terms of our plans for the area, or that no-one feels strongly one way or the other. Who knows?

The council have made a start on the ivy – cutting rings round most of the large trees along the path, to allow ivy to die back. No clearing has yet been done and the felling of the 2 large trees at the West Gate is on Paul Vine's "to do" list. IC keen that some debris left to decompose as nature intended, all agreed that no cleanup job was likely to remove all the debris – there is simply too much of it.

Brian Bainbridge (Arup) has promised to keep in touch re the restoration of the triangle and we will email him of the outcome of our discussions so that our plan is incorporated into theirs. Work not expected to begin until September at earliest. PB to liaise.

The notice board is ready and we agreed that it should go at the West Gate. Perhaps we might get a 2nd board that could be erected at either Tanfield bridge or the new Bell's Bridge when work there is completed.

It should be clarified how the path is designated, footpath, or shared foot/cycle path. JI thinks that because signage is brown that implies footpath, cycle paths having blue signs but we need to be clear about this.

The designation of the path may affect the management going forward, particularly with a view to surfacing. **Action PB**

4. The Triangle

Following the circulation of proposals, there has been positive feedback regarding the planting of a community orchard. There are concerns about what happens to the trees/fruit but it is a small area and it should not be beyond the Friends to manage to gather in a small harvest each year. Smaller, fragrant shrubs, bulb planting also discussed. Bulb planting is something that we could undertake once Arup's work in the area is complete. PB to go to Arup with the proposal. Cherry, apple, crab apple, plum and pear suggested. The trees should be of a reasonably mature size. There was much discussion about the railings around this area. The only ones thought to be essential are the ones separating the triangle from the road. We liked the idea of the triangle being open along the internal edge, perhaps with a seat and grassed area. A litter bin would also be a good idea.

5. The Dell

There is a strong desire amongst residents of The Colonies to keep the Dell as a wilderness area. When the area was cleared in the past, and a new footpath established, the area became a gathering place for youths who built fires and lobbed missiles across the river to the gable ends of the houses. They feel that keeping the area as a wilderness might discourage this kind of behaviour. Feedback from the consultation document was almost universally in favour of doing nothing very much to this area, keeping it wild. Clearing of self seeded saplings to allow the few planted trees to flourish and not very much else seems to be the best way forward. Defining the existing path might further discourage mountain bikes from destroying the bank. Planting of wildflowers might be a nice idea but the rampant wild garlic would have to be tackled first, and this would be a massive undertaking.

6. Long Term Plan

The railings are bound to be a source of controversy but everyone agreed that wherever you stand on the subject, the rusting and ramshackle railings at the lower level need to be removed. They are in a dangerous state and offer no protection (from what?) so we hope that on the grounds of H&S alone, we can persuade the council to remove them. The newer, green railings will be something to consider going forward. RP reported that a shed is to be erected to house equipment for the flood defences at Falshaw Bridge. It will stand against the fence at The Lodge, will be constructed of stone with a slate roof.

7. Date of next meeting Monday 30th April, 18:30 at Stockbridge Library.