

Sunnybank Reserve Advisory Group Meeting Minutes

Tuesday 29th January 2019 – Sheffield Jesus Centre (6pm – 7.30pm)

Attendees

Robert Miller – SRWT
Hannah Wittram - SRWT
Colin Roth – Local resident
Jean Glasscock - Local resident
Pete Sacker – Local Resident

Apologies

James McLean

Actions from the last meeting:

Action: Hannah Wittram (HW) to improve the grip on William St steps with more staples (**completed**). These steps could also be included in the 'Awards for All' funding application. – Still waiting on funding for new steps.

Action: SRWT to cut an access strip in the meadow alongside the fruit bushes (**this has been added to the LMT work diary and will hopefully be completed on the next work day**).

Action: Robert Miller (RM) to speak with Land Management Team (LMT) to increase strimming width of cycle path and add to work diary (**completed**). I will endeavour to remind them again in the lead up to the growing season.

Action: RM to add coppicing and blackthorn planting in drug use area to management plan work programme (**completed – but need to source some funding for this piece of work**).

Capital Works & Land Management Update (July 2018 – Jan 2019)

- 2-3 weekly patrols by reserves team – patrol spreadsheet findings;
 - The needles problem on the reserve is still ongoing but is now mainly confined to the area behind the pond in the corner by the Shell garage & the area next to the compost pit and the brash piles in the centre of the reserve. The Police are continuing their regular patrols, and coordinate them with the SRWT Ranger patrols.
 - To continue combatting this problem, we are continuing to cut back the scrub and to remove the lower branches off of the trees to improve the sightlines across the reserve to deter this behaviour. If the behaviour continues, we may try a different tactic and put hawthorn and blackthorn whips into the corner by the pond and coppice (to promote new growth) to try and create a barrier to them entering the area, as discussed at the last meeting. We are continuing to liaise with SCC enforcement officers, Sheffield Drugs & Alcohol Team / Domestic Abuse Co-ordination Team & the Police on the matter to improve the situation. If anyone spots any needles, please leave it and contact the Trust by phone on 0114 2634335,

or by email on nature.reserves@wildsheffield.com. Please also report it to the Police on 101 so they can keep a record.

- Since the beginning of the financial year the Land Management team have completed x6 work days including:
 - Litter picking, needle and graffiti removal.
 - Strimming encroaching and overhanging vegetation.
 - Raking up meadow cuttings and fallen leaves off of the meadow.
 - Reducing vegetation in the pond.
 - Japanese knotweed control.
 - Removing decayed trees, dilapidated hurdles and unwanted tall ruderals from the meadow.

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| <p>4th June, 23rd July, 12th Sept 2018</p> | <p>Sunnybank</p> | <p>Maintenance day tasks:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Litter pick (needle pick) 2. Strim all footpaths and around access infrastructure. 3. Strim front strip along William Street boundary being careful of parked cars. 4. Strim small circular areas within the meadow with access strips from the main path and strim strips adjacent to brambles in the Autumn. 5. Japanese Knotweed injection/spraying. 6. Remove tall ruderal species from grassland areas. 7. Remove overhanging branches along paths & from around street lights and the bus stop on Ecclesall Road. 8. Move interpretation panel to another location and re-paint. If in poor condition remove the interpretation panel (or remove entirely). 9. Sand down, re-paint and varnish welcome sign on entrance between Broomhall Place / Sunnybank Close. 10. Sand down and re-paint the dog poo bin. |
| <p>25th Sept, 10th & 31st Oct</p> | <p>Sunnybank</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thin Ecclesall Road woodland strip to improve structure and light levels for ground flora, whilst maintaining sightlines to discourage anti-social behaviour and retaining enough vegetation to provide a noise barrier between Ecclesall Road & Broomhall place. 2. Remove overhanging branches along paths & from around street lights and the bus stop on Ecclesall Road. 3. Litter Pick. 4. Cut back hedgerows after summer growth. 5. Cut back overhanging vegetation from around the edges of the main wildflower meadow. 6. Clear fallen leaves from the top meadow adjacent to the cycle track. 7. 20% of bramble to be cleared on a 3 to 4 year rotational cycle (to cut back older bramble to allow re-growth), particularly adjacent to the cycle track 8. Rake up arisings following the meadow cut (frog rescue) and dispose of in the compost bay (10th October only). |

- The VWD mornings (10am – 12noon) continue on a monthly basis and are successful at keeping on top of the small scale tasks such as litter picking, needle control, pruning, fallen leaves, graffiti removal. Thank you to everyone who have been helping on these days. It is a huge help ☺

Events, Education, Community and Interpretation Update

- The annual Frog Rescue event last year (2018) went well. We had 10 volunteers who stayed for the whole day & 15 children and parents came along to meet and release the frogs. The numbers of frogs were much lower than previous years with only 30 frogs caught compared to an average of 100+. We wondered if this was due to the cold weather provided by the ‘Beast from the East’ and then followed by the unusually dry summer and the meadow cut being a few weeks later in the year.
CR – asked where the frogs go for the winter. JC – explained that they either hibernate at the bottom of the pond or in damp places around the reserve.
- Rachel Stevenson (CWR) delivered a lunchtime short guided walk around Sunnybank NR on 25th July 2018 for up to x30 Sheffield University staff members as part of the universities Green Impact project.

Events planned for 2019:

| Date | Event | Type |
|---|---|----------------------|
| 4 th Wednesday of the month | Volunteer Work Morning 10am – 12pm. | VWD Morning |
| Wednesday 23 rd October 2019 | Frog Rescue (10am – 3pm) and Meet the frogs (3.30pm – 4.30pm) | VWD and family event |
| Mon 28 th October 2019 | Meadow Rake. Follow up to the Frog rescue. | VWD |

Future work programme (Jan 2019 – July 2019)

The SRWT Land Management Team (LMT) will be carrying out a further x1 work day between now and the end March as follows (please note that dates are subject to change):

| | | |
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| 12 th March 2019 (TBC) | Sunnybank | 1. Thin Ecclesall Road woodland strip to improve structure and light levels for ground flora, whilst maintaining sightlines to discourage anti-social behaviour and retaining enough vegetation to provide a noise barrier between Ecclesall Road & Broomhall place. 2. Clear fallen leaves from the top meadow adjacent to the cycle track. |
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| | | <p>3. 20% of bramble to be cleared on a 3 to 4 year rotational cycle (to cut back older bramble to allow re-growth), particularly adjacent to the cycle track</p> <p>4. Other tasks TBC.</p> |
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Ongoing VWD mornings once a month – aim to keep on top of ongoing small scale tasks.

CR – Commented that footpath near the top of the meadow going down towards William Street has become quite slippery. It used to have gravel but now doesn't
ACTION: RB to add onto the Land Team work day in March to address that issue.

CR – Also reiterated the steps are still a bit slippery. The extra staples have helped but due to slope of the steps they are still slippery.

RM – We have submitted a funding bid to include step repairs to that whole section which we should hear back from in April/May. If we aren't successful we will still replace the slippery ones. Land Team or next Vol Morning to improve the steps temporarily if possible.

- More Blackthorn will be planted around the area behind the pond which is current a needle hot spot with the hope that it will help deter the drug users.

Needle Issues

CR - have we noticed a difference after taking out the lower bench near the pond? Colin wondered whether the lack of a bench meant that regular reserve users were not able to sit there which may have helped deter drug users. HW explained that quite a few needles have been found around the existing bench so doesn't think that this is the case but we can't entirely be sure.

RM- we are in regular contact with Sheffield Drug and Alcohol Team, they arranged for us to use the needle exchange centre and they arranged for outreach workers to check Sunnybank. We also report to the police to keep a record of the needle use. Our records of needles removed suggests that drug use seems to be on the increase in Sunnybank. One reason may be that the Needle exchanges in city centre have closed down but the one nearest Sunnybank is still open so more people may be using it in this area. There are also a lot of opportunities for begging on Ecclesall Road and Sunnybank isn't far away once they have bought their drugs.

CR – commented that there is less support for people now.

PS - can there be a needles bin? RM we have spoken to SCC about it but there are worse areas in the city and their resources are limited. We considered putting our own needle containers up but for health and safety reasons this was ruled out as an idea. We will continue to regularly check the reserve and remove needles. Hopefully the situation will improve in the future. Scotland are currently exploring needle rooms for users to use and discard needles safely. This may potentially be an option in Sheffield in the future. Also there have been developments in the design of needles

which mean that blood doesn't stay on/in the needle so less risk of blood-borne diseases being transferred in the event of a needle stick injury.

JG - bins expensive to empty and maintain.

JG – Commented that she has noticed a cut through developing near the top entrance going toward to compost bay end.

RM - we are planning to open up the top entrance to make it more inviting and feel safer for site users. A couple of trees will be taken out to promote the healthier growing trees and open up the entrance to the reserves and cut back over hanging branches. Over next 12 - 18 months.

Funding update

- Next financial year (April 2019 – March 2020) we have budget allocated for x7 LMT days to carry out tasks as outlined in the Sunnybank management plan work programme.
- Our funding bid to 'Awards for All' (Big Lottery Fund – up to £10,000) has been submitted. The application includes:
 - 2 new wooden oak benches to replace to current ageing/vandalised ones.
 - Bench location will be up for discussion. We will contact the group about the benches if we are successful with the bid.
 - An extension of the compost bay & fencing (with gate) to hide the area from view.
 - JG – Asked whether the compost get used? RM - not at the moment because woody and grass material get combined. We will try to keep 1 bay for wood and 1 bay for grass if the bid is successful and we are able to extend the compost bay.
 - Footpath and step refurbishment at the William Street entrance.
 - Wildflower meadow improvements through seeding & plug planting in the top meadow adjacent to the Broomhall Place entrance.
 - Continued scrub control to maintain sightlines and improve light levels for site safety.
 - Bulb planting around entrances to make more inviting and provide spring colour. Wildflower area will be rotivated and seeded and leaves removed of the area each Autumn.
 - JC – Commended that by the time we hear back from the bid in May we will have missed the prime sowing time. RM Suggested we could rotivate and seed in the late autumn.
 - Replacement of the knee-rail at the William Street entrance.
 - A new wooden welcome sign to be installed at the Broomhall Place entrance.
 - Staff time & overheads.
 - We should hear the result of the funding application in April / May 2019.
 - If the funding bid is successful it will mean that we have an extra x15 LMT days on site.

- Other than the 'awards for all' bid, funding opportunities for Sunnybank NR are currently limited and it is therefore likely that we will be constrained to ongoing maintenance tasks for the foreseeable future, similar to last few years. Sadly this means that we are unlikely to be able to complete any of the larger upscaling tasks that may be in the management plan in the near future, unless the funding environment changes.

- On a more positive note, the trust is delighted to announce that we have been successful with our Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership project application to the Heritage Lottery Fund and the project is now live. SRWT is the lead partner in the Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership, co-ordinating the work of more than 20 partner organisations towards a common vision. The Partnership has been made possible by a grant of £2.6m from the Heritage Lottery Fund, with matched funding from our core partners to deliver a £3.4m package of partnership projects conserving and celebrating the natural, built and cultural heritage of north-west Sheffield. Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership is managed by Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust, working together with Yorkshire Water, Sheffield City Council, Bradfield Parish Council, Stocksbridge Town Council, Natural England, the Environment Agency, South Yorkshire Archaeology Service, Sheffield United Community Foundation and representatives of landowners and local access groups. Many more organisations will come together to contribute and deliver projects over the lifetime of the Partnership.

Further information about the Sheffield Lakeland Partnership project (including map) can be found on our website at the following location: <https://www.wildsheffield.com/discover/your-community/sheffield-lakeland-landscape-partnership/sheffield-lakeland-landscape-partnership>

Simple Project Overview: <https://www.wildsheffield.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/simple-project-summary-feb.pdf>

Wildlife Sightings

- Recent bird sightings include Carrion Crow, Robin, Wren, Goldfinch, Long-tailed Tit, Blue Tit, Blackbird and a Bullfinch. We also have had reports of sparrowhawk and buzzard locally.
- There have been a number of reports of Waxwing around Sheffield over the last 3-4 weeks with some activity around Ecclesall Road. There also seems to be a lot of overwintering Brambling in Sheffield as well this year so keep an eye out for this species.

- Butterflies - With the dry summer it has been a reasonable good year and we have recorded x11 different species including small white, large white, orange tip, green veined white, speckled wood, peacock, comma, gate keeper, ringlet, small tortoiseshell, & red admiral on the reserve this year

AOB:

PS – Asked how many people attend the work days? HW mentioned that 3 – 5 people on average attend the volunteer work mornings.

PS – Asked whether we work with the local school? RM explained that our Outdoor Learning team carry out school engagement work but unless there is a specific project they concentrate on Greno Woods and Ecclesall Woods. Local engagement is on the management plan.

RM – Last year RS sanded and repainted the dog poo bin at the Sunnybank road entrance. It is quite old and rusty though and we are not sure what will happen when dog poo bin comes to an end. Local interest to encourage the Council to replace and continue emptying the bin would help as and when the time comes to replace the bin.

JG - have highways cut back the trees in the triangle? It looks more open. RM mentioned he wasn't aware of any work.

CR – Asked whether there will be any Section 106 money from the new tower block building? **Action** – RM to find out about potential 106 money.

Date and time of next meeting:

- Tuesday 16th July 2019 (6pm – 7.30pm). The meeting will be a walk around the reserve meeting at the Broomhall Place entrance.

A reminder will be sent out via email nearer the time & laminated posters will be put up on the site advertising the meeting along with updates on our website.

If you have any questions or comments regarding the information contained within the minutes or in general regarding Sunnybank Nature Reserve or the work of Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust then please do not hesitate to contact us:

SRWT contact details:

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If you are not a member of Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust then please join and help us work towards a better future for wildlife, people and the green spaces we all rely on: <https://membership.wildlifetrusts.org/join/join-sheffield-and-rotherham-wildlife-trust>