



# Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

## 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2023

Attending: Gillian Stevens, Jenny Deakin, Lois Kohler, Barbara Daniel, Margaret Greenaway, Angela Popplestone, David Newell, Helen Batten, Terry Phillips, Rowena Collins, Alex Stafford, Vaishali Phippen, Alison Jory, Colin Munn

Apologies for absence: Maxine Chapman, Nigel Jackson, Cilla Course, Jenny Floyd, Tess Wilmot.

### 1. Chair's Report

Colin Munn reported that we have made unexpectedly good progress since our inaugural meeting in November 2021. He acknowledged support from the Councillors' Community Fund, plus grants from the National Garden Scheme, Plymouth Octopus Scheme and other donations, which have facilitated the installation of a picnic table and raised beds which are now filled and planted with annual and perennial vegetables, salad crops, green manure and wildflowers. The existing apple trees have been pruned and the brash piled at the edge of the field to provide wildlife habitat. Thirteen fruit trees have been planted in the orchard and 250 hedge trees have been planted along the fences adjoining the bottom field supported by the Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest (PSDCF) scheme. A thousand daffodil bulbs were planted and are now flowering well. A 1200 L water butt has been installed to catch run off from the Age Concern building. We now have a licence (lease) agreement with PCC. In late March, Colin Munn, Nigel Jackson and Alison Jory met on site with Colin Johnson from Plymouth City Council who is responsible for green spaces to discuss plans for the coming year. It was a very positive meeting, Mr Jackson appeared pleased and impressed by what has been achieved and he was positive and helpful regarding future assistance from his department. The report was accepted unanimously (Proposed: Alex Stafford; Seconded: Margaret Greenaway)

### 2. Secretary's Report (presented by Alex Stafford)

Nigel Jackson summarised Committee activity and acknowledged the support of past and present Committee members. We currently have a mailing list of ~100 supporters and a website and Facebook group. We have carried out three large leafletting campaigns. The report was accepted unanimously (Proposed: Angela Popplestone; Seconded: David Newell)

### 3. Treasurer's Report - Colin Munn

The Association's accounts (November 2021-February 2023) were presented. They have been verified by an independent assessor. Most of the expenditure was on providing materials for the raised beds and publicity. At 28/02/2023, the bank balance was £817. More than half of this is committed to cover further infrastructure expenses, insurance, plants, and sundries. Helen Batten pointed out that we are expecting to receive a grant of £640 which she has obtained from the local Police Community Fund (for the purchase of a grass mower) and CM is anticipating a grant of £250 from POP. Report was accepted unanimously (Proposed: Barbara Daniel; Seconded: Gillian Stevens)

### 4. Discussion of proposed work and future plans

4.1 The need for bins for dog poo and rubbish was emphasised. These have been promised by PCC for over a year. Colin Jackson from PCC has been asked again to ensure installation of bins at the Sackville Close and Church Road entrances.

4.2 Young people use the area in the hedge near the entrance from Church Road as a meeting place and there can be a lot of litter left there. Helen (police) said they are aware of the problem and maintain a conciliatory approach. Alex Stafford said that a volunteer litter picker keeps the area clear and provides a bag for litter which does help to alleviate the problem. There were suggestions as to how

to encourage young people to take an active part in the activities of the community garden and the wider environmental improvements, such as child-focussed activities in the school holidays) e.g., den building, planting, wildlife trails, building nest boxes and bug hotels.

- 4.3 The Plymstock Festival was discussed. This has previously been organised by the Plymstock Forum, but that organisation is in the process of being wound up. The FoDP would be happy to assist with this if another group wished to take it on, but we are not able to initiate and run it.
- 4.4 Helen suggested having a stand at one of the monthly Saturday Markets which take place on the Broadway to publicise our activities.
- 4.5 Maps outlining proposed areas for tree planting, wildflower areas, and a bog garden were discussed. In the upper field, four large trees have been lost here through disease and a lightning strike. We should aim to replace these with large specimen trees. Suggestions for varieties were Walnut, Hornbeam, Sweet Chestnut, and Oaks. We also plan to plant mixed woodland hedging along the perimeter fences. CM noted that residents of Dean Hill, whose gardens back onto the field had received two announcements of our plans and inviting comments. There have been none. We will also interplant area of the existing hedges on the boundary between the fields, to replace damaged trees. It was suggested that some small spindle trees would be a welcome addition. All planting will be subject to advice and approval by the PSDCF. Devon and Community Forest Scheme will give advice on replacing these. The area adjacent to the Community Centre, where the Devon hedge was removed and replaced with a fence may be a good site for wildflowers. We will seek advice for Devon Wildlife Trust and other expert bodies.
- 4.6 There is a desperate need for paths for the parts of the fields which are currently not accessible for people with disabilities and difficulties with mobility. This would cost in the region of £20,000 and is a longer-term project for which we will need to seek specific grants. The meeting agrees that in the short term, the priority should be to make make access suitable for wheelchairs from Sackville Close to the raised beds. would be a priority and is a more manageable goal for the coming year. Compacted aggregate is envisioned as the best type of material for this.
- 4.7 Places to sit are also needed. We have installed the picnic bench in the centre of the raised beds, and seating on the ends of the raised beds themselves will be completed soon. It would be desirable to have at other parts of the fields. Benches made from recycled plastic, as the current round table is, were thought to be the best option — these cost about £350-£500. We will need donations or sponsorship for these. If people wish to have a memorial bench (with a commemorative plaque), we have been advised by PCC that this has to be organised through the Council, who charge a fee to lease and maintain them. However, we can install other benches and if local businesses wished to sponsor a bench this is permitted without PCC input. Colin Munn is exploring this option. It was suggested that some benches could be labelled for quiet contemplation and others could be signed as “chatty benches”, encouraging social interaction. We can also provide simple benches made from fallen tree trunks and log and plank benches; these will be ideal around the perimeter. It would be very helpful to be able to find a person with access and experience with a chainsaw to create these as an addition to the more formal seating.
- 4.8 The idea of developing a bog garden in the area abutting Downhorn Farm and Scout Hut was welcomed. We really need an area of water to increase biodiversity. PCC are in favour, provided we can ensure safety. This area can be fenced off easily to prevent access by young children. Again, we will seek expert advice.

- 4.9 PCC will continue undertake general grass cutting; close cutting the bottom of the lower field and cutting perimeter paths. We are obtaining a petrol driven strimmer and mower top enable us to keep the area around the raised beds tidy and accessible.
- 4.10 Alex Stafford is co-ordinating a team of volunteers for Wednesday mornings so that there will always be at least one or two committee members at that time to meet members of the public and carry out routine weeding, planting etc of the raised beds. Local GPs and the Wolseley Trust have been notified (for the Social Prescribing Initiative).

## **5. Proposal for a membership scheme**

This proposal for a formal membership scheme with a small annual subscription to be paid on a rolling basis was supported by all those present at the meeting. This will have the advantages of giving members a sense of ownership and also provide a modest but guaranteed income to cover such ongoing expenses as insurance and printing of publicity materials. Everyone on the mailing list will be asked for a contribution of £10 if they wish to have full membership, with voting rights to elect the committee and agree proposals.

## **6. Amendment to the Constitution**

The proposed amendments to paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 (Membership); 4.2 (Committee structure) and 6.1 (date of the AGM) were accepted unanimously (Proposed: Barbara Daniel; Seconded: Vaishali Phippen).

## **7. Election of The Committee**

All members of the Committee are willing to stand again, and the Committee was re-elected with the following list of members: Colin Munn, Alex Stafford; Sam Rebeiro; Nigel Jackson; Maxine Chapman; Sian Lane; Vaishali Phippen, Alison Jory.