

Wycombe Friends of the Earth

Minutes of meeting on Wednesday 6th August 2014, 7.30pm at the Friends Meeting House

1. Present: 10

Apologies: 4

2. The Business Bit – Finance: no change.

3. Any contribution to AOB? No

4. Campaigns (previous actions, ongoing campaigns, and environmental news)

- Grass verges – see talk below.

- Run on Sun (schools, solar power campaign)

We have leaflets that could be sent to HW schools to encourage take-up

We will get more 'Run on Sun' leaflets. 2 members will find out chair of governors of HW schools so we have a contact to send to.

- Space tourism – GB government are showing interest in being leaders in this – environmental impact?

- Wycombe Community Farm have an event 10am-10pm on Saturday 30th August at Arts4every1, in Desborough Road, High Wycombe and they are inviting eco groups to have stands. We won't have a stall at this for a variety of reasons. The event hopes to raise awareness of self sufficiency and local food etc.

5. Main item

- A talk on Chiltern Rangers and management of roadside verges by John Shaw of Chiltern Rangers, followed by a discussion on how we carry the verges campaign forward. See notes below.

6. Ecotip will be:

Fruit peels like orange, lemon, papaya, water melon are very nutritious, especially organic and unwaxed lemons and oranges. So cook them with your meals to make them extra delicious.

7. Forthcoming events

- **Pann Mill stall** in September – we don't have enough people available to do this.

- **Future talks** – possibly someone from Wycombe Community Farm – see above.

- **New Local Plan meetings** – further to the consultation, WDC are holding meetings to discuss 1. Areas proposed for new housing, and 2. Proposed junction 3A M40. Details:

- 1. New Housing.** Changes to planning nationally: over the last 6-12 months there has been a change in approach nationally to dealing with housing delivery. This has local implications, in particular for the 'reserve sites': Abbey Barn North, Abbey Barn South, Gomm Valley & Ashwells, Slate Meadow and Terriers Farm. To discuss the best way the Council can respond to this new approach WDC are holding two public workshop meetings. They will focus on the implications for these sites and will not be dealing with wider Local Plan issues. These meetings are 'repeats' because they are being held in the holiday season – you only need to attend one of them. **The meetings will be on August 14th and 28th at 7pm at the Buckinghamshire New University Sports Hall.**

- 2. Junction 3A.** Due to the level of public response in relation to the very early days proposals for a new motorway junction on the M40 between junctions 3 and 4 (so called

“junction 3A”) WDC are holding a meeting on **August 20th at 7pm**, at the **Gateway Lecture Theatre, Buckinghamshire New University**. This will be an opportunity questions to be asked about this.

If you would like to attend any of these meetings please register by contacting Lynn Bartley on 01494 421102 or Simon Barlow on 01494 421158 or by email: newlocalplan@wycombe.gov.uk.

8. AOB – none

9. The next meeting will be on Wednesday 1st October 2014 at 7.30pm at The Quaker Meeting House in Stuart Road, High Wycombe. **Interim meetings** will be set up to discuss campaigns on grass verges and 'Run on Sun'. Watch out for dates.

John Shaw then gave us a talk on Chiltern Rangers. Thank you John. Summary:

- Chiltern Rangers exist to enhance the Chiltern's habitats through conservation, education and community engagement.
- CR is nearly a year old. Due to cutbacks they couldn't continue to be part of WDC. They enhance wildlife and habitats through mainly volunteer action and is a 'not for profit' social enterprise. Any surplus goes back into the company and is used to subsidise like-minded community groups etc.
- CR manage 12/13 wildlife sites. Paid staff take volunteers into areas such as woodlands etc to help manage them for the community and wildlife.
- They also work with other Councils so can extend activities – no longer limited to HW area now they are not part of WDC. Also work with other Chiltern wildlife charities.
- Not so much educational activities at the moment as need more funding but Chiltern Rangers want to do this before too long.
- CR would like to see more members of the public using these areas.
- See website for more information - www.chilternrangers.co.uk

There then followed a discussion with John about mowing (or not) amenity areas such as grass verges and open spaces.

- Council mowing has moved from regular short cutting to 2-6 cuts which often leave unsightly dead grass and cuts through wildlife life cycles.
- Maybe a mower's width on the road side of the verge could be mown for safety and perhaps neatness. The verge behind it could be cut only once a year at the end of the summer and cuttings collected so it doesn't add nutrients to the verge (encouraging wild flowers) and composted by the Councils to be given to residents or farmers. This longer verge will then consist of long grass, wildflowers and wildlife.
- Verge cutting varies according to area and is hard to influence.
- Responsibility for verges/hedges etc. have now been passed from WDC to the parish councils. These might be easier to approach and possibly influence.
- How will the cutting workforce be occupied if only cut once – perhaps community gardens, litter picking, managing areas, renovating egg benches.
- Some areas can be put aside for wildlife but raking and collected is a huge task for a possibly volunteer workforce.
- Who to approach? – councillors, but the approach has to be about keeping residents happy, so keeping complaints to a minimum, and cost cutting. Improving wildlife could be presented as an added benefit.
- CR has planted area by clock tower in Frogmoor and at HW station.
- Austin Wood and Gold Hill common (Chalfont St Peter) have had areas unmown and they have been received well.

Actions we could take:

- identify influential people to approach and write a letter to them (Lesley Clark is District and County representative for conservation areas). Any approach should show multiple benefits.
- compile a list of people we could contact initially; perhaps approach council cabinet members first.
- perhaps write an article for parish magazines, taking a photo to add.
- make a gallery of relevant pictures on the website. Send any photos to Rod (John will also feed in some pictures)