

MANEA PIT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING

12 SEPTEMBER 2012 – 7.40 pm.

Present: Councillor Archer, Chairman; Councillors Cole, Mrs Desborough and Emery plus Mr C Carson, Mr A Fielding, Mr I Fost, Mrs P Smith and Mr H Westgate.

Apologies: Mr R K Miller and Miss N Frogggatt.

The minutes of the meeting of 15 August 2012 were confirmed and signed.

PMC13/12 Open Forum

The committee heard from a member of the public, who made alleged inappropriate actions by one member of this committee in terms of undertaking works at the pit. He detailed his allegations, which relate to applying a chemical to the water in the pit and transferring fish from the ponds into the pit.

The member of the public stated that he had spoken with representatives of Fenland District Council and the Wildlife Trust (WT) regarding the matters which had caused him concern and he expressed the opinion that the Wildlife Trust has concerns regarding the future of the pit as a wildlife conservation area. He informed the committee that the WT had indicated its support for the ponds to be cordoned-off until such time as the "alien" fish are removed.

The management committee noted the comments of the member of the public and decided that matter be considered, at minute PMC20/12, together with the formal complaint which had been received previously (minute PMC10/12 refers).

PMC14/12 Field adjoining Manea Pit – use as community orchard/woodland

Further to minute PMC3/12, Mrs Smith reported that guards had placed around each of the fruit trees (with the aim of preventing them being eaten by wildlife). She added that there are still a number of trees, up to one hundred, yet to be planted.

Mrs Smith informed the committee that before new grass seed is planted at the small area which had been treated with weed killer (to clear it of grass), it would be advisable for the area to be rotavated, She also made the point that she would arrange for some of the hedging to be trimmed over forthcoming months, to encourage future growth.

Mrs Smith mentioned that the grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund was allocated for use over a period of two years; this expires in February 2013. Given the current progress on delivery of the orchard/woodland project and the consequent level of spending to date (i.e. approximately 50% of the total grant), the committee agreed with Mrs Smith's suggestion that a request be made to the Heritage Lottery Fund for one year's extension to the grant period.

The committee decided that

- (1) the information reported by Mrs Smith be noted;
- (2) Mr Fielding would undertake the necessary soil rotavation;

- (3) Mrs Smith would make a formal request to the Heritage Lottery Fund for one year's extension to the grant period.

PMC15/12 Management Plan - improvement/development works and projects

Further to minute PMC4/12, Mr Fost reported that some repairs to roadways serving the pit area had been undertaken and that a small amount of further works are still required. He also informed the committee that Mr Miller and he had undertaken the clearance of weeds from some of areas within the pit (the need for this work was included on the list of general maintenance works that he had circulated at the last meeting).

The committee discussed the need for general weed clearance within the pit and concluded that this matter should feature within the maintenance action plan for the pit area.

The Chairman informed the committee that Manea Pit had won the 2012 Anglia in Bloom award for Best Conservation Project, as it did also in 2010.

The committee decided that the information reported be noted.

PMC16/12 Manea Pit – Revision of the management plan

Further to minute PMC5/12, Mrs Smith gave further detail of her dialogue with the Conservation Manager at the Wildlife Trust regarding revision of the management plan and she informed the committee that this officer had indicated a wish to visit Manea Pit. Consequently, the committee considered which members should represent the committee at this inspection visit.

Members decided that the information reported by Mrs Smith be noted and that

- Mrs Smith would make the arrangements for the Conservation Manager at the Wildlife Trust to visit Manea Pit;
- The management committee's representatives at the meeting with this officer would be the Chairman, Mr Carson and Mrs Smith;
- The Conservation Manager at the Wildlife Trust be invited to attend a future meeting of the committee.

PMC17/12 Manea Pit – Health and Safety

The committee considered whether there are currently any health and safety issues relating to Manea Pit.

Further to minute PMC6/12, the Chairman reported on his investigations as to whether there is a requirement for any person who undertakes strimming works in a public place and on behalf of a public authority to possess any form of licensing. Both the Chairman and Mr Fielding had made separate enquiries of the Health and Safety Executive and both obtained the same response; the situation is that there is no requirement for a person, whether an employee or volunteer, to be licensed to carry out work with a petrol strimmer on either public or private property. The person or body arranging the work must make available the correct personal protection equipment and be able to show that a risk assessment of the activity had been carried out.

Councillor Emery reported that he had prepared a draft risk assessment in relation to undertaking strimming activities around Manea Pit. The document had identified the potential risks to both the operator of the machinery and to the public and the suggested mitigating actions (including the operator to wear protective clothing). Some of the committee members commented upon the content of the document and Mrs Smith, who possesses relevant experience of undertaking risk assessment processes, offered to review, and revise if necessary, the document to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

The committee decided that

- (1) there are no new health and safety issues at this time;
- (2) the information reported in relation to the health and safety situation relating to strimming activities be noted.

PMC18/12 Fishing and other pit users' issues

Further to minute PMC7/12, the committee considered the suggestion that the proposed pond dipping area should be created within the woodland area, instead of within the pit area.

Further to minutes PMC1/12, PMC2/12 and PMC13/12, Councillor Emery sought members' views on whether the committee wished to see the ponds cordoned-off and the "alien" fish removed.

The committee decided that

- (1) the proposed pond dipping area should not be created within the woodland area but in the area identified previously at Manea Pit;
- (2) Mr Fost would develop further the draft design for a pond dipping area that he had prepared previously; the committee supported Mrs Smith's suggestion that the design being shown superimposed upon a photograph of the pit would assist the committee's future deliberations in this regard;
- (3) Councillor Emery would request the Environment Agency to cordon-off the ponds and to remove the "alien" fish.

PMC19/12 Monitoring of actions

The Chairman circulated an updated schedule of actions document.

The management committee considered the actions listed in the document and agreed which ones had been completed and which ones needed to remain as outstanding.

The committee decided that the Chairman would present an up-to-date version (i.e. with completed actions deleted and new actions added) to each meeting of the management committee.

PMC20/12 Formal complaint

Further to minute PMC10/12, the committee considered the formal complaint from a member of the public; the complainant stated that he and a guest had witnessed what he felt to be inappropriate behaviour (this being a verbal assault) by one member of this committee towards another committee member. The Chairman read to the committee the e-mail, detailing the incident, from the complainant.

The committee supported the suggestion of the Chairman that he would make it clear to all members of the committee that they are expected to behave in a proper manner and that if there were a repeat of incidents of the nature described by the complainant, it would not be tolerated by the committee.

The committee considered also the allegations made at minute PMC13/12 and agreed, after a lengthy debate, that it would do its best to ensure that only works approved by the management committee were undertaken in future.

The committee decided that

- (1) the Chairman would write to both the complainant and his guest, informing them of the outcome of the formal complaint and giving an apology on behalf of the Manea Pit Management Committee for the public behaviour of one of its members;
- (2) the Chairman would write to the committee member who is the subject of the allegations, making the point that the committee would not tolerate any member behaving in a manner which could bring the committee into disrepute;
- (3) it expects there to be no more incidents of committee members acting inappropriately towards each other either at meetings or in public places. It is understandable that members may have different views on matters but discussion of issues should be carried out in a "professional" manner;
- (4) it would seek to ensure that no unauthorised works at Manea Pit are undertaken (particularly by members of the committee) in the future.

PMC22/12 Next meeting

The committee decided that the next meeting be held on 11 October 2012, commencing at 7.30 pm, at the British Legion Club, East Street, Manea.

Meeting finished at 9.50 pm.

Signature:.....(Committee Chairman).

Date.....