

# FOLK AGM Report for 2021



# AGENDA

- Welcome and apologies
- Minutes of 2020 AGM and matters arising
- Annual Report and Accounts
  - Presentation and approval
- Election of officers and committee
- Any other business
- Presentation by Simon Smith

# ANNUAL REPORT

- Covid 19
- Committee Activities
- National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative
- National Grid Funding
- Membership
- Major Works carried out
- Work Parties
- Cycling on the Hill
- Secretary's report
- Financial report
- The coming year
- The Memorial Wall proposal

# Covid 19

- On site
  - Increased number of visitors leading to increased erosion and littering
  - Car parks often full
  - Work Parties cancelled for 4 months (Nov, Jan-Mar)
  - Following Covid guidelines
  - Individuals did some litter picking and gorse cutting
- Committee working
  - Greater use of internet and adoption of Zoom meetings
- Recruitment of new members
  - We had a stand at the recent Charlton Kings Fayre but other events succumbed to Covid

# Committee Activities

- 5 meetings held since the last AGM on 20<sup>th</sup> January  
(February, April, June (on site), August and October)
- Some issues discussed :
  - National Grid Funding
  - Memorial Wall
  - Site Management Action Plan
  - Footpath conditions
  - Cycling
  - Website & Facebook

# The National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative

In 2018, we learned of an innovative grant scheme being offered in protected landscapes by National Grid to reduce the landscape and visual impact of its existing electricity infrastructure and to enhance the quality of the affected designated landscapes. Where the visual impacts of the electricity transmission line are not able to be directly screened or otherwise mitigated, the objective will be to shift emphasis away from the transmission line by enhancing the landscape in other ways.

A partnership was quickly established and the combined knowledge, skills and enthusiasm of the Borough and Parish Councils, FOLK, and the Cotswold Conservation Board put a complex bid together in under three months. It was submitted in May 2019 and finally signed off by National Grid and, importantly, its regulator Ofgem, in April 2021.

The grant is for £175,000 over three years, with a commitment to a further three years of monitoring and restorative management as required. With cash contributions from the two Councils and an allowance for costed volunteer time, the whole project will contribute over £1/4 m to the restorative management of the most significant landscapes and biodiversity hubs in Cheltenham Borough.

In July 2021, the very first contract to be let as part of this project was for 40 tonnes of walling stone for Leckhampton Hill and further information and updates will be provided as the project progresses.

# National Grid Funding

- Submission of bid to National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative in May 2019 finally resulted in the receipt of £66k in August 2021.
- Further funding of £108k will be received over the next three years
- Grant shared with Ravensgate Common
- FOLK and others to supply voluntary labour to the value of £68k.

# Membership

- Offer of free membership continued
- Followers on Facebook now over 1200 (from 453 at last year end)
- Number of members
  - 2018 - 270
  - 2021 – 433



# Major Works Carried Out

- Cotswold Wall rebuild beside Cotswold Way continues (Cotswold Wardens)
- Car Park extended and holes filled (CBC)
- Application to renew fencing of Common (CBC)
- Resurfacing of Cotswold Way and improving disabled access

# Work Party Statistics 2020/21

- Work Parties cancelled for 4 months due to Covid-19 restrictions, restarted fully in May
- A very welcome influx of new volunteers since then
- Approximately 40 regular volunteers
- 1,400 volunteer Work Party hours logged
- Number at Work Parties ranged from 7 to 18

# Work Parties Report 2020/21

- Tasks completed over last year include
  - removing gorse, hawthorn, bramble and cotoneaster
  - cutting fire breaks through gorse stands
  - annual mowing and clearance in various areas
  - removing Hemp Agrimony and Ragwort
  - litter picking
  - removing growth to re-expose Cotswold stone walls and fence lines
  - removing tall scrub to open up a flight-path<sup>s</sup> for Duke of Burgundy butterflies
  - Notice boards refurbishment
- Additional support provided by Cheltenham College, Gloucester Vale Conservation Volunteers and local church group

# Cycling on the Hill

- Riders, walkers, Cheltenham & County Cycling Club, FOLK and Cheltenham Borough Council are working so that all users can use the hill safely
- Most established mountain bike tracks will remain with minor modifications to improve safety for walkers
- Some minor tracks have been blocked off where risks for walkers cannot be mitigated
- Signage will soon be appearing to warn walkers and cyclists of each other's presence



# Secretary's Report

Activity	Volunteer hours
Work Parties	1,400
Project Work (largely RCEG)	260
Newsletter Production	75
Events	43
Committee meetings and work	317
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,095</b>

# Financial Report

- Income £953
- Expenditure £1,787
- Deficit for the year £834
  
- Total funds at year end £4,788
- Cheltenham Lottery producing a small regular monthly income

# The coming year

- Gorse clearance by contractors and volunteers to enhance grassland and reduce fire risk
- Making diseased and end of life trees safe for visitors
- Change in breed of cattle and in seasonal grazing pattern
- Rebuilding a dry stone wall to mount memorial plaques
- Continued removal of invasive plant species

# Proposal to build a “Memorial Wall”

- During 2021 a proposal was put forward by CBC to make provision for the erection of Memorial Plaques, similar to those around the ‘lone tree’ on Cleeve Common
- If implemented, this proposal could raise funds for the maintenance and restoration of the Hill and Common by seeking donations when plaques are installed.
- This activity had formerly taken place by the installation of memorial benches but it is agreed that scope for significantly increasing the number of benches is limited
- FOLK were consulted as representatives of users of the Hill
- The Officers and Committee of FOLK were, on balance, against the modification of the wall on the top of Charlton Kings Common but formulated an alternative proposal, which is believed to be a compromise between various other suggestions.
- It is suggested that plaques are installed on a newly built section of Cotswold dry stone wall near to the Stalwarts memorial





# Election of Officers

<u>Current</u>	<u>Term</u>	<u>Comments</u>	<u>Nominated</u>
Chairman (John Harvey - retiring)	2014 - 2019		Mike Donnelly  (nominated by Tony Duffin)
Secretary  Tony Duffin	2020 – 2023	Term is three years	
Treasurer Malcolm Geddes	2016 - 2020	Term is four years and now ends but incumbent remains until a new nomination is received	

# Election of Committee

Peter Whalley	2019 - 2022	Term is three years	N/a
Geoff Holt	2020 – 2023	Term is three years	N/a
Peter Niblett	2020 – 2023	Term is three years	N/a
Oliver Pointer	2019 – 2022	Term is three years	N/a
Clive Lewis	2020 – 2023	Term is three years	N/a
Anne North	2020 - 2023	Term is three years	N/a
Committee Member		VACANT	VACANCY
Committee Member		VACANT	VACANCY

Any Other Business

**Simon Smith C.Env M.C.I.E.E.M**  
**Nature Recovery Lead, Cotswold National Landscape**

## **Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan**

