

FOLK AGM 2023

Minutes of the Twenty-fourth Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Leckhampton and Charlton Kings Common held on Tuesday, 14th November 2023 at The Wheatsheaf, Old Bath Road, Leckhampton, Cheltenham

23.1 Opening and Welcome

The Chair, Mike Donnelly, opened the meeting at 7.05pm with apologies for the slight delay in beginning. He welcomed the 33 members present, seven Committee and 27 ordinary members, and the guest speaker. He noted that all papers relevant to the meeting had been circulated to members and had been available on the FOLK website. As an introduction to the meeting he showed a selection of images illustrating a selection of the works done on the Hill and the Common over the previous year.

Apologies for absence from Andrew Bishop, Angie Boyes, Tony Duffin, Wendy Flynn, Ann North, Tim Sugrue and Shirley Wood were noted.

23.2 Minutes of Twenty-third AGM held on 15th November, 2022

The acceptance of the minutes as a true record of the meeting was proposed by Geoff Holt, seconded by Serena Meredith and agreed by the meeting. There were no matters arising.

23.3 Annual Report for 2022 / 2023

The Chair presented a number of images that summarized issues covered in the previously circulated report and which illustrated these by pictures. The themes reported on included, Committee Activities, the National Grid Restoration Project, Membership, Major Works carried out, Work Party statistics and the Work Parties Report, the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens, Users of the Hill and Common, Financial Highlights and the Financial Report, and the Secretaries Report. Copies of these images are available on the FOLK website.

It was noted that the membership now totals 500 and that we have 2,500 followers on Facebook. FOLK recorded 1,700 work party volunteer hours on the Commons with a total of at least 2,544 hours including administration and other activities. The Cotswold Wardens contributed 1,805 volunteer hours in 2022/23

The following issues were discussed as a result of questions.

Reintroduction of an annual membership to help improve FOLK's financial position.

The Committee felt that collection of a small fee from such a large number of members would involve too great an administrative burden, and could result in a large reduction in the number of members and the audience that FOLK was able to reach. The Committee was exploring possible ways of raising funds.

Tree planting on the Hill or the Common as a possible contribution to current tree planting initiatives.

The key issues covered in an extensive discussion were: there were few locations where tree planting would be possible due to the importance of grassland as a key feature of the SSSI; some planting might be done if suitable locations were identified; over most of the site there was more than adequate natural regeneration of trees to replace any that were lost; the survival of trees developing naturally from seed was almost always much greater than that of planted trees, which generally needed significant levels of management, such as watering in dry conditions, to survive.

Links with Tewkesbury Borough Council and Shurdington Parish Council.

The Chair accepted that FOLK had few links with these councils and agreed to seek to develop them

The joint acceptance of the Chair's Report and the Accounts for 2023 was proposed by Peter Whalley and seconded by Martin Harwood and was approved without dissent.

23.4 Elections

The Chair began this section of the meeting by displaying an image showing the current membership of the Committee and indicating which members did not wish to be re-elected. He stressed that no nominations had been made for the post of Secretary or for two of the four vacancies as ordinary members of the Committee, and also that the post of Work Party Coordinator was becoming vacant.

He stressed that without an adequate number of officers and active committee members FOLK's future could be at risk, as would then be its ability to speak as a representative of users and to make the massive work input that made the present levels of essential management possible.

John Harvey, the acting Secretary for the meeting, asked for possible nominations for election or that the Committee be authorized to fill any vacancies that existed after the meeting. He noted that two valid nominations had been received, Andrew Bishop and Clive Lewis.

The election of Andrew Bishop and Clive Lewis, together with giving the Committee authority to fill any vacancies, was proposed by Serena Meredith and seconded by Martin Harwood. The proposal was accepted with no dissent.

The Chair thanked the members of the committee for their support and hard work over the last year, and thanked the retiring members noting our efficient Secretary Tony Duffin, the 9 years input by Geoff Holt as Work Party Coordinator and the success of Peter Niblett in developing the very popular Facebook page, Malcolm Geddes who was our treasurer for many years and Anne North a founder member of FOLK

23.5 Any Other Business

There being no other business, the Chair closed the meeting at 7.50 pm.

After the meeting, Steve Peacock, who as part of the 2023 Cheltenham Science Festival had led walks on Leckhampton Hill, gave a PowerPoint illustrated talk 'Leckhampton this is your (geographical) Life'. This covered the geological history of the site and highlighted the various quarries to view limestone exposures.

HJH 16/11/23 & MDn 8/12/23