

Update from the Weir Meadow Working Group (WMWG) and Joint Projects Fund Raising Group (JPFRG)

Since the last update (31st August) two further meetings of the WMWG and JPFRG have taken place (12th September and 17th October). Draft minutes from the meeting on the 12th September were provided for the PC meeting on the 12th October. This update, therefore, covers the period from mid-October.

Access arrangements

Originally, a standard field gate was going to be installed at the entrance to the meadow and this was tendered for. After additional consideration it was decided that a more robust barrier should be put in place and a cost for this (£2,000) was obtained from Will Bosworth. The new barrier gate was installed at the end of October. Space either side has been left for pedestrian access and additional access gates could be fitted here if needed. Keys to the barrier padlock are held by the tenant of the Northern Fields (Richard Parr), Nick Bradley, Pete Skinner and Richard Cottle.

A stile at the upper entrance from College Lane to Northern Fields; and a pedestrian gate in the gap in the hedge at the lower entrance (NE corner of easternmost of the Northern Fields) are to be installed. Will Bosworth to be asked to quote for these works, which will be paid for through the existing WM funds. When the gates have been installed, signage as agreed with IPC will be in place at WM entrance, WM & NF junction, and both NF entrances off College Lane. Stuart Brooking has made contact with a designer who makes interpretation boards.

Oak (scrub) Bank

Richard Parr suggested moving the opening in the dividing hedge in N Fields down the hill to a point by the junction with WM, so that people can walk along the southern margin of the Western N Field to Oak Bank. This area (3 acres in total) could then be used as an off-lead area for dogs and provide an additional area for walking.

The need to flail the large bramble patches to open up the site for access was discussed at the last meeting and subsequently by Pete Skinner and Richard Cottle. There are a number of well developed saplings in some of the bramble patches and it would be a shame to lose these if the area were flailed. Pete Skinner has obtained a quote for flailing using a remote controlled machine (£800 / day for 2 days). However, rather than flailing the whole area an alternative would be to open a couple of access tracks running across and up the slope. Footfall could maintain these open and further chopping back of the brambles (if needed) could then be undertaken on an ad hoc basis. The saplings in the bramble areas would be marked before any flailing was undertaken.

PS and RC have also looked at whether the 3 acres of scrub would qualify for grant aid as part of the Forestry Commission England Woodland Creation Offer. Based on the criteria set out in the grant manual it looks as though the site could be entered into the natural rewilding option, which is less onerous (in terms of the tree-planting requirement) than other options. RC will fill in the pre-application form for this option to see if the FC accept that the site meets the necessary criteria. If it does then no additional tree-planting would need to be undertaken as long as a minimum of 100 tree saplings (which includes scrub species) were present after 5 years. The grant for the 1ha could be in the region of £6,000 (any standard capital costs e.g. fencing, trees, would be covered by the

FC). The land needs to be registered with the Rural Payments Agency and Pete Skinner has initiated an application on behalf of the PC.

National Lottery Community Fund

David Howe, with assistance from Richard Cottle, has put together an application to the <£10,000 category of the National Lottery Community Fund. The items for which funding is being sought are: fencing and tree planting (mainly along the brook), interpretation board, bird and dormouse nest boxes, benches for oak bank and possibly infill works to the meadow entrance). The application is due to be submitted by the 23rd November. Competition for the grants is high but there are no matched funding requirements.

Football and Cricket Pitches

Rich Cloke has started to get estimate costs (from Kier, via Andrew Ash, and Gavin Hands) for undertaking leveling, drainage and seeding for the cricket pitch.

A meeting with Devon Cricket to discuss the plans and consider funding criteria has been arranged for the 22nd November.

A small subgroup of the WMWG has been set up to start the process of agreeing leasing and rental terms from the PC by the sports clubs.

Stuart Brooking has completed a pitch inspection with soil sampling and reported to the Football Foundation's App. If the FF accepts the inspection, we would potentially become eligible for funding by the end of November. Devon Football Association advise the FF. The FF delivers the funding. New guidance is due in November. Ide Rovers are playing in a league – one of the eligibility criteria for potential funding.

The next combined meeting of WMWG and JPFRG is scheduled for Tuesday 15th November 2022, 8pm via Zoom.

From Richard Cottle, Chair WMWG – 9th November, 2022.