

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

Since the last update (7<sup>th</sup> March 2023) two further meetings of the WMWG and JPFRG have taken place (13<sup>th</sup> March and 17<sup>th</sup> April). This update covers the period from mid-March to the beginning of May (2023).

### **Tree Planting, Fencing and Interpretation Board**

A very successful, if somewhat wet and muddy, tree planting session took place over the 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> March by a dedicated group of volunteers. A total of 400 saplings were planted along the eastern border of Weir Meadow (by Fordland Brook) and on the lower slopes of Oak Bank. Further clearance of grass and brambles will be needed from around the saplings later in the year in order to give them every chance of establishing and growing on.

The tree-planted corridor along the east border of WM will be fenced to protect the brook from entry by humans and animals, using post and wire [double strand plain wire at top with sheep wire mesh lower section]. This complies with planning permission and is funded by the National Lottery grant. The fencing works are being costed for and will be undertaken later in the year.

David Howe has approached Freeline GFX to discuss the production of an interpretation board for Weir Meadow (to be funded via the NL grant). There is enough history in the leat, sheep dip, bridge, weir and Mill and wildlife of the area to make a worthwhile board. David and Nick Bradley are working up some text / sourcing illustrations to provide to Freeline GFX.

### **Football and Cricket Pitches**

Further correspondence with the Devon FA and Football Foundation (FF) and Grounds Management Association (GMA) has been undertaken. In order to be eligible for a grant from the FF/FA a report setting out the proposed measures (e.g. levelling, drainage seeding) required to create the new football pitch will be needed. Several work package options are available from the GMA, with the costs ranging between £3,500-4,000. A significant proportion of these upfront costs would be repaid if a grant application were to be successful.

Rich Cloke and Peter Skinner have provided a schedule of works that could be undertaken to strip topsoil, level and seed the meadow. The WMWG discussed this proposal and the commissioning of a report from the GMA at the last meeting. Subsequent to the meeting further questions have arisen about costs, work specifications and scheduling. To deal with these queries and ensure that we have an agreed and fully worked proposal to develop the sports pitches a separate WMWG subgroup meeting will be held. This is likely to take place in early June.

Rich Cloke has produced a draft soil report detailing the initial results from the topsoil investigation undertaken in February. The trial pits show that there is a 33-40cm thick topsoil layer across the site. Further work is needed to determine whether this topsoil would be sufficient to level fully over the meadow or whether additional topsoil will need to be imported

## **Meadow Entrance and Car Parking**

The PC has planning permission to create a car parking area at the entrance to the meadow. A number of options have been put forward (hard surface, geotextile, crushed stone) with the preference being for a 'green' geotextile surface. Andrew Ash has estimated that the cost would be about £25,000 for materials and labour for a 12 car grid and geo textile base. A similar sized Terram and stone base car park is likely to cost approximately £17,000.

Given these costs, the WMWG agreed not to prioritise car parking this year; but to ensure that works to infill and make good the entrance to the meadow are undertaken. Previous use of the meadow (and cricket games on the adjacent pitch) show that the lane and layby can accommodate up to 20 cars and this is considered sufficient for the time being. Improving the entrance will also make a material start on the project in the context of planning permission.

## **Pedestrian Bridge**

The structural integrity of the brick bridge across Fordland Brook has been investigated and options for repairing it sought. The arch is in relatively good repair but the bridge abutment on the meadow side is in poor condition and could continue to be undercut by the stream. The stones that have become loose from the abutment are probably in the stream and could be re-used. An option to use galvanized metal bands to increase the integrity of the bridge has been discussed as well as undertaking repairs to the stonework and re-pointing using hydraulic lime mortar. The WMWG favoured the latter of these options in order to preserve the authenticity of the structure given that it will be used as a footbridge only. Quotes for undertaking the works are being sought. The Ide Twinning Group have kindly offered a proposed £2,100 contribution towards the works. Any required remainder would come from the existing WM funds.

## **Fundraising and volunteering**

Tickets for the Police Dog Hogan concert on 8th July are on sale and selling well. Teams of volunteers have been put together to run car parking, the bar and marshaling on the day. The fashion show being organised by Nikki Rice and Janet Williams will be taking place on the 18th May. The pancake breakfast (15th April) organised by Rachel Herbert and Cheryl Haddy went really well, was a great community event and raised £263.

The next combined meeting of WMWG and JPFRG was due to take place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May, but will now likely just involve an email update of actions. A sports pitch specific meeting will be held sometime in early June.

From Richard Cottle, Chair WMWG – 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2023.