Report on St Mary's Fields Management Meeting of 18 March 2024

Interpretation board and dog notices

The meeting was very impressed with the excellent first draft of the interpretation board (see below) produced by Rhiannon Young (Wild Oxfordshire). Lengthy discussion resulted in some suggestions for content refinement and for additions including more information about birds, mammals and invertebrates. It was also agreed to change the QR code link from the SMF Facebook page to the KPC website. It is hoped that a final version of the board can be approved at the May meeting. Upon completion, the board will be positioned at the main entrance. At the same time notices will be put up at all entrances/exits requesting that dogs be kept on leads at all times when in the reserve to protect the wildlife and with a reminder of the need to protect wildlife such as ground nesting birds in the fields beyond the reserve.

The meeting welcomed the news that KPC will be setting up an earmarked reserve for St Mary's Fields to cover costs such as the interpretation board.

Tree planting

All donated trees (oaks, chestnut, ash, hornbeam, beech) have been planted and no more tree plantings are planned. Doug Williamson will request from Ian Osenten (CDC Tree Officer) a copy of his tree map which is needed to help with a proposal for designation as a Local Wildlife Site. He will also be asked to consult SMF before any tree management is undertaken in the reserve which in the past has not always happened, leading to some problems.

Wildlife recording

Trail cameras set up by the river near Wight Bridge captured 20,000 images amongst which five included a swimming mammal, hopefully an otter but could be a mink!

A wooden camera positioning bracket has been installed near the reserve entrance so that anyone can take a series of pictures to monitor change over time. There are four more posts to be installed at other locations.

It is planned to collate all wildlife recordings from the fields behind The Moors which have been included in the Cherwell Draft Local Plan for the building of 300 homes. Bats have already been recorded along with other species such as deer, badgers, foxes, grass snakes and slow worms.

Additional corrugated metal sheets are to be put down in the reserve to provide cover for, and to help monitor, animals such as slow worms, grass snakes and voles.

It is hoped to hold a moth trapping evening and possibly a 'moth breakfast'.

Plant surveys are also planned. In addition, BSG Ecology, a large ecological consultancy firm, will be doing staff ecology training exercises in SMF in July and will make available their plant species list.

Zero Hour

It was agreed to support this initiative which is promoting the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill. This has cross party support and aims to strengthen climate and ecology legislation. KPC has already registered its support.

SMF events

5 May:	Dawn Chorus Walk starting from the church car park at 4.45 a.m. Free tickets from Eventbrite needed.
11 May:	Lyne Road Eco Fair. SMF Volunteers stall.
20 July:	KPC Gala Day 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. SMF Volunteers stall as part of Wild Kidlington's Green Lane.
25 August:	Annual Hay Rake 10 a.m. onwards, tbc.

Date of next meeting: 20 May in Exeter Hall at 10 a.m.

David Thurling
27 March 2024