

Friends of Radford's Green Environment (FoRGE) Forum

March 30 2021

Meeting Notes

FoRGE AGM – See separate minutes

Canal Towpath Update by Russell Poulton, Warwickshire Enterprise Manager of Canal and Rivers Trust (CRT).

Russell explained that the design stage is complete, but the project is running late. Kier have been appointed as framework contractor but the cost of the work has increased to £190,000 due to lack of access over the field. Materials will now have to come in via water transport. Due to the cost increase, the project is now outside the scope of the Commonwealth Games funding pot so still ready to go but funding not yet in place so CRT are exploring other potential funding sources include Sustrans, and Warwickshire County Council but Russell is still hopeful that the work can be done this year. This project can be seen in the wider context of towpath improvements as Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) as laid out in a recent technical guidance document produced for Local authorities by the Department for Transport.

Stan Sabin, Chairman of Radford Semele Parish Council explained that the Parish Council have secured £41,000 of Section 106 open space contribution from the Leam View development which is now in their bank account but cannot be released until the Parish Council have fully agreed and that they have received appropriate paperwork such as invoices and receipts from CRT.

Dave Steele of FoRGE explained that FoRGE have now received approx. £1300 of donations and plant sale money earmarked for the canal access and hope to increase this in the next few months. Russell explained that this is far from insignificant as it demonstrates commitment and support on the part of village residents.

In the general discussion the issue of applying for funding from HS2 was raised. Stan suggested that FoRGE could apply and Brian Follett could advise on the process, but some people had reservations about accepting HS2 money due to the contentious nature of HS2.

Stan Sabin also asked if CRT had been consulted on the Canalside Development Plan (CDP) https://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/info/20799/development_plan_documents, but Russell explained that CRT aren't happy with the CDP as it isn't ambitious compared with the Canal conservation area documentation, which is already in place: https://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/info/20004/planning/1264/canal_conservation_area

Nicola David, Vice Chair of Governors who have been working on improving energy efficiency at the school. The first project over the past 18 months has been working towards installing solar panels on Yr 5 & 6 classroom roofs. This is now complete and will generate 25% of the school's energy consumption and feedback 30% to the grid to generate income. The panels will have a lifespan of 25 yrs. and should give lifetime savings of £80,000 as well as the obvious environmental benefits. This has been financed by a government loan which will be repaid from the feedback revenues.

The second project is to replace fluorescent with LED lighting. WCC have agreed to replace 65 lights in the classrooms at their expense. This leaves a further 58 in communal areas will cost £4500 for which they are seeking funding. FoRGE considered making a small contribution from this year's plant sale.

Nicola explained that they are carrying out an energy audit to see if there any other aspects of energy consumption in then school which could be improved – the school, boiler for example. Other projects include tree planting and a gardening /nature club which could be set up in conjunction with FoRGE volunteers. If anyone knows of any other schools funding initiatives please email Nicola: david.n@welearn365.com

Climate Emergency

Brian Austin appealed for FoRGE to be more involved with the climate emergency. He is a community champion for the climate coalition and asked people to sign the declaration : <https://thetimeisnow.uk/declaration>. Brian also appealed for village residents who are passionate about the climate and the climate emergency to join him in talking through the issues, please contact him by email: jb.austin@outlook.com

Brian also flagged up the Warwickshire County Council green energy switch and save scheme: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/switchandsave> and the free trees for schools funding offer from the Woodland Trust: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/schools-and-communities/>

Wildlife and Footpath Group

Barbara Wyatt of FoRGE explained how FoRGE has been looking at conservation in very local way. She updated the meeting on the ways FoRGE has been mapping habitats in and around Radford and linking areas by encouraging hedges, ditches and wildlife corridors between the increasingly separated habitats by management plans to support these habitats. One example is a collaboration between FoRGE and the Parish Council to enhance the ditches between the playing field and the Lloyds development at the end of school lane by encouraging small wildlife and wildflowers.

The has also been surveying ponds but has shown that these ponds were in better condition than we thought.

The footpath group's activities have been limited during covid but in normal times have been keeping some paths clear. Barbara explained that is not the job of the footpath group to clear up dog poo.

Barbara then showed the meeting three maps. She highlighted three footpath routes which could link other routes in the village and add variety to daily walks.

Leigh Foss Footpath, a permissive path, has been nominated as a public footpath linking Valley Road to village pond which has been submitted to Country Paths Warwickshire. The documents have been accepted, but there is a long waiting list.

The possibility of a footpath to the Canal below the new Bovis development at Crown Hill avoiding Offchurch Lane is being looked into by the Parish Council.

Barbara is trying to collect evidence to establish a public footpath linking two existing footpaths from below the Spring Lane development – more people are needed to fill in the forms.

The possibility of opening the viaduct cannot be taken forward at the moment.

Stan Sabin, chair of Radford Semele Parish Council talked of the difficulties of members of the public straying from the public rights of way and damaging crops. They are not following the paths. Signs have been put up.

Dog poo and dog poo bags are a problem, and some are being dumped in a large oil drum a long way from a road and Stan has emptied this a few times. The idea of stick it and flick it, avoiding poo bags, was suggested but we don't know if this is OK in our area.

Judy suggested a farm walk explaining what crops look like as some think they are grass. Another suggestion was to make and post a video with farmer explaining field crops.

Julia Cooley of FoRGE suggested a crop identifying pull-out in FoRGE news and will look into renewing dog poo advice.

Caz Ingall said that John, Jane and Tom from Leasowe Farm may be able to help. She wanted to let people know that they are planning a new community woodland at Leasowe farm planned to involve local people, including families with children. This will be accessible from the Canal. It will take a few years to complete and the family would like FoRGE to be involved in any way possible.

Jane Ingall flagged up the possibility of continuing footpath to Canalside entrance, or edge of land. Path could be completed on Ingall's land. Enquiries have so far not been successful.

Forum

A lively open discussion followed about concerns for Radford Semele and positive, hopeful ideas for the future. Chair Dave Steele

Marc Sanderson described himself as a resident, nature-lover and bird watcher and is interested in habitat mapping and corridors. He is also a trustee of Warwickshire Wildlife Trust which is organizing hedgehog corridors. Radford is poorly represented on the Hedgehog Highway national database. This could be a community venture and has no cost. Could this be promoted in village?

Wildlife Trust is involved with the 30 by 30 campaign which the government is and which aims for 30% of land in the UK to be managed for wildlife by 2030. At a national level a lot of debate will probably be generated about what is wildlife friendly. But 30 by 30 is infinitely scaleable and works for a window box, garden, playing field, village or district. Very specifically targeting climate, biodiversity, human health especially mental health in connection with nature. Maybe we could use this as a way for the village to look at its environment – could be large as a community woodland and could also be done by individuals in their gardens. He would be interested to help FoRGE with habitat managing and has 20 years of bird watching records in and round Radford.

Dave Steele asked if Marc could help with articles and images for FoRGE News and hedgehogs – hedgehog pictures from people's wildlife cameras could generate interest.

Steve Randall – had had to leave, but left message a message on the chat which Naomi read out. He is concerned about rubbish from Spring Lane development. It seems that various people have asked AC Lloyd about this and also tried to help. Jane Ingall said that there is also a lot of litter like sweet wrappers and drinks cans in that area.

Steve also asked if we can apply pressure to consider wildlife when building? The concrete gravel boards along Spring Lane won't let hedgehogs through. Swift bricks and nest boxes for sparrows could also be included. Barbara thought this should have been in the plans.

Neighbourhood Plan

Olly Aries of Radford Semele Neighbourhood Plan

Olly thanked Barbara and Judy who have served on the Neighbourhood Plan group, who are all volunteers. This has taken four and a half years. September 2016 after the new houses came on board. Neighbourhood Plan covers whole of the parish although much concentrates on village. The group has been run by five or six people who report back to parish council. Two village consultations contributed

ideas and approval. Two formal consultations have been run by WDC. The independent planning inspector agreed plan could go forward apart from a couple of small items. The plan lost a bit of the area of separation and a view. Overall it was a good result. The plan has managed to secure some green spaces: Leigh Foss, the area round the church, back of Valley afforded protection like green belt land. WDC has formally accepted report. The final stage is a referendum on May 6 which appears on the polling cards flagging up a separate vote for Neighbourhood Plan— simple vote to say if you want WDC to use the plan. If more than 50% of the people who vote say yes it will sit alongside the local plan and be considered in planning decisions. It doesn't prevent sustainable development, but should make it difficult to build between Sydenham and Radford, and offer some protection for community assets and the environment. It was an achievement that the valued views were passed by the inspector. There are 13 policies – including footpaths, cycling, traffic management, environment. It will inform the council about what is important to us as a community— e.g., paths to canal. Hopefully the plan will help the council to put its budget forward for these things as well. Olly and the group are hoping everyone will come out and vote yes we want this NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN in place on May 6. The plan lasts till 2029. Leaflets will be sent out. Also check WDC and Parish Council websites. Copies will be available, but hopefully people will download and read it.

Tribute to Brian Edden

Naomi Northey of FoRGE paid tribute to Brian Edden, a local artist and one of our staunch supporters who has died. His tiny garden was a haven for wildlife. He wasn't a well man, but attended events when he could, including litter picks, and contributed diagrams of bird boxes for the newsletter. We appreciated his membership of FoRGE

Plant Sale

Naomi announced the imminent 2021 self-service plant sale.

Due to start mid-April.

It will be a help yourself plant sale again with an honesty box and PayPal account.

FoRGE News - Julia Cooley of FoRGE appealed for contributions and help with deliveries.

She is always interested in suggestions for articles. I

If anyone has ideas but doesn't feel they can write an article please send notes and bullet points. Julia will write them up and send them back for approval.

Delivery –we need more people to deliver. Just a street or so would be helpful. Please get in touch using the FoRGE email address.

Discussion about opting for a digital copy of the newsletter – this may be complicated but may be possible. Marc Sanderson not so sure [works in communications] as there is evidence that people don't read digital copies. Maybe people could indicate they have read the electronic copy and opt out of a paper one.

Also Footpaths – hopefully the footpath group will be able to meet on May 8. Please email FoRGE if you would like to volunteer.

forge.radford@gmail.com