

1. Welcome and Presentations

Twenty one people attended the Zoom meeting which was opened by Dick Baxter, our Chair, who reviewed some early FoMC history. This is the 14th meeting of members since 2006 when the inaugural meeting took place in the Wesley Methodist Church Hall.

Dick reminded us that we are now in the process of formulating the 3rd Management Plan for the Common. The first Plan covered the period 2009-2014; the second covered 2014-2019. The new Management Plan will cover 2019-2024. In response to the needs of our time, this Plan has an updated **Vision Statement** that specifies the important role biodiversity should play in the management of the Common.

Following along the theme of the important role the Common plays in maintaining Cambridge's green space and biodiversity, the meeting featured two speakers from the City Council who are dedicated to this work. The first, Guy Belcher, is the City's Biodiversity Officer. Guy has a long history of working with FoMC; in the early days he helped volunteers dig and plant wildflowers on Butt's Green. More recently he has led developments in Logans Meadow further down the river. The second speaker, Kenny McGregor, is the City's Arboricultural Officer. Kenny helped guide FoMC volunteers in the planting of fruit trees in the Community Orchard. His bigger task is to lead the work on maintaining the health of Cambridge's trees and those of Midsummer Common in particular.

1.1 Guy Belcher's Presentation

Guy reminded us that the Common is part of an ecosystem of protected areas that includes the near neighbours of Logan's Meadow and Jesus Green as well as Christ's Pieces and Parker's Piece. Work to increase biodiversity has also been completed at Parkers Piece where some of the turf has been replaced by wild flower habitat to support butterfly and bee populations and the similar work at Christ's Pieces was also noted.

Guy reminded us that the Common has not been particularly diverse. The establishment of the orchard was a significant improvement. We are also learning how to better manage, with a view toward biodiversity, plants that were previously regarded only as pests e.g., brambles. Guy noted that warblers were recently seen in the Common's brambles. The best practice is to seek a balance between nature simply taking its course and the multi-purpose nature of the Common. Care just be taken as, e.g., Butt Green has seen invasive grasses that must be controlled.

Guy was quite excited about how restoration of wetlands can aid biodiversity with recent examples at e.g. Logans Meadow, which has direct access to the river. In the 1830 map by Baker of the Common, you can see ditches of water running through. These have since been covered, but we now have the potential to open those up. Section 106 funding might be applied to Jesus green to establish more of a wetland along the edge of the canal there. This funding might also be applied to open up the ditches on the Common. Guy recognised that

any such plan would take into account the multi-use nature of the Common with appropriate concerns for transportation and grazing.

1.2 Kenny McGregor's Presentation

Kenny was appreciative of the draft management plan that specifically references trees. Not only specifying the priority of managing the orchard, but also increasing the health, number and variety of trees on the Common. Kenny's work is also aimed at addressing climate change and he showed the significant temperature change we have experienced since 1890. Cambridge has 33,000 trees planted across the city. Every 3 years, they inspect the health and safety of each one.

Kenny shared details of The Cambridge canopy project that seeks to increase canopy coverage in the city from the present 17% to 19%. Opportunities to increase the canopy on the Common are primarily on the edges of the area. Kenny also noted that a diversity of trees helps guard against pests i.e., if a pest is particularly aggressive, they usually target a specific type of tree. Having a greater variety of trees enhances the safety of the canopy as a whole.

1.3 Questions

Jane asked how the canopy coverage of Cambridge compared to London? Kenny responded that London has pretty good coverage but the exact percentage would have to be checked through [the London i-Tree Project](#). Peter noted that some areas get water logged and asked Guy whether it is possible to make a pond area in those areas or is that a health and safety risk? Guy responded saying that all of the major sites they are surveying and mapping include areas of known standing water. However, it is also completely possible that their data is missing some real-time and new developments so they are open to hearing from the group about areas of standing water. Susan noted that it is difficult to get wild flowers growing because of circus events and cattle. She wondered if we should plant some flowers around the toilet area on Butt's Green and maybe a small area by the Fort St George pub? Guy said the area around the pub is a bit tricky space because of the shading of the trees. There are also legal hurdles as we have to apply to the secretary of state to put up any fences.

Dick asked about thistle control. Guy acknowledged that while they are injurious to people and pets, they provide nectar pollen and protection for butterflies and caterpillars. In the future the Council will consider how to balance the advantages of thistles and even dandelions. There was a recognition that we need to put this into the new Management Plan. Concern was expressed about publicity for the Plan and Guy accepted this criticism. Signage was raised as an issue - both to promote the Community Orchard and to separate bikes from pedestrians. Guy drew attention to both vertical signs and painting on the paths. Kenny highlighted the need for vehicle signs to control heavy vehicles on the Common. Charles noted what is happening at Logans meadow with regard to their use of downed trees to form borders. Kenny agreed that this was a great approach - it helps with mycology.

In closing the presentation and question session, Dick passed on his appreciation to our speakers and participants gave them applause.

2. Treasurer's Report.

The Treasurer reported £1,967 in the FoMC account with outstanding bills of £260. The Treasurer saw no need to collect an annual subscription from members. The Treasurer thought it was time that FoMC sought Charitable Status. An important discussion was held

regarding changing our status to become a charitable organisation. Peter proposed that this status would make FoMC more visible to potential members. It would also make FoMC more attractive to potential donors and would increase our opportunity to gain grant funding. This status would also protect us from liability. The meeting approved that this direction should be followed with positive comments from Jeremy Francis who is a retired accountant and Cllr Ian Manning. Further details will be presented to the members at a future meeting and communications.

3. Secretary's Report.

Charles Hattersley noted that we had 21 people participating in this meeting over 19 Zoom links. For 2019 we attracted 19 new members. Over the last three years there have been 58 new members - so FoMC is growing nicely. Charles noted that he will step down from being secretary.

4. Chair's Report.

Dick mentions the annual report located on the web site. It has been a good year for the Common. Next year we assume that events will be back and will be the usual problems to discuss. Dick mentioned that he had information indicating that a large group of Travellers would be on the Common over the week-end of June 27, 28. Thanks were expressed to Jeremy Francis who had arranged the zoom meeting.

5. Election of Honorary Officers.

Charles Hattersley would step down as Secretary. The Chair thanked him for his 5 years of service in that role. Sue Woodsford and Peter Levine would leave the Committee; the Chair expressed thanks for their services.

Charles proposed the following candidates for election to the 3 officers:

Chair, Dick Baxter

Secretary, Steve Cheek

Treasurer, Peter Gotham

Charles also proposed the following Committee members:

Rosica Bates

Jeremy Francis

Sue Gordon-Roe

Charles Hattersley

Kate Hurst

This motion was seconded by Miranda Ponck and then passed. The Chair thanked those who attended and closed the meeting.

Please contact us if you have anything to say about the issues raised on this page

Steve Cheek

(secretary)

27 June 2020