

Friends of DeVitre Community Garden

Annual General Meeting

Thursday 4 July 2019 – Boot & Shoe

Present:

Tim Newton (Chair & Minutes); Caryn Willmott (Deputy Chair); Abi Mills (Treasurer); Deborah Otway (Secretary); Tim Dant.....Simon Gershon (Lancaster Green Spaces)

The AGM was held later than required by the Friends Group's Constitution, as it had been decided that most the setup work on the Garden should first be completed. Then we would be in a better position to discuss its future development with interested parties and the public. This decision was ratified at an interim Friends Committee meeting held on 21st March 2019.

Despite significant publicity about the event on social media, Emails and posters, it was disappointing that there were no attendees at the AGM other than the above.

Progress on the Garden

TN reported that as all present had been involved in developments, the following are detailed for the record:

- Fruit and native trees (for coppicing) have been planted across the garden in accordance with the design plan – they are growing well but will need some attention prior to winter. The planting was done at volunteer sessions and with some help from clients of Making Space and Piccadilly Gardens
- The entire site has been grassed which has generally been successful except that the grassed paths may need re-seeding later in the year due to the adverse effect of the hot weather in May. Some removal of invasive weeds has taken place and the remaining weeds will be dealt with once a mowing regime is introduced later in the year
- The garden has been fenced and a swing gate fitted near the Royal Albert Playing Field – all this work done at volunteer days

Future Work – all to be carried out on volunteer sessions

- A pergola is to be built at the Garden entrance (Simon's excellent design!) that will eventually incorporate raised beds to grow climbing plants over it
- 5 x benches have been delivered and will be fitted over the next couple of months
- The secure sheds for the mower and tools etc will be delivered 5 July – TN will arrange erection of the same with identified neighbours

- Fitting of a rubbish bin in the garden has been agreed with Lancaster City Council – once on site, signs can be erected as per the lease agreement with LCFT and will incorporate requests to users to use the bin, especially dog walkers
- Once the secure sheds are in place, the mower can be purchased and an appropriate mowing regime established (the Garden currently looks a little overgrown albeit that the area around the fruit trees has been kept clear)
- Arrangements have been made for the Garden to be assessed in September for the suitability / cost of planting a hedge along the line of DV House car park as per plan – if/when this is planted will be determined after the site survey
- TN has applied to the Lancashire Wind Turbine fund for a grant to plant native bulbs (Daffodils, Bluebells, Wild garlic etc.) across the site. TN has also applied to the Woodland Trust for a further 200 native trees pack to complete the planting / coverage along the housing line – update awaited.

Financial Report

SG provided the meeting with a breakdown of the grant money / spend to date.....as follows:

Total grants offered	49,400
Spend to date	39,536
Anticipated but not spent	7,270
Potential surplus	2,735

There is a complicated process for administering the grant money / spend – the above figures re anticipated spend/surplus are being monitored on an ongoing basis by SG on behalf of Lancaster Green Spaces

TN thanked SG for his very considerable efforts in obtaining the grants to fund the project and ongoing efforts and enthusiasm in support of its delivery.

Treasurer's Report

Abi updated the meeting that there had been no income/outgoings from the Friends bank account that has the princely sum of £10 credit balance!

The Grant Monies detailed above should cover the vast majority of capital establishment costs for the project, but once exhausted, any future income will likely be to the Friends Group. Accordingly, Abi will arrange for the bank mandate to be amended to reflect the current makeup of the management committee.

Future capital spending will be determined by any grants for specific projects that the Friends Group can obtain. Ongoing “revenue” costs should be small and there was a discussion about how future funding could be obtained without definite conclusions being drawn.

Election of Friends Group Management Committee

No new nominations had been received for people wishing to stand for election to the management committee.

The existing committee members present agreed that they would all be prepared to continue in their current roles

Tim Newton was thanked for his considerable input during the last year, both on site and behind the scenes.

AOB

Communications:

Currently communications with the public about the project uses many communication means including the notice board, notices around the area, mail-drops, e mails with replies to DVG or TN or SG, Mailchimp to “registered” members of the public, Facebook, word of mouth, volunteer sessions etc. –

TN stated his view that whilst as many communication channels as possible should be utilised, there was confusion about exactly which were to be used and who should be the nominated point of contact as author / point of reply

This was to ensure that there was a consistency of message and no confusion.

The issue was discussed and it was agreed that the principle means of communications would be Facebook (AM to try to arrange closure of the earlier FB site); Mailchimp to registered users database with FODVG Chair being the named author with contact details included and DVG e mail also included. These channels would be supplemented by posters and mail-drops as appropriate/necessary.

Ideally, the Friends Group would have a dedicated person responsible for communications / publicity – this is a position that should be sought as soon as the volunteer numbers increases

TD informed the meeting that whilst he was prepared to manage the Mailchimp database / communications for the forthcoming short-term. His workload following his recent election to Lancaster City Council meant that he could not fulfil this task much longer. TN stated that as such communications would be sent out under his (the Chair’s) name, he would familiarise himself with the system and would take over this role shortly pending the

appointment of a “communications” volunteer. TN thanked TD for the work he had done to date on the project.

Apple Day

SG had suggested that a community event day should be held to promote the Garden project on 14 September 2019. This would be designated the Apple Day and would consist of apple-themed games, information, apple-pressing, cakes and refreshments etc. as a means of promoting the project, bringing the community together and potentially recruiting new volunteers.

Other Friends Groups run similar events that are successful and SG has experience in organising them.

There was a general agreement that this was an idea that should be promoted and it was envisaged that the day (morning was agreed) would be similar to the Garden Project’s launch.

TN and AM stated that they would not be able to work on the preparations due to holiday commitments and it was agreed that publicity would be circulated suggesting the event to gauge the level of support for holding it and to establish if sufficient volunteers could be recruited to make it happen.

A decision on the viability of the event will be taken at a committee meeting on 14 August at Boot & Shoe

Volunteer Numbers

TN expressed a little concern that whilst there was significant support from volunteers in the early stages of the project, numbers had dwindled to a small “hard-core” recently. He was assured by SG and AM that support, in their experience of similar projects, actually was good and that volunteer numbers take a significant time to build up.

However, it was agreed that promotion of volunteer days needs to continue – TN agreed to do house-to-house visits in the coming months and we would try to use existing volunteers to pass the word to uninvolved neighbours and friends. The potential from other community groups should also be explored.

Tim Newton

Prepared 6 August 2019