

Surrey Tree Warden Network

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Saturday 14th June 2014 at Lingfield & Dormansland
Community Centre, High Street, Lingfield Surrey**

WELCOME

Jon Stokes welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded us that this year is the 40th anniversary of The Tree Council, and next year will be the 25th anniversary of the Surrey Network.

He then introduced the first guest speaker Jim Jones of the Surrey Wildlife Trust who gave a very informative talk on the relationship between trees and water, as components of the Living Landscape. The benefits of trees were discussed including their role in moderating flooding, preventing river bank erosion, providing a habitat for a wide range of animals, absorbing pollution, and providing shade for creatures living in the river. Mention was made of the ecological value of wet woodlands, and the need for a partnership approach amongst the various stakeholders (eg. Environment Agency, Wildlife Trusts, land owners) to help reduce flooding risks and to enhance the natural environment.

Jon introduced the next guest speaker, Gillian Jonusas of the Royal Parks – Richmond Park. She gave a very clear presentation of the complex life cycle of the Oak Processionary Moth, and what actions are being taken to prevent the spread of this alien pest beyond the London area where it was first discovered in 2006. This moth is a native of Southern Europe where it is kept in ecological balance by natural predators not present in Northern and Central Europe. The health hazard to humans and the ability of the pest to kill Oak and other trees were also discussed.

Both talks were followed by a lively question and answer session.

Attendance

See list.

Annual General Meeting

Election of Chairperson

Chris Pead, Secretary was appointed to Chair the meeting.

Apologies for Absence

As per list, plus Sally Pemberton and Liz Ramsey

Minutes of previous Annual General Meeting

The minutes had been circulated and were unanimously approved, with no matters arising.

Annual/Secretary's Report

Firstly, I would like to thank all those tree wardens who have been active on the various planting projects and other activities over the past year and for the support of my fellow officers and members of the committee. Late last year and early this year we had the floods to contend with, causing one committee meeting to be cancelled because of conditions in the Spelthorne area.

It still has not been possible to fill the post of Chairman but potential candidates continue to be sounded out.

Again in the absence of a chairman, the committee is very grateful to the Tree Council for their tremendous support and especially in the person of Jon Stokes who after a day's work travels many miles in order to attend and chair our committee meetings.

My thanks also to Don Henderson our Hon. Treasurer who has done an excellent job in keeping our accounts in good order and in preparing the yearly return of accounts for this AGM and the Charity Commission. He has also been a great help to me in preparing the papers for this AGM. However, it was with regret that I learned a few weeks ago that Don wished to resign from the Surrey Tree Wardens and will stand down after this meeting has been concluded. It only remains for me to thank him for the impeccable work he has done to date for the Surrey Wardens and to wish him all the very best for the future.

Mention must also be made of Peter Fischer our web master who has continued the work in simplifying STWN web site and negotiating with the web host for a lower annual maintenance cost, in which he has been successful.

The group is also grateful to Anne Richards & Peter Francis for facilitating arrangements at this very convivial venue for our 12th AGM here at Lingfield & Dormansland Community Centre. Our thanks also to Anne, for successfully negotiating with Surrey County Council for funding resulting in £1000 being added to STWN bank account.

Liz Ramsay has been doing a great job in getting the Newsletter out and we are also grateful to her for making her home available for our December meeting when our usual venue at Gatton was not available.

Thanks are due also to Sue Henderson for taking on the task of membership Secretary and for organising the raffle at this and last year's AGM.

Sally Pemberton, our events' organiser has been very busy organising willow coppicing events for which the group is very grateful.

This autumn we have the SE forum to look forward to which this year will be held in Kent; the location has not been finalised yet. It is hoped to arrange a visit to the to the East Sussex wood fair at Bentley near Lewes once dates have been confirmed.

Mention of Andrew McManus has also to be made who was co-opted onto the committee last year and has been nominated to stand for election as a full member of the Committee at the AGM, by myself and seconded by Don Henderson our treasurer

He is involved in the Arboriculture industry and his input to the meetings has been very useful.

Lastly, but certainly not least, thanks to Dave Pope for his work in raising money for the group and for keeping us supplied with tea, coffee and biscuits at our meetings and events.

I would ask members to bear in mind that because of the high cost of postage, postal communications have to be restricted to only the most essential items.

Although it has been again a very difficult year as far as administering the Group, we feel that progress is still being made despite the difficult financial restraints which have eased slightly since our last AGM. Although there has been success in raising funds, funding is still a serious concern but, with your support, I am

confident that we will continue to go from strength to strength and to this end I again would make a plea for more members to take an active role in the group.

Financial Report

Don Henderson reviewed the accounts for the financial year ended 31 December 2013

At 31 December 2013, cash at bank was £2175. After deducting liabilities totalling some £275, the net cash balance was almost £1,900. For the first time for some years our annual income exceeded our expenditure, showing a surplus of some £1,297.

The Treasurer briefly explained each of the figures in the accounts. He noted that the nil figure for Administration/membership expense arose because the invoice for room hire for our committee meetings in 2013 (£40) had not been received until after 31 December 2013.

We were now in a better financial position than we had been for some years and we would be seeking to make good use of the funds in hand. We were planning for an event to celebrate our 25th anniversary in 2015 and we also hoped to organise a training day for Tree Wardens. We had in mind talks to help tree wardens spot early signs of tree diseases and general advice on caring for trees. Don invited suggestions to the committee of any other topics which members would find helpful.

Don highlighted that the bulk of our income for the year came from donations and we could not rely upon these being repeated each year. We needed to identify regular sources of income. The committee would be focusing on this in the current year and seeking to develop better contacts with our County and District authorities. Again, if any member had contacts in this area, he asked that they contact any member of the committee.

Individual members could help at the local level and Don asked all members to seek to develop relationships with their Parish Council and any local charities. Very often, such local charities could help with small donations. The Surrey Tree Warden Network was really a very frugal organisation and just a few small donations from such charities would help us enormously.

The Treasurer thanked all our members for their work and support throughout the year. He summed up by saying that we had had a comparatively good year, which provided us with a breathing space, but there was still much to do to provide a secure financial base.

Both the Secretary's and Treasurer's reports were proposed by Lawrence Hole and seconded by Peter Fischer.

Election of Honorary Officers

There had been no nominations received, and Don Henderson had stood down as Treasurer. Chris Pead was reappointed as Secretary, with the posts of Chairperson and Treasurer remaining vacant.

Proposed by Dave Pope and seconded by Peter Fischer.

Election of Executive Committee Members

The following were re-appointed – Peter Fischer, Michael Lidstone, David Woods, David F. Pope, Anne Richards, Liz Ramsay, Sue Henderson, Sally Pemberton and Andrew McManus.

Proposed by Jane Plant and seconded by Mike Ford

Following the end of the Annual Meeting, a fundraising raffle was held raising £111.

Jon Stokes then looked back over the 40 since the setting up of The Tree Council, and looking ahead to the next 40 years with issues that tree wardens are likely to face including the ravages of the Ash dieback disease, climate change and continuing habitat loss.

After lunch some of the Lingfield Tree Wardens led a walk around their local nature reserve, which included an orchard, a fruiting hedge, ponds and wild flower meadows. Unfortunately Jon Stokes and the guest speakers were not able to stay for the afternoon.

Some of the attendees were able to assist and/or watch David Pope plant a standard small leaf Lime on the nature reserve, whilst the rest returned to base for a cup of tea at about 4.30 pm. It was another successful and enjoyable Surrey Tree Warden event, and a big thank you is due to Jon Stokes, Lingfield Tree Wardens and guest speakers for all their input.