

As my time as Chairman draws to an end, I feel it is important to confirm that the Friends Committee has continued to fulfil all the commitments of the group's Constitution. Happily, there are no embarrassing weak links nor any need to 'massage' the facts. All bases have been covered as you will see below, but we are not complacent and continue to plan a wide range of activities.

From the outset the aims of the Friends of Dothill LNR have been to promote public awareness, to assist with the development and maintenance of the area, to seek grants and funding, to develop the Reserve's potential as an educational resource, to research the history of the site and liaise with the relevant authorities.

Here is an outline of our main achievements during the last 12 months:

Public awareness

- We now have 90 members. They receive a weekly email to let them know what work the Friends' volunteer groups are doing on the Reserve.
- Over 480 people 'like' our Facebook page and regular bulletins keep them up to date with events.
- Our website has had over 23,000 views.
- There is a notice board at Tee Lake and two information boards will soon be in place.
- Our DLNR leaflet outlets need to be continually restocked and the '50 Tree Trail' map and information leaflet has proved enormously successful.
- We have had promotional stalls, organised guided walks and given presentations at various events throughout the year.
- Additional information has just been submitted to Telford and Wrekin Council to add to their updated online material for promoting their LNRs.

Development and maintenance

Numbers in the volunteer work groups have grown. We have also attracted additional physical help through support from companies and Council schemes. This has enabled us to take on some ambitious projects in addition to many smaller tasks. Here are a few examples:

- Creating the '50 Tree Trail'.
- Working in co-ordination with contractors to restore the wetland area next to 'Shawbirch' bridge.
- Sustaining another massive annual effort to reduce the invasion of Himalayan Balsam.
- Establishing a programme to coppice previously neglected hazel.
- Embarking on a laid hedge restoration project to enhance tree work done by the Council.
- Removing old metalwork.
- Engaging a contractor to do restoration work on the pool alongside the playing field.
- Laying the hard-surfaced path to the west of Tee Lake, which completes an easy access route around the heart of the Reserve – The 'Three Bridge Way'.
- Building a dead hedge to protect an area suitable for encouraging potential populations of amphibians and reptiles in the 'Snake' field by the entrance at the end of Donnerville Close.
- Monitoring water quality, undertaking surveys and keeping the species list updated.

Grants and other funding

- Securing further financial assistance from Wellington Town Council, which was helped by our positive and successful involvement on the Reserve.
- Gaining an 'EnviroGrant' Award from Veolia for the hard-surfaced path construction.
- Seeking and receiving a substantial donation of gravel from Breedon.
- Supporting the bid for the large-scale funding of this autumn's wetlands restoration project.
- Welcoming support from the local Co-op and placing a donation box in the shop.
- Attaining a 'Community Events' Grant to help fund an event in on the Reserve this summer.

Educational resource

We have developed a firm working relationship with Dothill Primary School. This has resulted in:

- A week-long Outdoor Education programme with pupils from Year 6.
- A major artwork project involving the entire school.
- Individual visits for specific topics.
- An 'Easter Egg Hunt' around Tee Lake.

Negotiations are underway for the Reserve to host woodland and woodcraft training sessions and to be part of an amphibian research project. Ongoing training takes place as knowledge and experience is passed to new volunteers. The '50 Tree Trail' is a learning resource available to everyone at all times.

History

We have recently completed an outline history of the houses, land use and ownership of the site. This will be added to our website. Our PowerPoint presentation has been extended to include recent research. More investigations are planned.

Liaison

Our relationship with all associated organisations has been very successful. The 2019 AGM will see the election of a Liaison Officer who will be involved in much of the communication with the growing number of other groups with which we have formed links.

The regular 'official' site 'Walkabouts' and follow up meetings are enormously helpful in maintaining the positive support the Friends receive from Telford and Wrekin Council, Wellington Town Council and the Shropshire Wildlife Trust.

It has been a great pleasure and privilege to work alongside such an enthusiastic and productive team of people during the last three years. The group has flourished because of its individuals' love for nature and their commitment as a team towards improving the Reserve for all concerned. I thank them all for what has been achieved. As new Committee members take their places, there will, of course, be subtle changes in the way it operates, but I know that the group will remain an active and dynamic force working hard on the Reserve for wildlife and you.

Andy Harnell