

The minutes for West Park Friends Group Meeting
Thursday 7th April, time 7.00pm at West Park Café.

1. Apologies:- Tony Cooper (Bussey & Armstrong), Mr and Mrs Wilsons and Rob George (Parks & Countryside Development manager, DBC),

2. Present: - Councillor Barrie Armstrong, Tracy Ridley (Bussey & Armstrong), Andrew, Matthew(newly born) and Rebecca Buckingham, Christina and Craig Jones, Andrew Henley (West Park Cafe) Neil Brimer(Minutes) and Pippa Smaling (Ranger Team DBC)

3. Matters Arising

Paths : Friends agree with current priorities with the spare 150m to be used to complete full paths not parts of larger paths. The path work would be in term time. This the friends agreed could be decided by Pippa. Pippa to send out a final proposal.

Pond and water ways work to be agreed, areas such as Cometh Garth to be improved.

Friends Group feel concerns about the accountability of the steering group and levy payers, Friends group would like to see the annual accounts of the Levy Fund

4. Update from steering group

£10,000 to camber and repair paths, cost per linear meter is £22 and should allow for 450m of paths to be completed. Friends agree with current priorities with the spare 150m to be used to complete full paths not parts of larger paths.

Steering Group agreed for the levy covenant to widen the scope for events in the park to be funded, this will come on stream as new development are sold.

5. Site Maintenance

Fruit trees - As part of Darlington its Growing scheme (DIG), 25 fruit trees were planted on West Park in the North West corner. The event on the 16th march saw 100 trees planted on 5 different locations by 140 volunteers from Everything Everywhere (t-mobile & Orange). The location was discussed by the friends, Nick Leeming and DBC's tree officer. There are 4 varieties of fruit tree which includes: Crispin Apples, Early Rivers' Cherry, Sunburst Cherry and Doyenne du Comice Pear.

Friends feel the levy should be spend on improvements, but feel the council's maintenance responsibilities need to be addressed for the future so a budget can be completed.

6. Events update

Easter Egg Hunt – Easter eggs will be located around the play area as well as spots & stripes (community games). (19th April 2011, 10-12pm)

West Park Activity Day – Sunday 24th July, there will be a range of activities such as Archery, craft stall, 4x coaching, assault course, great north air ambulance, face painting, spots & stripes etc. The friends were grateful for the expression of support from Craig Jones and Pippa to follow.(24th July 2011, 11-4pm)

Bat Walk on the (9th September, 7.30pm) in the Park ran by the Rangers.

More work is required for Halloween, but will continue after the current events are concluded.(Friday 28th October)

7. Community Feedback, A Henley spoke about incentivising participation for residents to attend meeting to increase the groups numbers, bring this to steering group meeting, also to look into social media and the website to increase methods of telling people what is happening.

Also dog fouling was brought up as a continuing problem, the group would like to look at ways of improving the park by reducing the fouling thus enhancing the park. Pippa to research companies that clean up dog mess.

Since the meeting a new website has been set up www.westparkdarlington.org.uk , we have a twitter account #westparktweets and a facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Friends-of-West-Park-Darlington/158096217583287>

8. Any other business – Constitution, elect chair and green flag.

Rob asked Pippa in his absence to speak about the friends group supporting and taking a lead in West Park achieving Green Flag Status. Friends would like more information before committing and how this would affect the steering group, invite Rob to discuss further.

The green spaces forum meeting is the 13th April 2011.

The latest work on the constitution is to be attached to these minutes for friends to look at and comment for next meeting. The friends didn't feel the need to appoint a chair as they aren't a constituted group.

Park Rangers, the friends were sad to hear about the cuts to the ranger team but pleased to hear that Pippa would continue to support and cover West Park.

Cllr Armstrong has decided not to run again in the local elections and will be standing down in his official capacity, the group thanked him for his work with the group over the years and wished him well and we would like to keep in contact.

9. Time of next meeting

Thursday 14th July, 7pm West Park Cafe