



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Bernards Heath 10:30 a.m. Saturday February 11th 2023, at the Jolly Sailor

- 1) Welcome and apologies
 - a) Apologies were received from Polly O'Connor, David Pearce, Caroline Holmes, & Val Argue.
 - b) Peter Cook (PC, Chair) welcomed all attendees.
- 2) Approval of Minutes of previous AGM
 - a) The 4th September 2021 AGM minutes were approved.
- 3) Lower Field + Ariston Site update
 - a) PC gave a brief history of the Friends of Bernards Heath (FoBH).
 - b) Peter Burley (PB) was thanked for his work in getting the Lower Field registered as an Asset of Community Value (ACV).
 - c) Helen Campbell (HC, District and County Councillor) informed the meeting that –
 - i) A Planning Application for the entire Ariston site is believed to be imminent.
 - ii) Buildings replacing the current ones will be used for children's services.
 - iii) the plan will include 50 new dwellings.
 - iv) The fenced-off areas of the Lower Field are likely to remain that way indefinitely – Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) was planning boreholes to investigate the stability of the land, to estimate potential costs of rendering it suitable for building on; HCC now lacks the budget to proceed. If such costs were 'manageable' HCC might keep the area for a possible new school, though school places are not in short supply presently. HCC does not believe that further sinkholes will appear (following the enormous one in Fontmell Close in 2015). PB noted that the land stability ought to have been properly assessed before building Heathlands School (long before the Fontmell Close sinkhole).
 - v) Professional users of the Upper Field (e.g. personal trainers and the Try Time Kid's Rugby (<https://www.trytimekidsrugby.com/>) are required to have licenses (Try Time does).
- 4) Review of other activities since last AGM
 - a) Traveller incursion on the Upper Field is believed unlikely to recur, with the change to the law banning return within 12 months. No further action to be undertaken by FoBH unless another problem situation arises.
 - b) Roger Miles (RM, FoBH Tree Warden) noted –
 - i) St Albans District Council (SADC) has felled apparently sound trees, possibly considering risks to adjacent properties.
 - ii) Some trees marked for felling remain in situ.
 - iii) Ash die-back hasn't infected mature trees, but some saplings have been infected and appear to have recovered.
 - c) Playground Project (<https://www.letsplayatbernardsheath.org>):
David Pearce had reported that –
 - i) following a number of unfortunate setbacks last year, Let's Play at Bernard's Heath had to delay the launch of their "buy-a-brick" campaign over the winter, however, they now hope to kick this off in the very near future.
 - ii) Their campaign will offer users of the Heath the opportunity to receive an engraved paving brick with a personalised message written on it for an agreed donation. The bricks will then be located at the entrance to the play area for all to see.
 - iii) Corporate paving bricks will also be available.



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- iv) It is hoped that the funds raised from the bricks, along with any additional grant money, will allow the refurbishment to go ahead in the autumn of this year.
 - v) HC will investigate whether the Ariston development could offer an opportunity to part-fund the Upper Field playground development, which has now twice been refused a grant from the Veolia Environmental Trust.
 - d) Rod Keat reported on the cost, use and development of the website (<https://bernardsheath.org/>).
 - e) Caroline Holmes had reported on social media use -
 - i) On Facebook We currently have 617 likes, an increase of 139 from Feb 2020. 679 follow FoBH, an increase of 173 since the last report.
 - ii) On Twitter we have 542 followers, an increase of 21 since the last report. We follow 504.
 - iii) On Instagram we have 218 followers, and we follow 207.
- 5) Plans for 2023/2024
- a) FoBH will continue to champion the use of the Lower Field as a community asset, and to preserve and improve BH, specifically –
 - i) Continue to organise biannual Action Days, primarily to remove litter.
 - ii) If needed, part fund the repair of paths where they get very muddy in wet weather. SADC have pledged £3,600, for up to 100m of path repairs. If more is needed FoBH could contribute up to £1,000.
 - iii) Monitor the repair of the Spinney Lane surface, allegedly due to happen during half-term (the week commencing 13th February).
 - iv) Continue to monitor and object to abuse of the Sandridge Road Wastes (SRW).
 - v) Continue to monitor and object to any property 'creep' onto Beech Bottom Dyke (BBD, a Scheduled Ancient Monument).
 - b) FoBH will investigate using the forthcoming (April to June) Museum exhibition about the second battle of St Albans to promote FoBH. (<https://www.stalbansmuseums.org.uk/whats-on/forgotten-battle-st-albans>). (The proposal for a BH memorial to the Second Battle has not been pursued).
- 6) Treasurer's Report
- a) Mary North gave the Treasurer's Report, for the years ending September 2021 & 2022.
 - i) The accounts are healthy.
 - ii) FoBH had 133 paid-up members (households) in 2022, and currently has 100, deemed good for this early in the year.
 - iii) No significant expenditures were made in 2021 and 2022, and none are planned for 2023, other than the aforementioned possible part-funding of paths maintenance.
 - iv) We have not moved to change banks yet.
- 7) Appointment of Auditor for 2023/24: David Keen is to continue as FoBH auditor.
- 8) Election of Chairman and Committee for 2023/24
- a) PC agreed to remain Chair, and was re-elected.
 - b) PB and AM have resigned from the committee.
 - c) The other committee members were all re-elected (Val Argue, Jenny Faldon, Rod Keat, Roger Miles, Mary North, David Pearce, Chris Hartgroves, Hannah Salji, & Polly O'Connor)
- 9) Any other business
- a) JF asked for more volunteers to deliver leaflets.
 - b) RM offered the Open Spaces Society 'Common Land' booklet, discounted to £4.



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- c) RM publicised the 7th March Open Spaces Society talk for the St Albans & Hertfordshire Architectural & Archaeological Society (SAHAAS, aka the 'Arc and Arc' - <https://www.stalbanshistory.org/>)
- d) A Beech Bottom resident informed that a Forestry Commission person had told her that spraying local oak trees to prevent processionary moth infestation might take place. (See <https://bernardsheath.org/?p=1193>).

The Chair closed the meeting at 1145 a.m.