

BOOKER COMMON AND WOODS PROTECTION SOCIETY

(Registered Charity No: 289871)

MINUTES OF THE 42nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held Monday May 19th 2025

Apologies: David Riddington, Tony & Pauline McMahon, Elaine Tranter, Judy Hallows.

Welcome: Brian Tranter (Chairman) opened the evening, welcoming everyone and then introduced our speaker, Penelope Tollitt, Trustee of Wycombe Environment Centre.

Guest speaker: Penelope Tollitt. **“From Upcycling to Bulb Planting”**

Penelope, gave a fascinating presentation explaining the history of the Wycombe Environment Centre (WEC) and in particular the Refresh Store in Wycombe.

WEC was set up by Frances Alexander a number of years ago within the Rye swimming pool complex. Over time it was forced to move to the Chiltern Shopping Centre but eventually it lost premises and became inactive. It has however since led to the Refresh store.

This actually had its beginnings in Cressex as the Cressex Resource Zone, a Council lead facility taking surplus stock, from the upholstery industry, and making it available to schools and other organisations. This closed due to financial constraints, but two years ago the idea was formed to revive the Resource Zone as a project of the WEC, and so give it a physical representation again. They took on the stock and opened up in an unused unit in the Chiltern Shopping Centre. The name of “Refresh” was adopted and grants were obtained to give it a start. It is now a busy undertaking run purely by volunteers and exists as a way to save usable craft materials from being wasted. It offers many fabrics, wools and paper crafting materials which would otherwise go to waste, receiving donations not only from the upholstery industry but from individuals who find themselves with surplus material.

Volunteers from WEC also run the Repair Cafe in All Saints Church in Wycombe and run crochet workshops and other craft activities to engage the public. The current lease runs until the end of the year so once again a search is on for new premises.

Penelope then quickly went through some interesting charts, produced by the Ellen McArthur Foundation, showing the trend in the warming of the planet and highlighting 4 sources of carbon emissions, namely “food”, “transport”, “home energy”, and “stuff we buy”. Three of these are in some way tackled by government or local organisations, leaving “stuff we buy” as an item which we can all influence and control as individuals and as groups. This is the prime aim of the Refresh shop - to reduce, reimagine and refresh.

To this end WEC / Refresh store volunteers work on small local projects to follow through on the idea of saving waste from going to landfill and also to support and encourage wildlife. The individual projects maybe small, but they all add up in a positive way and move away from ‘Take, Make and Waste’ to ‘Take, Make, Reuse, Share, Repair and Replenish’.

A popular project in the past was the packaging and donating of hundreds of packs of pollinator friendly wildflower seeds. These were donated to schools and the public. Last year it was decided that bulbs are more visible and permanent than wildflowers and to this end WEC volunteers worked with Red Kite to plant hundreds of bulbs along Holmers Farm Way and other local roads.

The latest project is called "Pride of Place" which will be launched in June at Frog Fest.

A comment from the audience highlighted that some items thrown in tip at High Heavens may still be usable. In response Penelope agreed that there is plenty more that could be done but it all needs resources and volunteers. The more volunteers we have the more we could do.

Brian commented that a move to the 'right to repair' so that items should be repairable to some degree would be a benefit. Gradually, built in impossibilities to repair are being forced out.

Minutes of 41st AGM: Copies of the minutes from last year were available at the meeting. Comments were invited from the audience. Mary Steptoe proposed that the Minutes be accepted and those present agreed.

Treasurer's report for the Year ending 31.3.2025. The accounts were presented on screen for all to see. Community account: £3949. Income over year amounted to £3163, £2000 of which came from Red Kite. It should perhaps be noted that Red Kite always asks for a clear plan of how this money will be spent, which this year was on equipment, in particular a new mower and a saw. The other big expenditure is Public Liability Insurance and grass cutting. Our expenditure over the year was £3215 including the £2000 from Red Kite.

The Fighting Fund now has £11911. It gained £174 in interest this year.

Without Red Kite donation, subs and expenditure were similar to last year. We still carry out door step collections for 41 per cent of funds.

A vote is taken on the accounts and they are accepted as a true representation by those present.

Chairman's review of the year

Alerted by a resident to the existence of records in the Library at the Museum of English Rural Life in Reading, Brian visited and found a copy of the first ever newsletter for BC&WPS from May 1982. In April 1982, 89 residents came along to form the Protection Society. A few years later it was registered as a charity. There are still a few early editions of our newsletters missing, but all we have can be found on our website.

Brian went through the activities of year. Red Kite staff offer community assistance days where volunteers come and join us to help with cutting back, clearing the triangle, replacing bollards etc. We continue to hold litter picks twice a year where sadly it is noticeable that the number of gas cylinders is increasing. They need to be kept separate from other rubbish. Aylesbury has started offering special bins for the cylinders but this may just encourage their use, so it is not clear whether this is the right approach.

Plans for part of the airpark the two horse paddocks were discussed.

The latest plans for the air park are for the construction of a data centre. The original plans were for a film studio. In both cases the plans are speculative having been submitted by a small UK registered company that is funded by a financial group in Luxemburg with no interest in running a film studio or a data centre but would hope lease the buildings out. The film studio plan has been approved by BC but what will happen to the data centre application is unclear. With limited power and water available in this location, it seems doubtful a data centre is even practical. Brian will continue to monitor.

The plans approved for the 'horse paddock' at the top of Hornes lane allowed for the building of 50 homes. The new plans under consideration by the Council for more than a year, although not yet formally submitted, are for many more homes and local residents have raised objections. Brian Pearce commented that he was on the Council when this field was designated as a possible housing site with a limited number of dwellings as it is an area subject to flooding. At that time the vote was for 32-35 buildings.

Dave Hudson, a local resident who lives in Linnet Close, presented an objection he has put together on behalf of local residents with respect to the revised plans, pointing out that the new plans for 100% affordable housing would not be in keeping with the surrounding area. Several other objections are listed in the letter. He made copies of his document available for undersigning by any local residents who wish to do so.

A revised plan for the horse paddock on the opposite side of the motorway has been approved. This is for a huge single warehouse. Again, this is a speculative application with the organisation putting forward the plan for a building that they don't need but would hope to lease out.

It was reported that there have recently been a couple of fires in the woods which had to be put out. This is clearly unlawful and dangerous. If anyone is seen lighting a fire they should be reported.

Brian thanked Ian and his team for their hard work mowing the common.

Brian Pearce also pointed out that Mr. Forrest regularly cuts back growth on the bund. He works hard and although not everyone is happy about it his work should be acknowledged.

Finally, Brian reported on an incident with the footpath which runs from Limmer Lane through to Horns Lane. The Society cleared this a few months back as it was very overgrown but then suddenly signs appeared stating that it was private land and there was no access to the field. This was completely false as a landowner has no right to close what is a designated public path. Either the landowner or the developer must have put up the signs. Brian took it upon himself to take the signs down and reported the incident to the Council. The Council thanked him for the action but no further information has been received since then. The path across the field also needs clearing.

Election of Committee

The audience was invited to ask questions or make comments before the election of the committee.

With the exception of Ron Bowden who has decided to step down the current Committee Members have agreed to continue in their current posts. No new applications have been received. If anyone would like to join, please let us know. It was therefore agreed to elect them "en bloc".

Jeff Harvey proposes that the 8 current members of the committee be re-elected and all present are in favour.

Committee Members remain as: Brian Tranter (Chair), Steve Blackman, Ian Evans, Sally Jay (Secretary), Hedley Luxton, Tony McMahon, Phil Stagg (Treasurer), Wayne Jevs

Meeting finishes at 9.15 pm.