

# FoHT MEETING MINUTES

## FRIENDS OF HIGH TOWN SEPT 2012

### DETAILS

The meeting was held at Methodist Church Hall, High Town Rd on 11<sup>th</sup> Sept 2012. The meeting started at: 7pm and finished at 8:30pm.

### ATTENDEES

People present at the meeting:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Email Address</i>
<b>Fiona Morton</b>	
<b>Chris Grabham</b>	
<b>Russell Cartright</b>	
<b>Annie Bygrave</b>	
<b>Simon Barrow</b>	
<b>Roger Dixon</b>	
<b>David Landau</b>	
<b>Anthea Cowen</b>	
<b>Marie-Louise Lowcock</b>	
<b>Joan Samuel</b>	

### APOLOGIES

People who were not present at the meeting:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Email Address</i>
<b>Andy Malcolm</b>	
<b>Roxanna</b>	
<b>Judy Dixon</b>	

### KEY FINDINGS AND DECISIONS

The following key findings and decisions were made:

- Guerilla gardening - dates to be set for Rainbow Charity plot tidy up –one in September and one in October.
- Portas bid – decision to be made before 16<sup>th</sup> Sept on what FoHT want to spend £10K on, chosen from the list already made for the original £100K bid.
- Railway Tavern redevelopment – close eye to be kept on developments esp. regarding the conservation of the tree and red phone box and use of the correct construction materials.
- Ask Network Rail to clear rubbish and weeds from plots of land in High Town Ward that they are responsible for.
- Investigate avenues for telling public about free council collection of large items for disposal
- Advertise FoHT meetings and events better.

The following meeting actions were agreed:

<i>Due Date</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Person responsible (email address)</i>
	Dates for guerilla gardening to be set	David Landau/Anthea Cowen
<b>16<sup>th</sup> Sept 2012</b>	Send Portas bid wish list to all members and ask them to respond in good time.	David Landau
	Email to Network Rail re rubbish and weeds	Annie Bygrave/David Landau
	Investigate avenues for telling public about free council collection of large items for disposal	Annie Bygrave/David Landau
<b>13<sup>th</sup> Sept 2012</b>	Update website with AGM date for <i>Friends of Luton Parks and Green Spaces (19<sup>th</sup> Sept)</i>	Simon Barrow
	Invite next speaker: Nicola from Travel Luton	Fiona Morton
	Investigate advertising avenues for FoHT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local papers: eg <i>What's On in High Town, Luton News, Luton On Sunday.</i></li> <li>• Add FoHT to library's <i>Clubs and Community Groups</i> register</li> </ul>	Simon Barrow/David Landau  Simon Barrow
<b>Before 25<sup>th</sup> Sept</b>	Make and send FoHT meeting advert poster to Roger Dixon and Marie-Louise Lowcock	Simon Barrow
<b>From 25<sup>th</sup> Sept</b>	Deliver posters to High Street Shops	Marie-Louise Laycock

Key:

[anything in square brackets] = assumed meaning of dialogue that was not actually spoken

*Italics* = a general direction of dialogue that was unrecorded or an action that was taken by a person or group.

#### Minutes From Sept 2012 Meeting

Apologies given (persons as in the above table).

#### **Topic 1: Guerilla Gardening**

*David Landau explained to new members what Guerilla Gardening was – i.e. the transformation and maintenance of public or publically seen neglected green spaces by the action of volunteers. He mentioned the talk Jeremy Williams gave in the July meeting and the charity garden in High Town that needed work. He advised the group that Rainbow Charity had agreed to having FoHT work on the plot and all that was required was to set a date.*

Annie Bygrave: We need free plants and shrubs, so if anyone has any garden plants they were going to split this autumn or any self seeded shrubs they have potted up please can we have them.

*Joan Samuel mentioned a section of land behind the railings by the station that is full of rubbish and weeds. Discussion regarding where this area is located. Group gathered that it is at the junction of New Bedford Rd and Manchester Street.*

Russell Cartwright: It's Network Rail's property.

David Landau: I think that is outside of the High Town area. We should probably stick to High Town.

*Discussion regarding various Network Rail areas that need clearing of rubbish.*

Simon Barrow: Maybe we can do a reccy and let them [Network Rail] know?

David Landau: OK, we will send an all encompassing email to Network Rail asking them to sort out the rubbish [on multiple plots].

Roger Dixon: The state of the platforms [tracks] are bad too - lots of grass.

*David took a phone call from Jeremy Williams re: guerilla gardening plans.*

David Landau: Jeremy has got the weed proof membrane and now we need to set a date for the charity plot. Fiona how are you fixed for weekends to do a bit of gardening? Anthea what about you? *Mentioned the help of the Beacon Group.*

*Fiona and Chris discuss this and say that they are not free until 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend in October onwards.*

Anthea Cowen: 22<sup>nd</sup> September is the only one I can do. October would be better.

Annie Bygrave: I can do daytimes during the week

Simon Barrow: But you wouldn't want to do it on your own.

David Landau: Ok, we can set one date in September to make a start and then organise the final one in October.

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### **Topic 2: The Portas Bid**

David Landau: Every organisation that put in a bid for Portas funding will receive £10,000 so long as their MP supports the proposal. Gavin Shuker our MP is behind it and will sign the bit of paper. We have to tell them what we want the money to be spent on. The rest of the High Town Portas team will convene again and a decision has to be made and submitted by 16<sup>th</sup> September. All of these bids seem to have a very short time scale! We have the wish list for the £100,000 original bid so we'll choose something from that. I'll send out the list to all the members present and you can return your choices to me. We don't want any new ideas being proposed at this late stage, so please keep to the list items. I won't be able to attend the meeting so maybe we can send it in by email.

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### **Topic 3: The Railway Tavern**

David Landau: *Mentioned that we updated the group on the proposed redevelopment of The Railway Tavern in the last meeting. Explained briefly what the redevelopment entailed and that we sent in a letter to the Planning Office giving our views and objections. (Annie Bygrave provided copies of the letter that she had sent in to the Planning Office on behalf of the FoHT group.) Planning permission has now been given for the redevelopment, apparently without any changes to the plans.*

*Chris Grabham informed the group that he had also sent in a letter to the Planning Office. He told us about the replies he had had, one of which invited him to attend a daytime meeting to state his case (which he was unable to attend). Told us a bit of background about the structure of the system and the individuals concerned.*

Fiona Morton: Is it worth keeping an eye on how the development goes and find out who is checking up on them?

*Marie-Louise Lowcock expressed concern that the tree in front of the pub may not be saved and mentioned that contractors had chopped down some trees they were not supposed to have touched at another development. Group agreed that tree should not be felled and that we should all be vigilant.*

Russell Cartwright: Is the red phone box going to be retained?

Chris Grabham: The box is on the local conservation list so we should keep an eye on it.

Joan Samuel: How do recommendations that this group make work with other groups in the area, like the Heritage Group for example? I've seen that High Town has a page on the The Heritage Group website so they obviously have an interest. Who is top dog as it were?

*Chris Grabham informed us about the Heritage Group of which he is a founder. He is the person who set up the website. He explained who is in the group.*

Chris Grabham: The Heritage Group is a loose group of people who meet about 3 times a year. It has been going for about 2 years but we are still finding our feet in making the group actionable. Luton Borough Council send a representative to the meetings so we have a good dialogue with them. The Council have given us a tool kit to use for looking at different areas of interest in the town. We are looking to take steps to protect certain parts of Luton.

David Landau: They are more concerned with the built environment, and the whole of Luton, rather than just High Town.

Chris Grabham: Barry is willing to come to one of our [FoHT] meetings to talk about what he does.

David Landau: Coming back to the Railway Tavern – we have to keep an eye on it basically.

Roger Dixon: I was very concerned about the planning consent being given. Did Barry Neil actually speak at the Planning Meeting?

David Landau: I don't know

Roger Dixon: There were several conservation issues – type of brick, roof, plate glass windows not being invented when the building was built.... I can't understand why these weren't addressed in the planning meeting.

David Landau: The [planning]officers have to weigh it all up - they have to decide - is it within the [conservation] law? It is a very tricky thing. Solicitors would probably take them to court if they got it wrong.

Chris Grabham: The Council may not be interested enough to put our suggestions or ideas in place. Station House had a lot of local complaints [sent in] and I think the Council were surprised at the support for the building and took some of it on board.

David Landau: We have to keep pressure on the local authorities and either take individual action or as a group. With Station House it worked. I will be keeping a particular eye on materials with this one.

Anthea Cowen: Do we know what the retail units are going to be?

David Landau: Downstairs will be a café eventually

Simon Barrow: The retail units will be let out

Roger Dixon: I've noticed the boards...the murals have been tidied up

David Landau: Did anyone here have anything to do with that?

*Rest of group indicates not.*

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#### **Topic 4. Any Other Business**

##### 1. Rubbish Dumping in High Town

Marie-Louise Lowcock: There are an awful lot of private landlords in High Town and they don't seem to care as much about their houses [as private owners do]. There is a problem with dumping mattresses and other rubbish outside of their properties. For example one left a headboard out in Clarendon Rd. It makes such a mess and I don't know how to approach it [the problem].

David Landau: The Council will take it away if you ring them up. I have lost count of the number of times I've phoned the Council to collect big articles of rubbish that have been dumped outside.

*Discussion about how many people don't seem to know that there is this free collection service. It was suggested that sometimes the tenants dump stuff they don't want outside, rather than the landlords. Roger Dixon proposed that it could be due to the changeover of University of Bedfordshire students at the beginning of each semester, next one being due this October. It was agreed that if the rubbish was on private property (eg a front garden) there was little we could do.*

David Landau: The Council could label the rubbish. In [place name] they labelled the items saying that the dumping will be investigated and they had some success. On Kingston Rd people are genuinely not aware the Council will take large items of rubbish away for free. What can we do? A letter to the Council? Advert in the paper? The key issue is to let people know there is a free service.

Simon Barrow: They could put it on the Recycling Leaflets that the council give out.

*Discussion about whether or not the recycling leaflets go out to everyone and that all of the recipients in different areas of Town get the same free collection service. It was suggested that they do.*

David Landau: We should tell the council there is this problem and more needs to be done in High Town. Possibly contact the University as well to let their students know. Liase with private landlords to ensure they know they should not do this dumping and they need to contact the council so that it can be taken away for free.

##### 2. Promoting FoHT meetings, events and information to the public.

*(N.B. I have merged three separate discussions here as this seemed sensible - Annie B)*

Roger Dixon: We have this free newspaper that came out – we accidently got 3,000 copies delivered here. The point is this is a pilot issue, but maybe we will get the opportunity to use it in the future.

*D.L. looks at the new free newspaper. Discussion about who writes What's On in High Town: 'Hope Not Hate' and 'Searchlight'. D.L. says they have used the FoHT logo without permission, but they have advertised the FoHT group meetings, which the Group agreed was useful.*

David Landau: 'Hope Not Hate' and 'Searchlight' are two anti-racism groups. They may be particularly interested in Luton since the EDL [English Defence League] problem.

*Discussion about whether or not we want to be associated with these groups. No objections were raised.*

Simon Barrow: We could probably use it to publicise things in future.

Anthea Cowen: We could let people know about the guerilla gardening, I'm sure they would want to know.

Fiona Morton: The Library [Culture Club?] produces a booklet 'What's On In Luton' and I was hoping that Simon could get us included in that, but they have run out of money [so won't be producing it anymore].

David Landau: We have had a small triumph – it was mentioned in the local paper that FoHT failed in their Portas bid but that we will be trying for a second round.

Chris Grabham: The Luton News has a section about local community groups [that we could advertise in].

David Landau (*speaking to Simon*): That's something we will work on together.

Fiona Morton: The libraries have a community clubs and societies register – perhaps someone at the library would know.

Russell Cartwright: Or it might be on their website.

Roger Dixon: We need to advertise these meeting better. The poster needs to be made up and sent to me 2 weeks in advance so I can put it on the railings outside [in good time].

Marie-Louise Laycock: I would be happy to take posters into all the shops on the High Street and ask them to put them up.

David Landau: Some of the shopkeepers aren't keen on having anything in their windows. *Mentioned which were and which weren't.*

*Group discussed. Marie-Louise will take posters in and speak to them again.*

### 3. Upcoming Events

Russell Cartwright: There is the AGM of the Luton Friends of Parks and Green Spaces at 7pm on 19<sup>th</sup> September at the Wardown Parks Dept offices, next to the cricket ground. [Simon] please put that up on the [FoHT] site.

### 4. Guest Speaker

Fiona Morton: Nicola from Travel Luton is doing a project with the Council to get people interested in sustainability. If we are all agreeable, she or one of her staff will come to the next meeting to give a talk.

*No objections were raised.*

David Landau: The next meeting will be on the 9<sup>th</sup> October

END OF MEETING

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