

Chesworth Farm - time to get Friends up and running!

EVERYONE'S aware of the threat hanging over the future of Horsham's Mugeridge Field.

Whether or not it will become a building site will be determined at a planning appeal in the near future.

We all hope that it will survive and remain as part of the existing natural environment, but you never know.

This has put the future of Chesworth Farm under the spotlight.

Although rejected by the council as a site for future development in last year's options review the ever present pressure to maintain a viable pipeline of land for new housing means we cannot be complacent.



by
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chairman of the
Horsham Society

The more we can encourage visitors to this unique Horsham oasis and raise awareness of its rich flora and fauna the more likely we will preserve it for the future.

Since the public meeting in the Drill Hall in April, and a smaller group in May, considerable progress has been made towards setting up a Friends of Chesworth Farm group.

The first priority was the creation of a constitution

for the proposed Friends and a draft is now ready for consideration by the inaugural committee once the Friends is formally established.

Work has also started to identify items that might appear on a wish-list for Chesworth Farm once the Friends is up and running.

There are obviously many different things that need to be done to preserve and protect Chesworth Farm not only for today but also for tomorrow.

At the same time, care is needed to avoid being too restrictive and so ruining people's enjoyment of the environment. There is a careful balancing act to be achieved between

encouraging wider access and protecting wildlife.

Three key objectives were identified as the short term priorities. Firstly, the relationship between the Friends and Horsham District Council, which owns and manages Chesworth Farm, needs to be clarified.

Secondly, the Friends will need to research the availability of grants for any future projects. Access to grant funding not available to the council itself is one of the key benefits which the Friends can bring.

The third objective has to be something with an immediate visual impact, which can be achieved quickly.

People need to see

something positive emerging from setting up of the Friends.

The site lacks noticeboards and new visitors have no idea what Chesworth Farm has to offer.

This was considered as a good starting point and a small group has looked at where noticeboards should be situated and what information they should display.

In the longer term, improvements might be made by waymarking, the provision of more dog bins and fencing off some sensitive areas, for example, where there is already serious erosion of the river bank.

The next step is to

formally establish a Friends of Chesworth Farm so that the talking can stop and the action start.

A meeting of those who attended the public meeting in April, together with any other interested parties, will be held in the Drill Hall at 19.30 on Monday, August 22.

The Horsham Society is concerned about the past, present and future of the town. It seeks to promote good planning and design for the built environment and open spaces. Membership of the Horsham Society is open to anyone, who shares these concerns. For more information, visit our website www.horshamsociety.org or telephone 01403 263870.