

MINUTES FOR LEECHWELL GARDEN ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE MEETING
7th July 2021 at Leechwell Cottage

PRESENT: David Mitchell (Chair), Shirley Prendergast, Sue Holmes, Roma Church, Philip Strange, Lu Overy, Paul Church (observing)

1. APOLOGIES: Keith Rennells, David Martin, Jeannette Willington

2. MINUTES: the minutes of the meeting on 21st April were ignored!

3. MATTERS ARISING

None.

4. LOWER CIRCULAR POOL

Dave described Rob Sekula's proposal to construct a fence across the watercourse immediately above the lowest, circular pool. It would run from the hedge on the upper side across to the nearest tree on the lower side, essentially making the pool part of Heath Way rather than the Leechwell Garden. As well as making things safer for young children by denying them access to the circular pool it would also provide more privacy for Heath Way residents, particularly when the hedge had grown. Rob agreed that SHDC would do and pay for the work, though not in the immediate future. The committee expressed their gratitude to SHDC.

5. POSSIBLE HEDGE FENCE ABOVE LOWER HALF OF HEATH WAY?

As a follow-up to the fence it was suggested that the residents of the lower 5 Heath Way Houses might like the hedge/fence continued along the ridge as far as the steps at the end leading down to Susie's Gate, Lu and Paul agreed to discuss the issue with the residents.

Action: Paul and Lu to inform residents

6. THE SANDPIT

Dave outlined the proposal (detailed in Shirley's notes which are attached to these minutes). Two main issues deserve mention:

1. The plan to fence the existing sandpit, rather than move it, will, it is hoped, solve the problem of sand being transferred to the watercourse. If it turns out that it does not we will have to consider the (much more expensive) cost of moving the sandpit or of closing it altogether
2. Phil, a long-term employee of EarthWrights (which took part in the construction of both the original play structure in 2010 and its replacement in 2016), is prepared to do the work on installing the fence for free (and hopes to obtain materials for the fence from EarthWrights at a much reduced cost.) Phil would hope to do the work over a weekend in mid- September.

It is hoped that SHDC would contribute to the cost if, as hoped, it dramatically reduces the work they have been having to do to cope with sand in the watercourse.

After some discussion it was agreed that Dave would write to Rob Sekula and Alex Whish (and via Paul to the Heath Way residents) informing them of our plans.

Action: Dave to write the letter

7. PICNIC TABLE REPAIRS

Dave had managed to contact Tim Crowley, who made the Picnic Table and Pergola back in 2010. Although he no longer runs a large woodworking business he does still do such work and is prepared to come and look at the picnic table (and the pergola) with a view to making the necessary repairs.

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8. COMMITTEE CHANGES

Dave noted that Jeannette would be retiring as Treasurer at the end of the year and that Shirley also intended to leave the committee then. He said that we would need to hold an AGM (in October?) in order to elect the new committee. He and Sue, while neither wished to become chair, had agreed that they would be prepared to be co-chairs in the absence of other candidates. Dave also noted that Jeannette has given him the necessary documents to set up electronic banking for the Leechwell Garden account at Lloyds, which should make the job of treasurer much easier.

Action: Dave to set up acct (done!)

Shirley suggested that we open a sub-account for projects to make it easier to keep funds separate - at present the single account is used for paying Ross and Keith and will be used for the work on the sandpit.

9. AOB

In his email sent before the meeting, Keith mentioned various maintenance issues – keeping the stone path edging free of vegetation (which he suggested could be added to Ross's task list, the pool area hedge and meadow which is looking a bit 'hairy and which he suggested he and Andrew could pop over and fix and the need to zap the little bit of Japanese knotweed which escaped the spray last year.

Philip mentioned the need to do some work on the oxeye daisies and perhaps plant some yellow rattle (the previous plants have not survived. Lu noted than the growth of the hogweed was later and much less this year.

Finally Sue mentioned the large event that Helen Sands was organizing for Sunday 3rd October. This would involve processions of children from Totnes and Bridgetown schools culminating in the Leechwell Garden.

NEXT MEETING: No date was agreed at the meeting.

Action: Dave to circulate date

The sand pit in the Leechwell Garden: solving the problem of sand dispersal and blockages.

1. Background.

Earlier this year, on 5th March, the LGA met with some of the Heath Way residents and agreed to solve the problem (in first instance) of sand dispersal and blockages by fencing in the sandpit. We have been offered some funds to this end from The Totnes Trust and a contribution from Councillor Sweett from his Sustainable Community Locality Fund.

2. Offer of volunteer help.

Since then the LGA has had an extraordinarily generous offer of volunteer help with fencing in the sandpit, leaving us to cover just the cost of materials.

A parent and regular user of the garden, Phil, has offered to do the work (with some additional volunteer help) over a weekend in early September. Most importantly, Phil has been employed by Earth Wrights for 18 years and has already worked on several Earth Wrights jobs in the Leechwell Garden. He is therefore very familiar with what is involved, the materials used in the sandpit and the play structure and in sympathy with the overall feel and quality of the outcome we would all wish: there could not be a more ideal person for the job.

3. The overall plan is:

- to fence the sandpit to discourage children from wandering across to the water
- if possible, to make the sandpit interior more attractive by adding a small raised play table with funnels and sieves etc (issue of space)
- to make it harder for children to find/ reach the water by putting the exit on the side furthest away from pool
- to hide the water from view with the fence and low hedge.
- In addition the decaying log edge will be removed, an extra seat added and the sandpit cover reduced and realigned to make it easier to use.

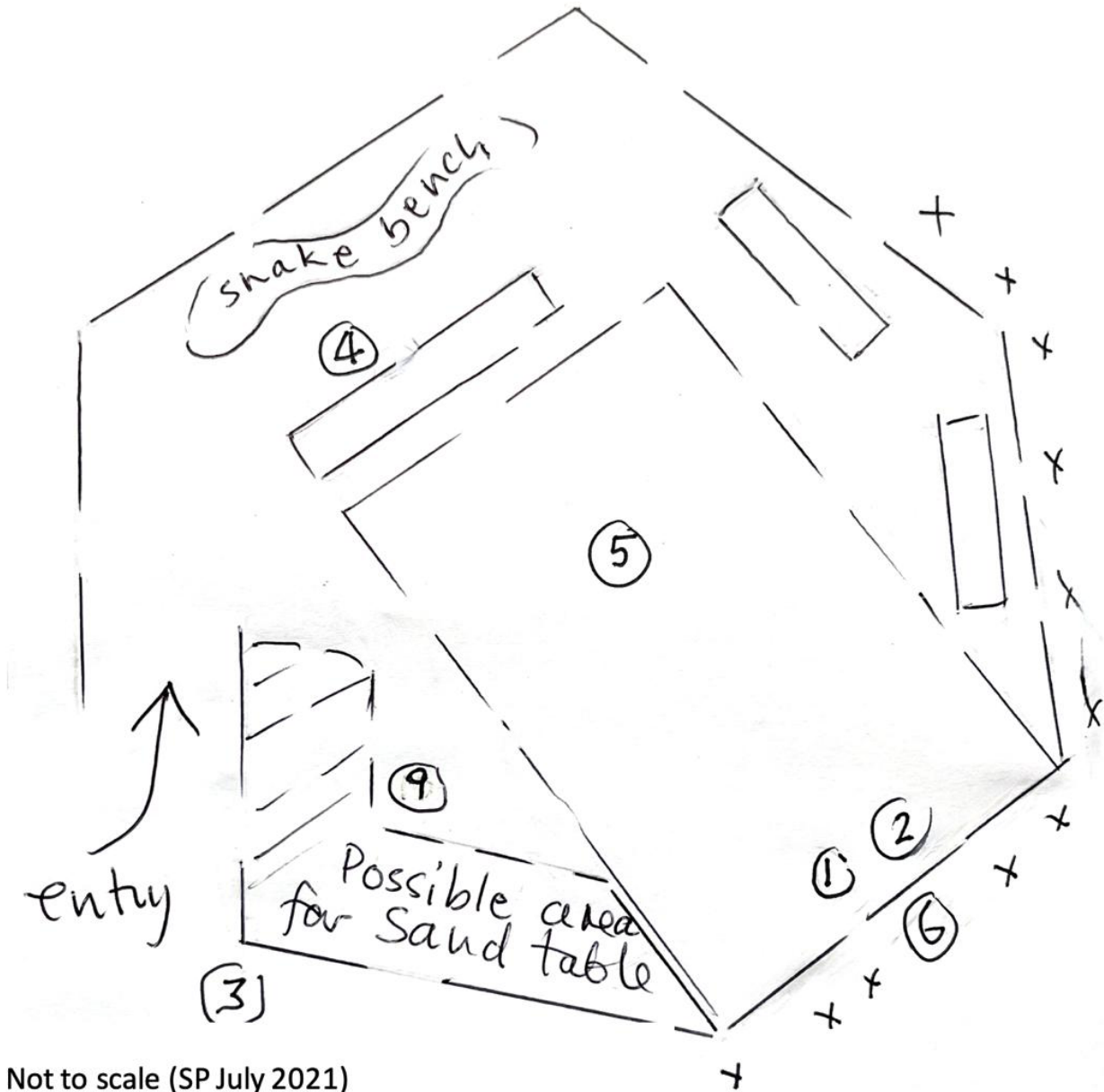
4. Proposed work on the sandpit

Summary:

1. Remove decaying logs at base of sandpit
2. Mound soil to replace logs
3. Put in a low, light (probably larch) fence with a staggered 'snail' opening instead of a gate
4. Add one new sleeper bench for extra seating
5. Reduce size of sandpit cover so it pulls
6. more easily across the (deepest) sand in central area
7. Re-angle cover and attach securely to fence
8. Plant hedge around exterior of lower half of fence as additional screening from water and neighbours
9. Refill the sand (approx 2 tonnes)
10. Possible space for small raised play table

PICNIC
table

Plan of proposed changes



Not to scale (SP July 2021)