

Minutes of Meeting

Friends of Landport Bottom

**Monday 9th February 2015 at 7.30 pm.
St. Mary's Church, Highdown Road, Lewes.**

Apologies for absences:

Jacqueline & Brian Bodel, Vicki Trenhaile.

Introduction:

There were 18 attendees at the meeting, which commenced with Stephen Watson proposing that Ruth O'Keeffe act as chairperson. This was unanimously agreed by everyone present.

Minutes from previous meeting 10/11/14:

The minutes of the last meeting were discussed with previous actions highlighted. Dan Fagan, Community Ranger responded to each of these as follows:

- a) **The rut on the motor road:** Dan confirmed that this location was not on the list of ESCC Rights of Way, and therefore they were not responsible for any maintenance. The right of access for pedestrians has been raised with the legal team by the owners of the land.

- b) **Dog waste collection / additional bins:** The number of dog waste bins is at full capacity and no additional bins will be provided by Lewes District Council. Not all regular bins can be used for dog waste but the introduction of multi-waste bins will be taking place in the future. Christine Parks asked why a further bin could not be installed along the motor road but Dan confirmed that as the road is private, vehicle access to empty bins is not permitted. Stephen Watson said that for 3 weeks running dog bins had been overflowing and asked whether they could be emptied more frequently. Dan suggested that if a bin was overflowing, then Lewes District Council should be contacted and made aware. Concern was expressed that the location / limited amount of bins, meant that some dog walkers would have to carry the collected waste around with them until they encountered a bin. This it seems encourages less responsible people to simply deposit the waste on the ground. A comment was made that dog walkers could plan their route around the location of waste bins. Ruth asked Dan to find out if there was even a *possibility* that another dog waste bin could be installed. He confirmed that he would make a note about this. Ruth continued that as Lewes Town Council will be taking over the responsibility for Landport Bottom at some future point, this might mean changes. (*Action*)

- c) **New benches:** Dan confirmed that when the land is transferred to Lewes Town Council, they will make a decision regarding the installation of further benches. Roger Murray said that there will be a review of this at the next Landport Bottom Management Committee Meeting. Christine commented that adjacent benches for the purpose of socialising were desirable. Nina Murden however felt that we needed to be mindful that Landport Bottom is a natural space and that we don't want to `go overboard` with benches, bins and information boards. Roger was in agreement with this comment.
- d) **Sheep escape:** Dan has spoken with Mark Hayward of the South Downs National Park, who confirms that if a field is adjacent to a farmer's land he can use it to graze sheep. Dan said that there had been an issue with Southern Water who had accessed the land and left a gate open, resulting in the escape of 80 sheep. He stated that Southern Water personnel should not drive vans onto the land at this time until the ground dries up, and if this is witnessed it should be reported to him. Ruth said that if anyone finds escaped or distressed sheep they should contact Dan.
- e) **Interpretation boards:** Three new interpretation boards have been designed for installation on the Tumuli field; near the reservoir; and by the Firle Crescent entrance gate. The information includes all the necessary telephone numbers. Copies of the new board design were circulated for the group to review and comment on. There was a very positive response and one suggestion was that a picture of a local wildflower could be added e.g. a pyramid orchid.
- f) **Wooden signs:** The current `Sheep In / Sheep Out` signs on the gates will be retained with the revised telephone number attached.
- g) **Diverting the wooded path:** Christine proposed diverting the muddy path where trees have previously been removed, she suggested the work be undertaken by volunteers. Dan responded that rather than diverting the path it would be better to put flint onto the current path. As this is an access issue the matter would not need to be discussed with the Landport Bottom Management Committee but Dan will make the committee aware of the works. Dan will add this matter to a task programme. *(Action)*
- h) **Designated area for walkers:** Christine had received a proposal from Wilma Rowell, who suggested that a sign be installed 50 metres from the gate at the top of the field, to facilitate / segregate pedestrians and horses. Nina said that she had spoken to someone from the stables who expressed concern that dog walkers and people were walking along the gallops. Dan responded that when the new interpretation board is in place, hopefully people will be directed to the right access point. Ruth suggested that a polite sign be installed by the gate at the reservoir to further encourage people. A vote was taken and nine attendees were in favour of this. *(Action)*

Ranger's Report:

- Dan confirmed that an event to check and fix gates, will be undertaken by the **Volunteer Ranger Service**, they will meet at the Tumuli field, Tuesday 3rd March, 10 am.
- The need for **surveys** to be undertaken on Landport Bottom, will be discussed at the next Friends meeting. However, Dan gave the following details:
 - Butterflies – at the beginning of April (weather permitting).
 - Birds: the Corn Bunting, Meadow Pipit and Skylark – March.
 - Flora – May, June, July.
 - Wax Cap mushrooms.
 - Reptiles.

Volunteers will be required to carry out the surveys and Dan circulated a list for those interested to sign.

- There will be a **community orchard** of 6 apple, plum and pear trees planted on land adjacent to Hawkenbury Way and the Gallops. Dan confirmed that volunteers were needed to plant trees / site bird boxes. A further list was circulated for volunteers to sign.
- Dan proposed using any money that is left over in the **Landport Bottom budget**, to plant more wildflowers; attendees responded with a unanimous vote.
- Dan confirmed that Plumpton College are now breeding **Southdown sheep**, they are a variety bred for grassland grazing and will work very well on Landport Bottom.

Any other business:

It was requested that Dan bring a map of Landport Bottom to the next meeting, this would help everyone to identify the various locations including access gates. (*Action*)

Graham & Hilda Heap gave information about a new long distance walk: the Greenwich Meridian Trial. The first part of this passes through Landport Bottom. An information card giving details was distributed to everyone present.

The date of the next Friends of Landport Bottom Meeting will be on Monday 11th May, the following meeting on Monday 10th August will also be provisionally booked.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm.