

Minutes of Meeting

The Friends of Landport Bottom

Monday 11th May 2015 at 7.30 pm - St. Mary's Church, Highdown Road, Lewes.

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Ruth O'Keeffe; Councillors Susan & Roger Murray; Jaqueline & Brian Bodle; Christine Parks; Vicki Trenhaile, Jancis Ham, Jacquie Bishop.

Introduction:

There were 11 attendees at the meeting, which was chaired by Stephen Watson.

Minutes from previous meeting 09/02/15:

Clarification of the following points was requested:

Item d) - Sheep Escape: it was confirmed that if a farmer has the ownership or tenancy of a field, he also has the grazing rights.

Ranger's Report - Southdown Sheep: it was confirmed that Plumpton College has put a *selective* breeding programme in place.

Action points arising from the previous Minutes:

- **Dog waste bins:** The possibility of installing a further dog waste bin had been discussed at the previous meeting. However, Dan confirmed that as the land is about to be devolved to the Lewes Town Council, decisions regarding policy and management will be taken by them. He added that the management of the habitat will continue to be controlled by the Lewes District Council.
- **Woodland path maintenance:** To address the problem previously raised, Dan has dug a gully along the edge of the Tumuli field at Gate 2. Ruts in the path will be filled with a suitable material to prevent puddles forming.
- **Designated area for walkers:** A notice has been put up at the Gallops to discourage people from crossing onto the Gallops. Dan will also put a notice at Gate 18 indicating "Left horses, Right people".
- **Map of Landport Bottom:** As previously requested, Dan provided a map which gave the numbered locations of access gates. This was an excellent reference aid during the meeting discussions.

Matters arising:

- a) **Dogs worrying sheep:** if this is witnessed should Plumpton College or the Police be telephoned? Dan confirmed that if a dog is seen chasing sheep

the Police should be contacted immediately via 101 or 999 if there is an attack. One attendee said that a particular dog had regularly been seen chasing the sheep. Dan advised that a record should be kept of such incidents in order to gain evidence. He added that this information should be brought along to the next meeting, when it could be co-ordinated and passed on to the Police. He confirmed that the term `keeping dogs *under control*` can be interpreted in various ways and is not clear cut.

- b) **Repairs to fences / gates:** repairs had been carried out to wire fencing, with the result that sheep were prevented from jumping over. However, Dan was advised that Gate 4 near the Chalk Pit had been hung the wrong way round, giving the potential for sheep to escape. Also, Gate 15 did not appear to close properly. Dan will inspect both the gates. (*Action DF*)
- c) **Skylark notices:** Dan will be drafting a notice asking people to keep to the paths on the land and avoid the long grass. A survey of Skylarks reveals that they are in the process of nesting. The season runs from the end of March until August.
- d) **Horses galloping:** Dan confirmed that horses are not permitted to gallop on Landport Bottom, they are only allowed to `canter`. There was divided opinion amongst attendees as to whether `galloping` had actually been witnessed. Dan added that horses were allowed to pass between Gate 15, and through to Gates 16 and 17.
- e) **Shelter for sheep:** concern was expressed regarding the lack of shelter for the sheep. Historically there had been gorse and scrub growing on Landport Bottom, which afforded cover in both summer and winter; this has long since been removed. Dan confirmed that LDC has to be guided by Natural England who funds management work. LB is a large area which is hard to manage due to limited resources and the size of the fields.
- f) **Chalklife Festival:** it was asked whether there were plans to hold another festival in the future. Dan confirmed that as it had been very expensive to organise, he felt it highly unlikely this would occur.
- g) **Dog walking:** an increase in dog walking on Landport Bottom had been noted, with a possible impact on wildlife. Dan was of the opinion that the wildlife would find a way to adjust.
- h) **Small field adjacent to the Tumuli Field:** this is currently owned by Justin Harmer however it is possibly up for sale. The ownership of the associated gates and fencing in the area could not be confirmed.

- i) **Parking area on Nevill Road:** the ownership was questioned regarding the piece of land used to park vehicles near the entrance to the motor road. Dan confirmed that this area was owned by the LDC.

Ranger's Report:

- The scrub in the Tumuli field has been cleared back.
- The sheep have been moved and are now grazing in the Tumuli field. This is to preserve the Yellow Rattle which is now growing near Gates 12 & 13 in the pond field. It has also been a good year for Cowslips although the sheep had been eating those in the Tumuli field. However, there are still a lot growing within the fenced area around Jill's Pond.
- Bird surveys have commenced on Landport Bottom and two of these have revealed skylarks, corn buntings and meadow pipits
- Reptile surveys have also commenced and three of these have revealed the presence of slow worms, grass snakes and a lizard.
- Stephanie and Tim (who were not present at the meeting), both work at Kew Gardens. They will lead a flora survey with three groups of volunteers. This will involve specific target species surveyed on three dates, to be arranged in June, July and August. Other volunteers can add their names to the survey list.
- There are currently orchids growing near the Chalkpit; Dan has seen three Pyramid rosettes and can arrange to collect seed from the early purple orchids in the adjacent woodland to plant in Landport Bottom woodland.
- Six bat boxes have been installed in the woodland, and during a recent evening survey using bat detectors, a lot were seen and heard in the area, thought probably to be Pipistrelles. The survey continued on to Jill's Pond where small newts, and one great crested newt egg, were found.

Any other business:

The date of the next Friends of Landport Bottom Meeting has provisionally been booked for Monday 10th August.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm.