

Minutes of Meeting

The Friends of Landport Bottom

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

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Ruth O'Keeffe; Joanna Carter.

Introduction:

There were 19 attendees, including two representatives from the Borough Bonfire Society. The meeting was chaired by Councillor Susan Murray.

The meeting opened with Susan introducing Borough Bonfire Society: Chairman - Jason Winter, and member - Stuart Geer. They were invited to comment about the condition of the Tumuli field, following their society's firework celebrations on 5th November. It was felt that this matter should be dealt with first, in order that Jason and Stuart could then leave the meeting if they wished.

Damage to the Tumuli Field:

Susan outlined the scale of the damage caused to the field, and in particular the churning up of the ground by agricultural vehicles. She added that the grass would take a long time to recover. Stephen Watson had taken photographs and put these on Facebook. The damage this year was made worse because of rainfall softening the ground. There had been a need to increase the height and weight of the scaffolding erected in the field, due to safety requirements by the insurers. It was suggested that tracking could have been laid to avoid ground damage, but this was not thought to be an option. Jason Winter said that Borough would be careful to avoid a repetition of the damage in future.

At the moment Borough are working with Ranger, Dan Fagan to see how things can be put right; damaged areas have been fenced off to walkers, horse-riders, etc. but weather conditions are not good at the moment to repair the land. As the soil is chalk it should drain and restore fairly quickly. Dan assured those present that resulting work would not incur any cost to the tax payer. The question of re-seeding the damaged areas of ground was suggested however Dan confirmed that the grass should re-seed itself. He added that the use of agricultural machinery on the land this year had made the situation worse; the current damage covers an acre of track. Dan will post a notice to say that there will be a delay with the re-generation of the land. (*Action DF*)

Jackie Bishop said that there were still spent cartridges on the land; Borough agreed to put a message on Facebook to notify dog walkers, also it would be helpful for people to avoid the area whilst the clearing up was taking place. (*Action WBS*)

Susan thanked Jason and Stuart for attending the meeting and invited them to stay for the remainder if they so wished.

Action points arising from the previous Minutes – Dan Fagan

With regard to dog fouling, a more permanent sign was to be designed and brought along to the current meeting. *This matter is dealt with in Dan's report below.*

Ranger's Report:

- **Dog fouling:** Dan apologised for the delay in producing the signs to advise dog walkers regarding fouling. There were suggestions that the signs should be compatible with the width of the fence posts, and secured in such a way as to avoid damage through vandalism. (*Action DF*)
- **Pond clearance:** A day of clearance at Jill's Pond had taken place on 27th October. The working party cut and collected a significant amount of vegetation and rubbish from the dew pond, this included reed and Canadian pond weed. It is less than a year since pond maintenance was last carried out.

Matters arising:

- **Mowing of the Tumuli Field:** Concern was expressed regarding the woodland edge of the field. Dan said that the contractor had cut right to the edge, which gave a very rough appearance and also encroached on part of the reptile survey location. He confirmed that unfortunately the contractor had not been made aware of the requirement to avoid cutting close to the edge.
- **Field identification:** For the benefit of new attendees, Dan indicated the locations of the three fields which comprise Landport Bottom; these are shown on the map and identified as: the *Tumuli*, *Pond* and *Small* fields.
- **Adders:** The decreasing presence of Adders on Landport Bottom was noted. Dan confirmed that during this summer's reptile survey, no adders were recorded. However, he gave details of two sightings he had made on the Motor Road.
- **Pond field boundary fence:** Part of the west boundary fence had been moved back earlier in the year, thereby encroaching on an area which had previously been a habitat for Adders. The reason for this was queried. Dan said this had been done to uncover more of the chalk grassland.
- **Chalk Pit access path:** The responsibility for the access path towards the Chalk Pit was queried. Dan confirmed that this was shared between the council and the land owner of the Chalk Pit pub.

- **Scattering of ashes:** The practice of scattering ashes on Landport Bottom was queried. Dan confirmed that ownership permission is required and that the council would not grant this. He commented that the ashes would increase the fertilization of the ground.
- **Plastic flowers:** The presence of plastic flowers tied to a Hawthorn bush near Jill's Pond, had been noted. The originator of this action is not known.
- **Memorial seat:** The question of installing a memorial seat near the pond has been raised at a previous meeting. Susan confirmed that nothing can be decided yet because the legal ownership of Landport Bottom - transferring it 100% to the town council - has still to be finalised. Once this is done a new Management Committee can assess policies for the site.
- **Galloping horses:** Jackie Bishop said that she had recently approached two horse riders in the Tumuli Field regarding their possible intention to gallop on the land. This resulted in her being verbally abused by the riders who then galloped up then down the middle of the field. She had taken a photograph at the time and showed this to Dan. Jackie felt that these riders were not from the local stables. Discussion followed as to whether the horses were in fact cantering, a practice which is allowed, as opposed to galloping. Despite all the stables having their own *gallops*, apparently when these are wet riders tend to use Landport Bottom. Susan said that any problems should be reported to Dan and then if necessary a letter could be sent to the various stables.
- **Community orchard:** On Sunday 29th November from 10 am, the planting of 29 trees for a community orchard in Hawkenbury Way, will take place. Dan said that volunteers will be needed and any help would be much appreciated.
- **Pond Field - Gate 18:** The path near Gate 18 is getting very churned up by horses. The first 10 metres of the path has become particularly dangerous. Dan confirmed that it is difficult to prevent a horse from spreading across the path. However, he will consider putting up a temporary fence.

Any other business:

Future event: On Saturday 14th December 10.00 – 12.30 an event entitled 'Wild Winter' will be held at the Railway Land Nature Reserve, it will be led by L.D.C. Community Rangers. Further details available from Dan: 07917-243343.

Friends of Landport Bottom - meeting dates for 2016:

Monday 8th February 2016

Monday 9th May 2016
Monday 8th August 2016
Monday 14th November 2016

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm.