

**Minutes of Meeting**  
**The Friends of Landport Bottom**

**Monday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2016 at 7.30 pm St. Mary's Church, Highdown Road, Lewes**

**Apologies for absence:**

Dan Fagan; Jacqueline & Brian Bodle; Imogen Makepeace; Catherine Hounsell; Joanna Carter; Sarah Flynn.

**Introduction:**

There were 12 attendees, and the meeting was chaired by Councillor Susan Murray.

**Action points arising from the previous Minutes:**

**Damage to the Tumuli Field:** Borough Bonfire Society completed the clean-up of the field. However, the impact of the damage to the grass will not be evident until it starts to grow in the Spring.

**Ranger's Report:** *(Dan had emailed his report prior to the meeting).*

- **Interpretation boards:** these will be installed at the end of the month in positions approved by the planning department.
- **Dog fouling signs:** new permanent 'Please pick up after your dog' signs have been sourced for the gate posts.
- **Posts and gates:** a full survey will be taking place and issues fixed February-March
- **Chalk Pit pub:** has new owners. I am getting contacts for clearance of scrub this autumn and peregrine ringing in the summer.
- **Event:** there will be a 'Jewels of the Downs' guided walk on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> June 10.30-12.30. - looking at the butterflies and flowers that adorn our grassy hills.
- **Volunteers for Ecological Surveys this year:** hoping to carry out Birds, Butterflies and Reptiles surveys. Maybe also a Moth survey and Bioblitz for insects. I will circulate information to everyone who surveyed last year; any new volunteers should email me their details.
- **Other updates:** with support from local PSCO I shared concerns with Highways about horse riders using the narrow twittens. I have asked for permanent rights of way signage to be installed so that PSCO's can enforce it, and for Highways to look at installing barriers. This includes both the official footpath from the Old Motor Road to Highdown Road and the unofficial path between Hawkenbury Way and the top of the Gallops.

### **Matters arising:**

- **Horses using Highdown Road twitten:** Rob said that he and his wife had recently encountered a horse rider coming down the twitten. When Rob told him that this was a designated footpath, the rider had become arrogant and aggressive and continued along the path, stating that he was exercising his right of way. Jacky suggested that a high barrier could be installed along the twitten in an effort to deter horse riders using the path. The previous low level barriers mid-way along the twitten have been removed, allowing clear access to everyone.
- **Information signage for horse riders:** Rob has consulted with Dan regarding signage that had been erected a couple of months ago at the top corner of the pond field. This requested: "Horse riders please keep right (*or left*) to uphold a firm path for pedestrians". Rob said that some riders were continually ignoring the signs and blatantly passing to the wrong side, and riding right up to the wire fence. Rob had also emailed photographs of hoof prints and the general erosion of the path to Dan.

Dan had responded that he felt signage was not an option as it had not worked. He also believed that the main issue was the intensity of riding on the land. However, in a recent consultation on the matter a survey had shown that horses had limited impact on the condition of the site. Dan concluded that the intense rain this year had exacerbated the issue. He asked that his comments be shared at the meeting and welcomed a response from the group as to how the matter could be resolved.

A further comment had been passed on from someone not in attendance, who had observed horses galloping along the top of the pond field and throwing up clods of earth, which she had then attempted to replace. Kim commented that she felt the horses were being used as a scapegoat and that *everyone* should be aware of their footfall and useage of the land. The finger should not be pointed at the horses alone.

- **Repair of footpaths:** It was suggested that woodchip could be used to improve the conditions of paths leading from the top of Hawkenbury Way to Landport Bottom. Gaynor said she could organise a free delivery of woodchip from the council which could initially be piled up on the grass at the top of Hawkenbury Way. She had spoken with Dan who was in agreement with this. However it was noted that the use of woodchip on the Landport Bottom fields would be unsuitable as it would add nutrients to the soil of this ecologically sensitive site.

Gaynor said that someone whose property backs onto the path leading to Landport Bottom, wished to dispose of a Leylandii tree. She suggested that a group of volunteers could remove the branches from the tree and lay them on the path.

It was noted that unlike the land behind the houses backing onto Landport Bottom, this area was owned by Farmer Robinson. Susan pointed out that in this case the matter need to be sorted out with the land owner. (*Action Gaynor*)

Nina made the point that problems for one sector were not problems for another and that people needed to co-exist. Jackie remarked that some paths were too dangerous at the moment to walk along, and highlighted that Vikki had previously

fallen and broken her ankle. Jackie suggested that where a particular muddy path and gateway were impassable, a kissing gate could be installed. It was noted that the previous ranger Dan Ross, had not been in favour of this, however Susan felt this was something worth putting forward to the current ranger, Dan Fagan.

- **Cars using the footpath along the motor road:** Jackie had witness a silver 4x4 using the motor road. The vehicle was following horse riders and had cut across and onto the old motor road/footpath. When, challenged the driver had replied that this was `a right of way`. Apparently local PCSO's are aware of the problem. Nina suggested that the Friends of Landport Bottom wrote a letter to the owner/residents of the racecourse dwellings about this. Ruth made the point that the racecourse residents are not part of Lewes but come under the parish of St. Anne Without, which is covered by Kingston. Stephen suggested it would be helpful to get a photograph of any car (and its number plate), seen driving down the footpath. Susan will ask the Lewes Town Council about the status of the footpath.  
*(Action SM)*
- **A user survey:** It was discussed as to whether a user survey of Landport Bottom should be carried out. *A survey was previously conducted in 2011 with the results being summarised in a letter from former ranger Dan Ross, dated 8/2/12. The online survey comprised the views of 250 recipients, of which 37% believed that horse riding should be restricted on the land. (Refer to the Nevill Residents Association website for further details).*

With regard to another survey, Ruth suggested that volunteers could monitor use of the land.

#### **Any other business:**

- **Transition Town Lewes:** Susan said that extra vegetation would be planted along the field boundary of Landport Bottom, to reinforce the existing hedge line. This would have the effect of increasing biodiversity and help with flooding. The Woodland Trust will be providing free trees and Susan suggested that they send their planting ideas to the next Landport Bottom Management Meeting.
- **Next Friends of Landport Meeting:** will be Monday 9<sup>th</sup> May. Stephen cannot attend but Jackie will collect the key to the church and return it afterwards.

*The meeting ended at 8.45 pm.*