

## Minutes of Meeting

### The Friends of Landport Bottom

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

#### Apologies for absence:

Imogen Makepeace; Ruth O'Keeffe; Christine Cohen-Parks; Jacqueline Chubb.

#### Introduction:

There were 25 attendees, and the meeting was chaired by Councillor Susan Murray. As there were several new attendees, Susan invited all those present to introduce themselves.

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

**Horses using Highdown Road twitten:** there had been an action for Susan to contact Ruth O'Keeffe in this regard; Dan F. confirmed he would cover this matter in his Ranger's Report. There were no other outstanding actions and the Minutes were approved.

#### Issues and concerns:

Attendees were invited to share any issues or concerns relating to Landport Bottom.

- **Old Racecourse bridleway** (running from the top of the motor road towards Black Cap): Dan Jensen said that two weeks ago he had noticed that the boundary fence along the bridleway had been moved by the landowner, thereby reducing its width. Whilst this is not currently a problem access could be difficult come winter, due to muddy conditions. He had made enquiries of the Bridleways Dept. who confirmed the land was a paddock and therefore the owner's responsibility. Dan F. confirmed that he will get in touch with the National Park ranger. **(Action DF)**
- **Seats on Landport Bottom:** Cathy H. asked how many seats there were on Landport Bottom. Dan F. confirmed there was just the one installed by Jill's Pond. Cathy asked why this was, and suggested it would be good to install more seats, to cater in particular for disabled and elderly people who use the land. Dan confirmed that this was agricultural land therefore seats and benches were not a natural part of the countryside. Various suggestions were made regarding more natural forms of seating, e.g. logs. Roger Murray spoke about the seats installed on Seaford Head and asked how this arrangement compared with Landport Bottom. Seaford Head is also in the National Park so Dan will enquire as to whether there are rules on the installation of benches. Dan said that the use of log seating etc. would be considered and Susan M. confirmed this could be discussed at the next Landport Bottom Management Committee meeting. **(Action: DF / SM)**
- **Cyclists:** Brian B. asked how cyclists can be persuaded to use their bells. He said that twice whilst walking on Landport Bottom, he'd nearly been run over by cyclists??

## Ranger's Report:

- **Maintenance:** volunteers have been clearing areas of Landport Bottom. The Small Field will be cut by tractor tomorrow then the Tumuli Field cut by hand on Wednesday. The Pond Field will not be cut this year. The grass path behind the houses has recently been cut back.
- **Style / guillotine gate:** Dan is obtaining three quotes for work to replace the existing arrangement with a Kissing Gate. The whole fence in this location will also need to be re-tensioned. The proposed work would be carried out in September/October.
- **Habitat management:** Kew has been collecting seeds from *Rough hawk bit* and *Self-heal* plants.
- **Jill's Pond:** the pond will be cleaned by volunteers on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> October. Those wishing to get involved should meet there at 10 am.
- **Sheep:** following the cutting of the Small and Tumuli Fields, the sheep will be moved to the Main Field, where they will remain until the Autumn.
- **Pyramidal Orchid Survey:** a survey was carried out and 1,580 Pyramidal orchids were counted in the Pond Field. Dan passed round photos showing different types of orchid including the Fragrant variety.
- **Wildflowers:** there is a great display of *Wild carrot* on Landport Bottom this year. Also, *Round-headed rampion* (known as the *Pride of Sussex*), and *Wild thyme*, are both present.
- **Butterflies:** it has been a bad year for butterflies with not many species identified. However, there has been a possible sighting of a Green Hairstreak.
- **Horses accessing the twitten:** Dan read an email from the Highways Traffic Section dated 10/07/16. This related to a complaint instigated by Ruth O'Keeffe regarding horse riders using the twitten in Highdown Road. The email stated that the previous type of barrier/rail along the twitten, (which was removed some time ago), would not meet current standards, and that the re-location of new pedestrian guard rails might be implemented. Rob confirmed that he had received a very similar email response to his own complaint. Vikki said she had challenged a lady horse rider who was using the twitten, and received the response, "Where is the sign?" Vikki therefore asked that notices be displayed in the twitten.
- **Old maps:** on 18<sup>th</sup> June, Dan had conducted a walk around Landport Bottom, a number of those present at the meeting had attended. He then passed round maps dating from 1874 showing how the land had changed over time; he highlighted in particular various features of the habitat, scrub and grassland.

## Questions to Dan:

Susan invited those present to address any question they had to Dan.

- Jackie B. highlighted a lack of dog waste bins in relation to an increase in the number of dogs now using Landport Bottom. Several people commented that they'd seen bags of dog waste discarded on the ground. Dan confirmed that there is no council policy regarding dog bins, adding that there was an `any bin` policy regarding disposal of the waste. However, he will be looking at various options. **(Action DF)**
- Stephen asked why the Small Field was being cut so early. Dan said this was to remove the Ragwort. He confirmed that it is cheaper this time of year because the tractors are out working. There was also a remit to cut the Thistles and Brambles in the Small Field. Stephen commented that he had taken lovely photos of the habitat in a previous year immediately before it was cut down by tractor. Jancis asked whether it was possible for the Ragwort to be removed by hand, however Dan said it would need about 18 people to carry out such a task.
- Dan was asked why the paved footpath by the allotments had only been half cleared. He said he will talk with the East Sussex County Council regarding this. **(Action DF)**
- Cathy asked whether the maps circulated earlier of Landport Bottom, could be viewed at other times. Dan will look into this. **(Action DF)**
- Brian B. said that he had some very large scale ordnance survey maps of Landport Bottom, dated 1873. Various people expressed interest in seeing these.
- Nina M. asked the estimated cost of providing and installing a Kissing Gate to replace the Style/Guillotine gate. Dan confirmed that the gate would cost between £500-£700; with the overall cost of the work around £1,000. This money would come from the Landport Bottom budget. Nina asked how the budget would be prioritised and Dan said that livestock fencing would be the first priority, depending upon how much of the overall budget was spent on replacing the gate.
- Regarding the grass damaged following last year's Waterloo Bonfire celebrations, Dan confirmed that it was now in a good state of repair.

### **Wildlife surveys:**

Nina and Kim have been carrying out bird surveys on Landport Bottom.

- **Corn buntings** had been seen and heard this year on four occasions. They had also been sighted on adjoining farmland. This bird looks very similar to the Skylark and Meadow Pipit. (Nina showed a picture of the three similar birds).
- **Skylarks** had not been seen or heard in the last week; Nina said that they usually produce 2-3 broods a year. She had spoken with Michael Blencowe, Community Wildlife Officer, who confirmed that Skylarks *should* still be seen, and heard singing at this time. He felt that their lack of presence could be due to the current height of vegetation. Rob commented that the high quantity of rainfall might have affected their breeding. Nina had watched Skylarks flying onto the training gallops land where they could have been nesting. She felt that the previous Skylark notices alerting people to the presence of nesting birds had been helpful, and that dog walkers appeared to have taken heed of the warning.
- **Meadow Pipits**, a lot of these had been seen.

Jenny has been carrying out reptile surveys on Landport Bottom.

- **Slow worms** have been found under some of the 18 mats. However this year to date, no Adders or Grass snakes have been found. Richard confirmed seeing a large Adder at the top of the Pond Field.
- **Lizards**, during the last survey two tiny lizards were found under separate mat; they were the first seen this year.
- **Nests**, small dry-grass vole nests have been found under several mats over the past month, one contained an adult vole. During the last survey a particularly unusual nest constructed from mud and leaves was found beneath a mat. Dan expressed an interest in taking a look at the nest.

### Celebrations:

- **LDC Wild competition**, posters advertising this have been displayed around Landport Bottom inviting people, especially families and young children to email or tweet photos of particular wildlife sightings e.g. Adders.
- **Light Up Lewes**, this will be 3 x night-time events across Landport Bottom, the Railway Land, and Lewes Town; the provisional date is 11<sup>th</sup> October. The Landport Bottom event will be wildlife focussed. The following activities are planned across the three locations: Star gazing, led by the Dark Sky Committee; the promotion of glow worms by Sussex University; a light show; a bat survey; and a moth survey.

Dan commented that a very dark area with no light pollution can be accessed in the lower dip beyond the Tumuli Field. The Milky Way can be seen from this location. Stephen said that a meteor show was predicted shortly and this could be viewed from the area mentioned. Nina said that she had seen some very bright lights located at a dwelling on the old racecourse. As this could affect Light Up Lewes, Dan will investigate. (*Action DF*)

- **Any other suggested events**, Dan said that suggestions for other events would be welcomed. For example, the details of a walk could be posted on the Friends of Landport Bottom website. However, other more involved events would require permission
- **The Dark Ages Society**, Dan Jensen was asked when the society meets. He confirmed that they practice on Landport Bottom, Sundays fortnightly.

### Protection:

If anyone hears anything which could affect the land, they should pass the information on.

- Stephen passed round a map which showed a proposed building development near Houndean Rise. Rob said, opinion suggested that this particular land had been treated `with contempt`, therefore it needed to be `saved` through development! Susan said that this could be a potential case to keep an eye on.

**The Next Friends of Landport Bottom Meeting:** will be Monday 14<sup>th</sup> November.

*The meeting ended at 8.55 pm.*