

Minutes of Meeting The Friends of Landport Bottom

Monday 13th February 2017 at 7.30 pm St. Mary's Church, Highdown Road, Lewes

Apologies for absence:

Jackie Bishop; Imogen Makepeace; Thyone Outram.

There were 10 attendees: Councillors: Ruth O'Keeffe; Susan Murray & Roger Murray; Stephen Watson; Kym Murden; Nina Murden; Rob Elvery; Marieke Alkema; Vicki Trenhaile; Jenny Keen.

The meeting was chaired by Councillor Susan Murray, who invited all those present to introduce themselves.

Action points arising from the previous Minutes:

Dog bins: Jackie Bishop was going to write to the Priory ward Town Councillor, asking them to challenge the Lewes District Council policy regarding dog waste bins. It could not be confirmed whether this had been actioned. However, Ruth O'Keeffe confirmed that no additional bins could be installed on Landport Bottom, as per the waste collection policy. Vicki highlighted the presence of two dog bins on the Nevill Recreation ground, an area little used by dog walkers. She suggested that one of these might be re-located on LB. Ruth confirmed that this could be done.

Bonfire clear-up: all debris has now been cleared from the bonfire site. The matter of using volunteers to assist Borough in the future clear-up process had been raised at the last meeting. However, whilst Vicki felt the responsibility was that of the Borough Society, Kym said that she still supported the idea of volunteers working alongside the Borough team, as this would reduce the time taken to complete the task. Susan felt it would be a good idea to invite Borough representatives along to the Friends' meeting in August, when the matter could be discussed. (**Action SW**)

At the previous meeting the subject of fireworks being discharged at Halloween together with incidents of vandalism, had been raised. Susan will speak with the Community Safety Officer at Lewes District Council concerning this. (**Action SM**)

Ploughing: Rod noted that Farmer Harmer had ploughed the reservoir field right up to the boundary fence. A similar problem had been raised at the last Friends' meeting. Ruth confirmed that she had spoken with Chloe Rowling, Rights of Way officer who said that it was a difficult situation, but that she would get back to her. Ruth confirmed that she had not received a response as yet. (**Action RO**)

Vandalism of horse barriers: Rod highlighted the ongoing problem with the horse barriers. Three days after they had been replaced, sawn cuts appeared in the wood which Rod then repaired with metal brackets. However, within 48 hours the brackets had also been sawn through. Scaffold poles have since been attached to the barriers – (refer to the Ranger's Report below). It is believed that a local resident is responsible for the vandalism of the barriers, and that the same person is also responsible for blocking the bridleways near to the stables with brambles. Ruth said that any such incident should be noted and reported to Cloe Rowling.

Bridleway diversion: Susan confirmed that she had spoken with the Town Clerk and had agreed with him that the best body to respond to the consultation would be the town council's planning committee. The proposers of the diversion were invited to attend its meeting, but did not even respond. However the town council planning committee agreed to object strongly to the proposal. Ruth will email ESCC. **(Action RO)**

Ranger's Report:

Following the resignation of Community Ranger, Dan Fagan, the post has been filled by former Assistant Community Ranger, Thyone Outram, She had contracted Stephen by email confirming her new appointment, and notifying her current heavy work-load. She confirmed that when a new Assistant Ranger has been recruited she will definitely be in a position to attend the Friends' meetings.

She also wished to report the following items:

- **The chicane (horse barrier):** that was previously vandalised, has had the rails replaced in metal.
- **Local lepidopterist, Steve Teale:** has agreed to help with a moth night at Landport Bottom, probably in July. This should be more successful than the Lewes Lights evening in October, as it will be warmer and the moths will be flying!
- **Plumpton:** Emma, the shepherd, has moved to her own farm and has been replaced by George. However, the agreement between LDC and Plumpton College remains the same.
- **Pond Survey:** Thyone hopes to carry out another survey at Jill's Pond in the spring; she will keep us informed.

Contact details: Thyone.Outram@lewes.gov.uk

Issues and concerns:

Attendees were invited to share and communicate information concerning the area of Landport Bottom.

- **Grass cutting:** Roger referred to a point raised last meeting regarding the cutting of the grass/wildflowers in the Small and Tumuli fields. At the time Dan Fagan was trying to find a farmer to cut and clear the grass for use as silage. Roger has since spoken with John Robinson, a farmer from Iford in this regard. It was noted such an intervention could result in a saving of over £3,000.
- **Guillotine gate 14:** Stephen noted that the gate was going to be replaced with a Kissing Gate – Dan F. had been dealing with this previously. Stephen will email Thyone regarding this. **(Action SW)**

- **Maintenance of other gates:** It was noted that various gates on Landport Bottom need repairing, and that all gates need to be checked. This was something which Dan F. had previously been dealing with. Ruth suggested that the Friends send a list of outstanding actions to Thyone, for her information.
- **Skylark notices:** Nina raised the subject of nesting Skylarks. She noted that in another month or so she would like to display warning notices on gates. This will be highlighted on the previously mentioned list of outstanding actions.

Wildlife updates:

- Nina confirmed that Ravens have been seen in the Chalkpit. It was also noted that Skylarks were in evidence elsewhere, and Yellow Hammers too.
- Stephen reported seeing a Goldeneye lichen on a Hawthorn tree in the small field.

Celebrations:

- Kym is leading a Herb & Story Walk around Landport Bottom, on Saturday 25th March at 2 pm. She distributed information leaflets to those present at the meeting.
- It was noted that the Jewel of the Downs walk, organised by Dan F. last year, had been very popular, and it was asked whether this could be repeated.
- Steve Teale, local lepidopterist will help with a moth survey, probably in July (refer to Ranger's Report above).

Protection:

- Stephen spoke about the policy in Sheffield of felling trees, and suggested it was important for people to be vigilant in case a similar operation was authorised in Lewes.

The Next two Friends of Landport Bottom Meetings: will be Monday 8th May and Monday 14th August 2017.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm.

Landport Bottom - list of outstanding actions

- **Guillotine gate 14:** Dan F. had previously agreed that this could be replaced by a Kissing Gate. The matter is still outstanding.
- **Maintenance of other gates:** various gates on Landport Bottom need repairing, and all gates need to be checked. This was something which Dan F. had previously been dealing with.
- **Skylark notices:** in another month or so Nina Murden will begin her Skylark survey and she would like to display warning notices on gates, alerting the public to the presence of nesting birds.
- **Grass cutting:** Dan F. had previously tried to find a farmer to cut and clear the grass/wildflowers in the Small and Tumuli fields, for use as silage. Councillor Roger Murray has since spoken with John Robinson, a farmer from Iford in this regard. It has been noted that such an intervention could result in a saving of over £3,000.
- **Borough Bonfire Society:** Dan F. has previously experienced problems with regard to the clearing of firework debris from the Landport Bottom site, following bonfire celebrations. Representatives from Borough will be invited to attend the Friends' meeting in August to discuss the clear up process. It would be very useful if Thyone could attend in her role as Community Ranger.
- **Jewel of the Downs walk:** Dan F. organised a wonderful event last summer which proved very popular. The Friends were interested to know whether something similar could be repeated again this year.