

Minutes of Meeting The Friends of Landport Bottom

Monday 8th May 2017 at 7.30 pm St. Mary's Church, Highdown Road,
Lewes

Apologies for absence:

Jenny Keen, Victoria Trenhaile, Rob Elvery, Ruth O'Keeffe, Imogen Makepiece, Christine Cohen Park.

There were 11 attendees: Councillors: Susan Murray & Roger Murray; Rangers: Thyone Outram and Jasmine Owen; Stephen Watson; Brian Courage, Sarah Rideout, Kym Murden; Nina Murden; Paul Deane, Deborah Deane, Jackie Bishop.

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

Action points arising from the previous Minutes:

Bonfire clear-up: Stephen Watson has contacted Lewes Borough Bonfire Society to invite them to attend the August meeting of the Friends, but has not had a reply. Alternative communications channels will be sought if possible. **(Action SW)**

Fireworks/vandalism at Halloween: Susan Murray has mentioned the subject of fireworks being discharged at Halloween together with incidents of vandalism at a Joint Action Group meeting of Lewes Town Council. Paul Dean said that a fence had been smashed and a neighbour had had a stone thrown through a window at Halloween. Kim Murden said that the School Liaison PC, WPC Ross, should be contacted. Jackie Bishop mentioned that broken glass had been left near Gate 14 (Pond Field near allotments). Kim Murden said this was often a problem by the dewpond. **(Action NM)**

Horse Barriers: following persistent vandalism of the wooden horse barriers on the lane beside the Pond Field, these had been replaced with metal bars and no further vandalism had taken place, so Thyone Outram said they will be left as they are for the time being.

Bridleway diversion: Jackie Bishop had complained to Police about the Racecourse landowner setting fire to hedgerows beyond the gallops where diggers are being used. It appears that the bridleway is being diverted without planning permission to keep walkers out and free up land to build on it. The Police said they could not take action unless a nest was actually seen being destroyed. Thyone Outram said that a dead snake that had been run over, for example, could be evidence of law breaking. Nina Murden had contacted Councillor Ruth O'Keeffe who contacted Chloe Rowling, the Rights of Way Officer at ESCC. The County Archeologist had been informed as a site of interest was being dug up.

Gate 14 replacement: the old "lifting gate" to the Pond Field near the allotments has been replaced with a kissing gate. Jackie Bishop asked if gravel could be placed to prevent the chalk in the gate getting muddy and slippery in wet weather. Paul Dean pointed out that there was not a Sheep/No Sheep sign. **(Action TO)**

Ranger's Report:

The Community Ranger Thyone Outram introduced her new Assistant Ranger Jasmine Owen and reported the following items:

- The grass path at the bottom of the Pond Field will continue to be strimmed three times per year. In addition, vegetation overhanging the Firle Crescent pavement will be strimmed.
- Various gate posts have been replaced. All posts have been surveyed by volunteers. Wobbly posts have been marked an orange spots or lines (depending on severity), however some volunteers may have over-marked posts with multiple lines. These posts will be replaced in the autumn – the ground is now too hard.
- Sheep have been taken off all fields until mid-July when there may be a partial hay-cut depending on how fields grow.
- The planned Moth Night has been cancelled as Steve Teale who was to lead it could not commit to be available, A butterfly walk might be arranged instead.
- A night survey of Jill's Pond will be carried out on Tuesday May 30th starting at dusk. Details to be distributed via the Friends of Landport Bottom mailing list.

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

Issues and concerns:

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

- Paul Dean asked what is the long term plan with regard to hawthorn control. Thyone Outram agreed that hawthorn was a problem particularly in the pond field where there was more than in the past. Some could be pulled up by volunteers using a special tool, some might be left.
- Stephen Watson pointed out that a hay cut in July would remove flowers such as wild carrot at the height of the flowering season when the field would likely be full of butterflies. Thyone Outram replied that although it might seem heartbreaking at the time, it was the right thing to do in order to remove nutrients. The wild carrot stems were too thick and hard for sheep to eat and hay had to be cut when it was in full growth. Only part of the field would be cut.
- Jackie Bishop brought up the issue of height barriers in the twitten to Highdown Road, to deter horses. These had been requested in the past, but budget had not been available. A broken sign at one end of the twitten had been replaced. Jackie will again speak to Ruth O'Keeffe about the height barriers (**Action JB**)
- Kim Murden said there were more dogs on Landport Bottom than previously and more professional dog walkers. Dogs could disturb skylarks nesting in the pond field. Nina Murden had put up notices asking dog walkers to stick to paths during the nesting season. Thyone Outram said it was unlikely that skylarks would nest in the Tumuli Field which had shorter grass, and so notices should not be displayed

there or they might detract from the force of notices on the Pond Field. Nina Murden said that a skylark survey had showed skylarks singing over the Tumuli Field. Better education of dog walkers was needed. Stephen Watson asked if she would consider writing an article for the local press on the subject. Thyone offered to duplicate Nina Murden's posters for her (**Action NM/TO**)

- The possibility of installing another bench was raised. Susan Murray said this would be deferred until Lewes Town Council had full ownership of the site (currently co-owned with Lewes District Council). It was not known when the transfer might be completed.

Wildlife updates:

- Stephen Watson said that wild flowers such as milkwort were now appearing in the Tumuli field, and he had seen and photographed a red kite over Landport Bottom.
- Nina confirmed that Ravens and Peregrines have been seen.
- Ash dieback was discussed. Tyone Outram said that if not replanted, the woods will eventually become mainly sycamore as most of the ash trees will probably be lost.

The Next two Friends of Landport Bottom Meetings: will be Monday 14th August and Monday 13th November\ 2017.

The meeting ended at 8.45pm.

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.