

## Minutes of Meeting

### The Friends of Landport Bottom

Monday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2017 at 7.30 pm St. Mary's Church, Highdown Road, Lewes.

#### **Apologies for absence:**

Councillors: Susan Murray & Roger Murray: Thyone Outram; B & J Bodle, Gill Chambers, Brian Courage.

#### **Attendees:**

There were 10 attendees: Councillor: Ruth O'Keeffe; Stephen Watson; Jackie Bishop; Kim Dawson; David Marsh; Sarah Neels; Rob Elvery;; Vicki Trenhaile; Imogen Makepeace Jenny Keen.

The meeting was chaired by Councillor Ruth O'Keeffe, who invited all those present to introduce themselves.

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

1. **Bonfire clear-up:** at the previous meeting of the 14<sup>th</sup> August, it had been agreed that the Friends could assist Borough Bonfire Society with the clear-up process. Post bonfire celebrations, Stephen Watson and Jenny Keen attended the site to give assistance.

Deputy Ranger - Kim Dawson had since inspected the overall site, where in the Tumuli field she found: plastic, cardboard and wire debris. As a result she was unable to sign-off the site; until the clear-up work is complete.

2. **Fireworks/vandalism at Halloween:** following the problem of fireworks being discharged at Halloween and also incidents of vandalism, Nina Murden was going to contact the School Liaison PC, WPC Ross. Nina was not present at the meeting therefore the action is still outstanding? (**Action: NM**) *Note: this action has been carried over from the previous meeting.*
3. **Gate 14 Replacement: Sheep / No Sheep sign:** damage to the wooden sheep sign on Gate 14, has now kindly been repaired by Friends' volunteer Brian Courage.
4. **Definitive map showing ownership of the bottom of the motor road:** David Marsh produced a copy of the land title map, which confirmed that the whole of the motor road up to the junction with Nevill Road is in the ownership of the Racecourse Management Committee. The area beside the Nevill Road outside the junction with the Motor Road, which often has cars parked on it, is thought to be Highway Land, which would make it the responsibility of East Sussex County Council.
5. **Ragwort at the edge of the Pond Field:** the ragwort has been hand pulled. (*Refer also to the Ranger's Report*).

6. **Letter to the County Highways Department re: signs in the twitten:** several Friends confirmed that the signs notifying non-access to the twitten, are now in place at the top and bottom of the footpath.
7. **Re-iterate twitten problem to the racecourse riders:** David Marsh confirmed that he had written to all the local stables informing them that the twitten should not be used by horse riders. Rob Elvery reported that the situation had improved. David suggested that if the problem arises again, photographs should be taken and brought to the next meeting, when he would try to identify the people involved. Jackie Bishop highlighted the problem of horse riders using the footpath which runs at the side of the Wallands School. She mentioned a piebald/grey horse ridden by a male, and accompanied by two young female riders. David said that from the description it was unlikely that this was a race-horse. Ruth O’Keeffe suggested that where people felt safe to take them, photos could be taken before the next Friends meeting as David felt this might make it possible to identify riders who were ignoring the notices.
8. **Contact Town Clerk re: footpath repair/access issues:** regarding the proposal to resurface the footpath from the junction with Nevill Road up to the access to the allotments, Ruth has contacted East Sussex Highways to ask for an assessment of the cost for this work and hopes to meet the Highways Steward on site to have the area measured up for costings. **(Action: RO)** David Marsh said that the Racecourse Management Committee have had problems trying to maintain the vegetation along the path, due to the overhang of growth from the allotments. He added that if the central reservation of vegetation is reduced this will increase the width of the path. Imogen Makepeace felt that this would improve access to the allotments for disabled people. It was agreed RO would ask for costings for a slightly wider area than the present path.

---

### **Ranger’s Report:**

Habitat Management:

*Grazing:*

- Sheep were kept off all fields from May to August. They returned to the Tumuli field at the end of July, and then moved to the pond field in the Autumn.

There is the possibility that the shepherd will experiment with bringing Southdown ewes and lambs to LB in the spring. However, this will require a lot of advance warning for dog walkers, who may need to keep dogs on the lead where lambs are in the field. It may also be necessary to have some years when grazing occurs in the summer.

*Cutting:*

- Cut and collect (tractor cuts) were completed in October 2017, in areas of rank grassland growth; this was in order to help maintain suitability for chalk species.
- Ragwort in the pond field and other areas was pulled by hand, including council verges near the access road.

- The Tumuli field was cut by hand in the Autumn.

*Pond vegetation clearance and hawthorn:*

- The pond clearance was completed at the end of September by the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service. A male great crested newt and a female adder were recorded during the session. Non-native waterweed was present in the pond.
- Small hawthorn trees were cleared from the pond field using tree poppers.

*Other:*

- Badger activity was recorded on site and a camera trap installed on 1<sup>st</sup> November. Unfortunately this was stolen by the 3<sup>rd</sup> November. There are no more cameras available to replace the loss.
- Nevill bonfire was held on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> October instead of the previous day, this was due to Storm Bryan. Borough bonfire occurred on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> November, as planned. At the time of the meeting the site sign-off was still in progress. Thanks were passed to the Friends who helped the bonfire societies with the clear-up process.
- Lewes District Council and Eastbourne Borough Council are moving to shared services across the officer administration, which will result in the loss of a 150 jobs. During this period of transformation many of the posts will have changes to their duties and titles. Thyone Outram and Kim Dawson will have to reapply for their positions.

**Issues arising from Landport Bottom Management Committee meeting:**

**Planting hazel bushes:** Stephen Watson asked about the planting of hazel bushes along the path at the top of the Tumuli field. Kim Dawson confirmed that there was no funding available for this. Ruth O’Keeffe said that a costing for planting the trees should be obtained from the Lewes District Council; Kim will email Ruth with this information.

**(Action: KD)** Sarah Neel will see whether any of the hazels growing on the Wallands School land are ‘spare’, and could be used. **(Action: SN)** Rob Elvery said that it would be quite cheap to purchase bare rooted hazel cuttings. Ruth suggested that the Friends apply for a grant from the Lewes Town Council to purchase hazels; following receipt of the costing from Kim, she will complete the necessary form. **(Action: RO)**

**Issue and concerns:**

**An additional dog waste bin:** Jackie Bishop asked about the installation of an extra dog waste bin on Landport Bottom. She highlighted irresponsible dog owners who leave their plastic bags containing waste in situ. Ruth O’Keeffe said that an additional bin could not be provided but that one might be re-located from elsewhere. Vikki Trenhaile suggested that one of the two bins on Nevill Green could be removed/repositioned. Ruth asked Ranger Kim Dawson to look into the location of the two bins and decide which one should be moved. **(Action: KD)**

**Responsible users:** Imogen Makepeace said that resident Gaynor Hartnell had expressed the idea for a `responsible user agreement` for Landport Bottom. This will be discussed at a future residents' meeting and Imogen will report back to the Friends group on the outcome. **(Action: IM)** Rob Elvery said that in 2011 former ranger Dan Ross had carried out a study relating to the various users of Landport Bottom.

**Activity in the Chalk Pit:** Jackie Bishop had noticed a tent pitched in the Chalk Pit and suggested that someone might be living `rough`.

Rob Elvery highlighted the ongoing problem of litter in the area, possibly left by teenagers. Jackie had noticed that parts of the ground had been dug out, possibly by BMX cyclists. Ruth said that the land is not part of Landport Bottom; the area is in the ownership of the Curry Cottage, so problems should be taken up with them.

Imogen Makepeace mentioned the Woodkids project which is taking place on a strip of land near the Chalk Pit. The next session was scheduled for Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> November.

**Wildlife updates:**

As a standing item the Friends of Landport Bottom would like to be kept informed of any reptile survey opportunities.

**Celebrations:**

Jackie Bishop raised the subject of installing a commemorative bench in the Tumuli field. She suggested a bench made from gabions with a plank of wood for seating.

**Protection:**

No issues.

**Any other business:**

None.

**The next Friends of Landport Bottom meeting:** will be held on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

*The meeting ended at 9.05 pm.*

