

Friends of Landport Bottom Meeting
Monday 11th March 2019, St Mary's Church Hall, Highdown Road

Present: Stephen Watson, Thyon Outram, David Marsh, Patrick Euart, Sarah Flynn, Jancis Ham, Rob Elvery, Vicki Trenhaile

Apologies: Jenny Keen, Joanna Carter, Susan and Roger Murray, Brian Courage, Ruth O'Keeffe, Imogen Makepiece.

1. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

2. Action points and issues from last meeting.

- Frequency of meetings: these have now been changed from every 3 to every 4 months. The next two meetings will be Monday 8th July and Monday 11th November.
- Bonfire site: Imogen Makepiece was not present to report on whether she had spoken to Jason Winter of the LBBS about whether the pyrotechnic techniques used this year were different to previous years.
- Spreading of woodchips on path from Hawkenbury Way to Landport Bottom Gate 18: Imogen was not present to report on whether she had discovered from Southern Water who owned the land between Landport Bottom Gate 18 and Hawkenbury Way.
- Monday Footpath Group: Thyone Outram was to report to Christine Cohen Park on behalf of the Monday Footpath Group re access for stile replacement. Following discussion at the meeting it was revealed that the stile was between Mr Harmer's field (with the reservoir) and land in private ownership and therefore not a matter for Landport Bottom.

3. Tree removal and digger work by Motor Roads.

Patrick Euart, a director of the Lewes Racecourse Company explained that there were 3 reasons for this work being done:

1. Safety on the road. There was trouble with visibility on the bend which could lead to accidents.
2. The road becomes very icy in cold weather because the scrub casts a shadow that prevents it melting and makes it very difficult to use.
3. To reduce the cost of maintenance.

Stephen Watson suggested that gritting would be effective and that the approach taken by the Racecourse Company was over the top.

Thyone Outram said that managing Landport Bottom was all about wildlife, preserving the habitat of birds, reptiles and insects that live there and that the work could have been done in a more sensitive way, removing the scrub gradually and thus allowing the wildlife to move away. The other members of the meeting were in agreement and supportive of Thyone's view.

David Marsh said that the cleared areas are going to be resown and Thyone asked that a mix suitable for chalk grassland be used.

Thyone also raised the matter of work being done on the racecourse bridleway. She was concerned for the great crested newts who travel quite a way from the pond. There was no notice given about the work. David Marsh said that since there were vehicles from the work on the Motor road close by it was decided to level the path.

The problem is the manner in which things are done with no communication which would ease matters. Obviously the landowner can carry out works on his land but a bit of communication would help to avoid bad feelings.

4. Ranger's report

- **Grazing.** There have been higher numbers of sheep at Landport Bottom (mostly pregnant ewes) over the winter than in recent years -200 – 250. Most have now been taken to Plumpton College for lambing. There were sheep in both large fields for 3 weeks in January – necessary to keep pressure in rank grass while not allowing different breeds with different rams to mix. Zoe the shepherd has left the college recently but a new shepherd, Charlotte is in place.
- **Maintenance.** General maintenance work is ongoing dealing with gates and fencing. Cutting back of the bridleway in the Tumuli field has been completed with the help of South Downs Volunteer Rangers – access now right along the official route. The sheep sign at the gate near the new dog bin has been vandalised - a new sign has been ordered which will take at least six weeks.
- **Sewage.** There was a sewage leak from the pipeline that runs across Landport Bottom. The area was orange fenced and Souther Water unblocked the pipe. Orange fencing will remain until southern Water return to clean the sewage remains – when the sewage matter has dried up.
- **Pond and Great Crested Newt Habitat.** The fence around the pond will be moved in April to allow more rough ground inside the pond fence and a hibernaculum created for the newts. The bench will be left in position, the sign will be moved and the area close to the pond will remain. Volunteer work parties are scheduled for Tuesday 7th and Wednesday 8th May to do this.
- **Upcoming nature events.**
Monday 8th April “Landport Bottom After Dark” - an evening walk with newt survey after dark – bring a torch to get back.
Pollinators and chalk grassland flowers walk in early/mid July.

5. Appointment of group representative on Landport Bottom Management Committee (Lewes Town Council).

Ruth O’Keeffe had suggested there should be a representative of the Friends of Landport Bottom on the Landport Bottom Management Committee. Stephen Watson volunteered to do this.

No further matters were raised for discussion and the meeting ended.

Dates of next meetings: July 8th, November 11th .