

Friends of Landport Bottom Minutes  
St Mary's Church Hall, Highdown Road  
Monday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2019 7.30 pm

**Present:** Stephen Watson, Thyone Outram, Rob Elvery, David Marsh, Jenny Keen, Sarah Flynn, Vicki Trenhaile

**Apologies:** Brian and Jackie Bodle, Ruth O'Keeffe, Roger Murray, Joanna Carter, Imogen Makepiece

### **1. Minutes from the last meeting**

David Marsh asked that it be made clear that the Racecourse Management Committee who own the Motor Road and carried out the clearance at the top of it were a separate entity from those responsible for the work on the racecourse Bridleway. The minutes were agreed and signed.

### **2. Action points and issues from last meeting**

The issues regarding the Bonfire site and the spreading of woodchips on the path from Hawkenbury Way carried over from a previous meeting could not be discussed as Imogen Makepeace who is looking into them, was not present.

### **3. Ranger's report and discussion**

Thyone Outram presented the Ranger's Report.

#### **Grazing**

- Sheep have been kept in the Pond field for the last month to try and avoid the situation of the last few years where under-grazing has allowed some of the rougher plants to begin to build up a thatch. This bad for the delicate chalk grassland plants. There had been concern that the sheep are eating the flowers. The sheep prefer the fresh grasses and have done a good job of keeping down some of the grasses that have been outcompeting some of the chalk flowers. However they have eaten some of the flowers, notably rest harrow and kidney vetch. However the leaves and bulk of the plant remain. All the plants where concern has been expressed, are perennial. They will come back and flower again in future years. Thyone had found no evidence at all that they were eating the pyramidal orchids, however given that very few have flowered in the pond field, this does seem possible.
- It is hoped that we will be able to get the sheep to graze the pond field much more extensively over the course of the year and so relax this regime next year.
- The small field, and parts of the other fields will be cut and collected from September.

## **Maintenance**

- South Downs Volunteer Rangers have spent a number of days in the spring replacing fence posts – other fence and gate maintenance by the Town Ranger and contractors is ongoing.

## **Pond and Great Crested Newt Habitat**

- Fencing around the pond was not moved, although this had been planned to increase the great crested newt habitat. The fence moving needing planning permission and there was no time for the ranger to arrange this. It is hoped this work may still take place in the future.

## **Nature events**

- **Landport Bottom after dark** Spring walk saw a number of bats hunting over the land especially along the woodland edge in the tumuli field. Two great crested newts and three smooth newts were seen at the pond.
- **Beauties of Landport Bottom** walk was well attended with around 20 people attending looking especially at the chalk grassland flowers at Landport Bottom such as Fairy Flax, wild basil, thyme and marjoram, squiancywort and pyramidal orchids.

## **4. Issues and Concerns**

**The Bridleway:** the proposal for bridleway changes at Lewes Racecourse was discussed. The feeling was that provided there was a path which every one could use people did not mind which of the three routes was used. The made up path had positive benefits in that the horses tended to use it and it kept them off the pond field where in bad weather they churned up the ground. It also provided access for people with mobility issues.

**Reptile Survey.** Jenny Keen volunteered to carry out a reptile survey next year and Thyone Outram offered to help. Refugia mats would be put down in February. People who took part in the previous survey would probably be happy to volunteer to take part.

**Larks.** The impression is that there are many more this year not only in the pond field but also in the tumuli field and the small field.

**Plant Survey.** Steph Miles, a Nevill resident who works at the Wakehurst Seed Bank is going to carry out a survey of plants on Landport Bottom.

**Landport Management Committee** is not meeting at the moment.

**Next Meeting:** Monday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2019