

Meeting of Friends of Landport Bottom
Monday 11th November 2019 – 7.30 pm
St. Mary's Church Hall, Highdown Road, Lewes.

Present: Stephen Watson; Thyrone Outram; Sarah Flynn; David Marsh;
Vicki Trenhaile; Rob Elvery; Rob Handy; Jenny Keen.

Apologies: Ruth O'Keeffe, Brian & Jacqueline Bodle; Valerie Raynor

1. Minutes from the last meeting:

The Minutes were agreed.

2. Action points from previous meeting:

The issues regarding:

- i. The Borough Bonfire site /pyrotechnic technique for 2018
- ii. Spreading of woodchips on the path from Hawkenbury Way to LB Gate 18;
and contact with Southern Water re: land ownership.

Both these actions have been carried over previously, but due to the time lapse it was decided that this would not be done again.

3. Additional Issues:

I. The steps, handrail and banks at the Firle Crescent entrance to Landport Bottom, are rather neglected. Vicki T. said that she uses the steps regularly, and agreed that they were uneven and slippery, also that the handrail is wobbly. Thyone O. confirmed that the necessary work to level the steps and secure the handrail will be undertaken by the District Council.

ii. Vicki reported that there is a fallen tree on the path which leads from the gate in the tumuli field to the Chalk Pit

iii. The bench by Jill's Pond has been replaced by the Town Council.

iv. Landport Management Committee has not been meeting recently, but a meeting has been schedule for 4 December, 7p.m in the Council Chamber. Hopefully there will be sufficient people present to elect a chairman.

4. Ranger's report and discussion: Thyone Outram presented the report.

Grazing

- Sheep have grazed both the pond field and the tumuli field in the late summer and autumn. We will continue to graze both these fields through the winter with whatever sheep can be brought in by Plumpton college. There are certain restrictions around tuppings and the shepherd judges whether there is enough grass for the pregnant ewes at various stages of pregnancy. They cannot be supplementary fed at Landport Bottom because it would nitrify the chalk grassland.

- A lot of ragwort was hand-pulled in the small field in August but a second crop came through which was tractor cut before seeding.
- The small field, and most of the tumuli field were cut and collected in September.
- Pregnant sheep were removed for bonfire but 50 ewes remain on the pond field and will be joined by more stock after Neville Juvenile bonfire celebrations.

Maintenance

- South Downs Volunteer Rangers have cleared some of the vegetation around the pond. The pond dried up extensively this summer so there was very little of the Canadian Pond weed which usually requires a good deal of work each year to clear.
- Two volunteer groups pulled cotoneaster and hawthorn in the pond field. This is less of a problem in the other fields as they are mowed sometimes. Some scrub remains in the field.

Ash Dieback

- Extensive work needs to be done on the slope above the A275 this winter. This will involve road closures. Anything that doesn't need to be cut will be left. Trees will also be felled along Hill Road and along the path leading to the steps down toward Landport. There are currently no plans for felling to take place in the area directly adjoining Landport Bottom except where individual trees are considered unsafe for the public. The work is planned to commence at the end of January.

Bonfire

- Borough bonfire celebrations took place with a good deal of rain in the preceding week. They boarded some areas where vehicles needed to drive on site and used corrugated metal under some of the tab and firework areas with some success, but there are still some burnt areas as there are every year.
- Neville Juvenile will be having their celebrations on Saturday 16th November.

5. Issues and concerns:

Sheep:

David M. expressed concern regarding the welfare of the sheep in the pond field. He said that when the fireworks were set off during the Bonfire celebrations, the sheep

were terrified and started charging around the field, before running up the hill. He had then lost sight of them. Thyone O. said that in previous years the sheep had been removed prior to the celebrations, and that this could be considered again. She will report David's concern to the shepherd and leave it to them to decide on future action.

Ash die-back:

Vicki T. said that the public should be warned about all the work that will take place in the area. Rob H. commented that there will be replanting where trees have been felled. He said that Dan Wynn, the council tree specialist, would like to come and speak to the Friends and the Nevill Residents' Group. He wants to explain that the work needs to be carried out for reasons of safety so as not to put the community at risk.

Grazing – orchids:

Stephen W. asked if the sheep will be grazing in the south end of the pond field where orchids grow and flower late June, early July. Thyone O. confirmed that there will not be sheep in the pond field at that time of the year.

Galloping horses:

Rob E. said that he had recently been walking up from the Firle Crescent gate with two dogs, when he witnessed three horses at full gallop on Landport Bottom. He had to move quickly to avoid the danger. Initially the young riders were abusive, but later Rob had the chance to tell them that horses must not gallop on the land; he was not challenged further. He felt that the horses may have come from the Hamsey Riding School. Stephen W. said that in such situations and if possible, a photo should be taken to identify the riders.

Thyone O. added that in 2012 there was a consultation regarding the behaviour of horses on Landport Bottom. At a Landport Management Committee meeting it had been decided that bicycles and horses were allowed to go anywhere on the land, but that horses were only allowed to canter. David M. suggested signs indicating 'No Galloping' could be erected. Vicki T. said that we should speak to the Hamsey Riding School and give a gentle reminder about the rule.

The Bridleway:

There was a discussion about the bridleway changes at Lewes Racecourse. David M. said that 'improvements' made by Mr Ffitch-Hayes to the bridleway tracks had not been approved. This will mean more horse traffic on Landport Bottom.

6. Wildlife updates:

Reptiles: Thyone O. has previously agreed that a reptile survey can be carried out next year and she will organise the laying of new refugia on the land. Thyone will

meet volunteers on 25th February at 10 am by the entrance gate to the tumuli field, bottom of the motor road.

Plants: Thyone O. confirmed that Steph Mills, had not had time this year to carry out a survey of the plants on Landport Bottom.

7. Celebrations:

Thyone mentioned “Changing Chalk”, an event incorporating various organisations e.g. Butterfly Conservation. She said that it had been proposed to recruit a community ranger who could work with various groups, e.g. by carrying out educational work with schools.

8. Protection:

Nothing identified.

9. Date of next meeting and frequency of future meetings:

It was agreed that future Friends of Landport Bottom meetings should be held every 4 months; the next meeting will be: **Monday 9th March 2020, 7.30 pm at St.Mary’s Church Hall, Highdown Road, Lewes.**