

## **Meeting of Friends of Landport Bottom**

**Monday 13<sup>th</sup> March – 7.30 pm. Meeting held via Zoom.**

**Present:** Stephen Watson; Jenny Lindop; Vicki Trenhaile; Rob Elvery; Sarah Flynn; Jenny Keen; David Slater (initially present but had to leave due to technical difficulties)

**Apologies:** Matthew Bird; Stephen Wischhusen; Imogen Makepiece; Louise Gerber

**1. Minutes from the last meeting:** The Minutes were agreed.

**2. Action points from previous meeting:**

**i. The proposed bench:**

**There was no further news regarding selecting / installing a bench in the Small Field. Brian Courage had confirmed at the previous meeting that the proposal to erect the bench had been agreed.**

**It was unfortunate that David Slater, originator of the proposed bench request was not present to comment. However, Stephen confirmed that David had also asked him previously whether the FOLB would be able to influence the SDNP to install benches on Black Cap and Mount Harry. The matter is pending.**

**Stephen noted that there was now an additional bench by Jill's Pond. This is a makeshift structure installed by Pete Birchall, the pond contractor whilst he was carrying out the renovation work. It consists of clay and spoil from the pond with some wooden planks used to form a seat. It is currently being used and enjoyed by local people.**

**Louise Gerber contributed by email that she would like there to be more benches in the fields.**

**ii. Hawkenbury Way access track:**

**Rob confirmed that there had been no further progress regarding improving the condition of the path. It was currently only a bit muddy due to recent reduced rainfall. Vicki said that since the land owners, the waterboard, etc had shown no interest over a period of years, any remedial work that needed doing would be down to the FOLB. Rob agreed and said that the laying of stones on the track surface had been suggested previously, but that Brian Courage had highlighted a possible Health & Safety issue causing the proposal to be cancelled.**

**At the previous FOLB meeting the subject of applying for the path to become a Right of Way had been discussed. Jenny L. had sent the necessary information to Rob, However, he confirmed that he was unable to take the matter forward. The process is apparently quite involved and whilst Rob could not recommend anyone to do so, he suggested that the expertise of a local councillor might be helpful. He said he knew a lot of people who had used the path over the years and could possibly provide relevant information for the application. Stephen will circulate the FOLB to see if anyone is interested in taking up the proposed ROW application . Rob said they would need support from the local council.**

### **iii. Jill's Pond renovation:**

The pond has filled up well following the re-lining work. It is not known exactly when Pete the contractor will return to complete the work/planting, but Stephen thought this could be in April. Rob noted that some of the old fence poles which had been left behind following the initial work, had now been thrown into the pond. These would need to be removed to avoid damage to the new pond liner.

### **3. Chalk Life Ranger's Report:**

On Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> March, various rotten fence posts, mainly in the Pond Field, will be repaired / replaced. The old posts will be taken off-site by the council. Rob said that about 100 posts could need maintaining / replacing. He expressed concern about the amount of time this would take. Jenny L. said she was aware of this and that there were about 25 volunteers and a few sets of tools to carry out the work.

On Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> March, volunteers from the conservation group will work in the Pond Field to carefully remove scrub and stop it from spreading. Scything has been started and this will continue carefully in order to preserve the Skylark's habitat.

Stephen asked Jenny to pass on thanks from the FOLB to all the volunteers for the work that they do.

In April there will be a conservation task around breeding birds. It will be carried out by using sound and observation at the locations where the birds are found. This will follow the same format as the previous winter bird survey. Steve, who carries out bird surveys on the Railway Land will be there. Rob also mentioned Kevin Murphy, who does surveys at the Railway Land. Jenny L. will email him.

An Easter Egg hunt is planned for 9<sup>th</sup> April.

Vicki asked why the hawthorn scrub that was cleared some months ago had not been removed from the Pond Field. Jenny L. said that everything had been taken away. So, it was concluded that the piles were in fact brambles. Jenny said that after two years of inactivity due to the pandemic, they were gradually getting on top of the bramble removal.

Rob said he had spoken to the shepherd who had expressed a wish that the Pond Field should be topped once a year in Sept/Oct. This would help with bramble growth. However, it was understood that topping could damage resident ant hills; these need protecting. Jenny L. confirmed that ant hills were important for butterflies.

### **4. Issues and Concerns:**

**Russian Vine:** Stephen said that Imogen Makepeace had been in touch regarding a patch of Russian Vine in the south east corner of the Pond Field. Whilst it had been cut back by a Town Council contractor, her concern was that action was needed to stop it returning. Rob commented that the plant, which had probably escaped from a garden, was invasive and had covered wild cherry trees resulting in them dying back.

**Sheep / dog walking:** Rob said that he had been walking his dog off the lead every day on Landport Bottom whilst away from sheep, and that a lot of people he knew were doing the same. He said he will continue to do so because he does not agree with the directive that dogs

must be kept on a lead at all times when sheep are present. *Note: the current sign on all the field gates reads: “No livestock in this field. Please keep dogs under close control”.* There are currently no sheep on Landport Bottom as they have gone to Plumpton for lambing. The shepherd has apparently told Rob that they will not be returning until the end of May / early June.

**5. Wildlife updates:**

Jenny K. asked whether there would be any more reptile surveys on Landport Bottom. Jenny L. said she was considering setting down some mats fairly soon. Jenny K. and Vicki had previously been involved with reptile surveys. Vicki said she still had a roll of roofing felt which could be used to create new refugia. Jenny K. has a map of the fields showing the location of previous survey mats. She will send this to Jenny L.

**6. Celebrations:**

No issues reported.

**7. Protection:**

No issues reported.

**8. Date of next meeting:**

Monday 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2023.