

Meeting of Friends of Landport Bottom
Monday 11th November 2024 – 7.30 pm. Meeting held via Zoom.

Present: Stephen Watson; Rob Elvery; Sarah Flynn; David Salter; Jenny Keen.

Apologies: Jennie Smith; Lesley Healey;

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

2. Action points from previous meeting:

i. Bench in Small Field:

David Salter had previously sent a petition to Cllr Imogen Makepeace regarding an additional bench in the Small Field. This was to be presented at the next meeting of the relevant Council committee. David said he had followed it up but had not received a response from Cllr Makepeace. **Outstanding action: Cllr Makepeace**

ii. State of the footpath along the eastern boundary of the Pond Field:

Following the last meeting Stephen had informed Brian Courage about the condition of the footpath. It had not been mown and was impassable all summer. A District Council contractor had originally begun the work but this was curtailed due to ongoing rainfall. Brian had apparently been chasing up the contractor to complete the work. Rob Elvery said that in the last 3-4 weeks the grass had stopped growing, and this together with people trampling the grass down, had meant that the path was currently accessible. He said there would be no point in the contractor returning before next April/May. Stephen said this could be followed up at the next FOLB meeting in March. **Action: Stephen Watson**

Stephen asked about the hedge which runs along the footpath, encroaching both sides of Gate 17. Rob said the hedge had been randomly cut back but that it would need to be cut again before February. He suggested that this work might be undertaken by volunteers with loppers. Rob confirmed that the contractor only had a ride-on mower for cutting the grass, but no equipment to deal with the hedge.

iii. Poor state of gate 17:

The condition of Gate 17 (kissing gate south east corner of pond field) was previously discussed at the last meeting. However, the gate still continues to be a problem. One of the posts has completely rotted and fallen over, and the gate has no catch. Sheep could easily push against it and escape on to the road. Rob said the gate had been in this state of disrepair for about a year, and that he had alerted the shepherd last March/April. Following the last FOLB meeting Stephen had informed Brian Courage about the situation; he will now send a further email to Brian. **Action: Stephen Watson**

3. Electric fence around orchids in the Pond Field:

The use of the electric fence to protect the orchids in the Pond Field, has been successful. The fence was supposed to be in situ for 2 months but actually remained there for 4 months. Stephen had received an email from Christine Cohen-Parks saying that the fence was ugly

and unnecessary. Everyone at the meeting agreed that the fence had been effective in protecting the orchids. Stephen said that there had been ripe seed from the beginning of August and that all the orchids had survived. The orchids have increased over the years and there are currently three kinds: Fragrant, Pyramidal and Common Spotted. Rob said that when the electric fence is in place it was important that the footpath around it is maintained and accessible.

4. Issues and concerns:

Sheep: Rob said we need to know when the sheep are moving from the Pond Field into the Tumili Field. He thought they were due to move following Bonfire Night but this has not been confirmed. There are currently 200 sheep grazing the Pond Field, this is a good number as in recent years the field has been under grazed. Rob said that the Agrimony in the Pond Field was now very prolific, and that the grass had become coarser. There were also more brambles growing there.

Bonfire debris: Stephen said that in previous years the grass around the bonfire had been cut with a strimmer, however it had not happened this year. He said that there was a lot of Wild Carrot around the area which he felt might be disguising the presence of bonfire debris. Sarah Flynn said that there had been strong winds last year which had meant that firework debris was scattered over a wider area, with the debris still evident well into the summer. It had not been the case this year due to calmer conditions.

Gate 7: Sarah raised a concern about Gate 7 at the top of the Tumili field. Apparently, the gate has dropped and is hard to operate. David asked if the barred gates could be padlocked back when there were no sheep in the field. Rob felt this was not an option.

Ponies: Sarah asked whether the bridleway runs through the Small Field, as an option to put ponies into the Small Field was being considered. Sarah was concerned that if ponies were to graze there, they might approach passing horses and riders. Rob said that the bridleway there was not used by horses. Concerning the presence of ponies, he commented that there was now more Ragwort in the Small Field than he had seen before; Ragwort is poisonous to horses/ponies. He also said that sturdy fencing would be required around the field as ponies could push against it. Those present at the meeting agreed that having ponies on Landport Bottom was a good idea, although not necessarily in the Small Field. Jenny Keen said that during a walk with Jennie S and Brian C a few months back, the subject of grazing ponies on Landport Bottom was mentioned. However, the plan had seemed to focus on them being in a corralled area of the Pond Field, which is 70 acres in size, as opposed to the Small Field which is only 7 acres. Jenny K. will follow this up. **Action: Jenny Keen**

7. Wildlife updates:

Stephen had received an email from Jennie S. She plans to carry out conservation work on Landport Bottom on Saturday 16th November. This will include completing bridleway clearance at the top of the Tumili Field, and if time allows removing rotten posts from the fence wire in preparation for new posts to be installed. She would also be making a

Downland Guardian site check walk beforehand, and giving people an opportunity to find out more about the DG scheme.

Jenny K said she had received an email from Jennie S giving details about the role of the Downland Guardians. Stephen said he had previously circulated information about the scheme to the FOLB. Jennie S had asked Jenny K about revisiting the reptile surveys on Landport Bottom. She mentioned that as well as being a point of interest for some of the Downland Guardians, it could also be a possible project for a Plumpton wildlife conservation degree student or other young persons

8. Celebrations:

Stephen said that Jennie S had tried to organise a Love My Bottom event in the summer but unfortunately it had been rained off. She will try again next year.

9. Protection:

Nothing raised.

10. Next meeting:

Tuesday 11th March 2024.